



A Theoretical Review of Training Evaluation Frameworks as Enablers' in Determining Training Outcomes

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Abstract - Organizations continue to spend huge amounts of resources in training presumably to enhance employee knowledge, skills and competencies. It is critical that institutions undertake training evaluation to determine the contribution of training. There is need therefore for thorough understanding of theoretical and model frameworks for undertaking such training evaluation. This paper sought to discuss and cross examine through literature review the available theories and models that can be adopted in undertaking training evaluations. The review concludes that though these models present good frameworks for training evaluation at reaction, learning, behavior and impact level and inform various approaches adopted by various institutions in terms of approaches taken by their institutions in evaluating their training programs, the six models have a lot of similarities with Kirkpatrick's model, hence making Kirkpatrick's model a preferred training evaluation model. However, despite the wide use of Kirkpatrick model, little has been done on the entire four levels as most researchers have focused mostly on level one and a few on level two. The review also concludes that despite growth in approaches and changing situations in training evaluation, the four theories Vroom's Expectancy theory, Goal Setting Theory, classical organization theory and Identical Elements theory provide a solid framework that adequately anchors training evaluations. The review recommends increased adoption of level three and four of Kirkpatrick's model by researchers', scholars', professionals', institutions and organizations to support generation of better metrics that can better inform training decisions; the designers of training should adopt backward planning by first considering preferred training outcomes and resultant behaviour from trainees so as to develop effective training programs that can deliver value to organizations and that there is need for increased uptake of other models so as to provide adequate opportunities for gross examination and comparative analysis of results with a view to increasing effectiveness of training evaluations.

Keywords - *Evaluation Frameworks, Kirkpatrick's Model, Theoretical Review, Theories, Training Outcomes, Training Evaluation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation of training effectiveness is a critical area that needs thorough investigations. Organizations continue to spend huge amounts of resources in training presumably to enhance employee knowledge, skills and competencies. If such figures are anything to go by, it can be argued that evaluating the influence or better still the impact of training is paramount.

Training of employees is a widespread practice in most Governments and non-government organizations owing to assumptions across different countries, organizations and cultures that a correlation exists between employee performance and training^[1]. Similar efforts in Africa are abound particularly to mention is South Africa and Botswana, with the latter establishing National Productivity Center (BNPC) and the former establishing its National School of Government.

Training as a means of enhancing employees' performance enjoys recognition and support in many countries, for instance in September 2009 in USA in the city of Pittsburgh, the G20 leaders needed putting quality jobs at the center of economic recovery. They acknowledged the role and place of skills development; International Labour Organization (ILO) developed a training strategy which was adopted in June 2010 during a summit in Toronto. Similarly, in November 2010, managers vowed to continue supporting national strategies for capacity building and development of skills on the G20 Training Strategy in Seoul^[2]. To this end, job training, development of skills and lifelong learning strategies for enhancing development strategies has and enjoys international recognition.

With the foregoing it is critical that institutions undertake training evaluation to determine the contribution of training. There is need therefore for thorough understanding of theoretical and model frameworks for undertaking such training evaluation. The objective of this review was to discuss and cross examine through literature review the available theories and models that can be adopted in training evaluations.

Rest of the manuscript is organized as follows, Section I contains the introduction of the study, Section II contain theoretical review, Section III contain models of training evaluation, Section IV contain critical analysis of theories and models on training evaluation, section V contain conclusions of the review, Section VI contain the recommendation of the review and Section VII concludes review directions for future research.

II. RELATED WORK

Saad& Mat in their study established that over \$40 billion is used up on training in universities as well as graduate colleges in USA^[3]; while in UK, the National Skills Survey of 2007 established that £38.6 billion was spent annually in training of its workforce^[4]. Elsewhere, Omani Government in their 8th Five Year Plan for the year 2011 to 2015 reserved hundred million Omani riyals which is roughly US\$ 260 million for Omanis' human resource training and development programs^[5]. In Kenya the total cost of training including assets at Kenya School of Government by 2014 was Ksh 11,164,900,436^[6].

Jaidev^[7] while reviewing theories that support learning, identified Classical Organization Theory (Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1947; Fayol, 1949) as those which depicts the organizational climate that encourages necessity for change through intervention executions. Furthermore, the learned skills

transfer through training are embedded in the context of work teams and organizational sub units through all levels. Organization climate is an important determinant of whether employees actually get opportunities to transfer knowledge learned. Managers act as catalyst encouraging or otherwise inhibiting the intentions of the trainees to transfer learning to their respective jobs.

Jaidev in his study on theories supporting transfer of training cites Greenberg; McShane & Glinow; Hellriegel & Slocum and Jaidev, positing an assumptions that trainees transfers the skills upon training to their jobs, an argument that is in agreement with Expectancy theory in this review^[7].

If this is anything to go by, such approaches can be totally misleading. Leach & Liu further argues that such reactions could be possibly influenced by extraneous variables such as training venue, facilitator's personality among others and that trainees reactions do not necessarily lead to knowledge acquisition^[8]; arguments that are however disputed by Long *et al.* who found positive correlation between trainee reactions and other Kirkpatrick's' levels including future learning through attending future training programmes; his measurement was based on course enjoyment, technology satisfaction and relevance of course content to their jobs^[9].

The review also reveals that Saks & Burke; Hughes & Campbell; Blanchard, Thacker & Way; Sitzmann, Casper, Brown & Ely and Kraiger posits that, despite the wide use of Kirkpatrick model, not a lot has been done on the entire four levels; most researchers have focused mostly on level one and a few on level two^[10]. A study by Twitchell, Holton and Trott established that only 31% and 21% of institutions evaluated training on level three and level four respectively. Furthermore, most organizations actually assess transfer of learning based on reactions more than the other three levels of Kirkpatrick^[11]. A study by Attia & Honeycutt established that 78% of organizations evaluate training at the level of reaction, 32% at learning level, 9% at behavioural level and 7% at results level based on Return on Investment (ROI) or financial value^[12]. According American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), despite the models age, feedback from nearly 300 Human Resource Development managers and executives revealed that 67% of organizations that conduct training evaluations use the Kirkpatrick model^[13].

Candice in his study on Measuring Perceived Quality of Training within the Hospitality Industry found out that, while most organizations use Kirkpatrick's model to assess the training programs effectiveness, a study of 154 organizations showed that 77 percent of the organizations measured reactions of employees to training; 54 percent measured behavior; 50 percent measured learning; 45 percent of the organizations tried to measure findings; responses to their second questionnaire and interviews, nevertheless, showed very few systematic, objective and/or quantitative measurements^[14].

III. THEORY

A theoretical review on training evaluation theories undertaken yielded Vroom's Expectancy theory^[15], Goal Setting Theory^[16], Classical organization Theory and Identical Elements Theory^[17].

Coined by Vroom in 1964, Vroom's Expectancy theory outlines cognitive variable process which reflect differences of an individual in motivation of work. It explains why different individuals put effort, be it mentally or intellectually in achieving different objectives^[15]. The theory is concerned with intellectual experiences learners go through as well as participant motivation to transfer learning acquired through training intervention. The theory's argument is based on the idea that trainees, believe there is a relationship between the effort they put in and the resultant outcomes. This indicates that an individual, in this review, a trainee makes a decision to act or behave in a particular manner since they have certain outcomes or expectations linked with a chosen behaviour at the end. In this aspect, the theory relates to one of the goals in training that puts the expectations on trainees whom are expected to put in a lot of effort with the objective of transferring what is learned to their jobs so as to benefit them in their jobs and possibly their organizations.

Expectancy theory is founded on four assumptions^[18]; assumption one is that employees join institutions with varied prospects regarding their motivations, past experiences as well as needs. These in turn affect how such employees respond to interventions. A second assumption is that behavior of employees is a consequence of conscious choices made by the individual; this influences the degree to which trainees choose to transfer whatever they learn premised in this review to contribute to employee's performance after training. Assumption three is that, individuals need diverse things from the institution upon successful completion of training programmes, for example career advancement. The fourth assumption is that populace will select amongst available alternatives in order to optimize outcomes from interventions for them in person.

Developed by Locke & Latham in 2002, Goal Setting Theory postulates that setting goal motivates and is a means by which organizations can employ to improve and sustain performance of workers^[19]. The theory further argues people who are offered with precise difficult but achievable objectives tend to perform better as compared to those employees given simple nonspecific goals or no goals at all. The theory, though argues these individuals must have sufficient ability in terms of accepting the objectives and receiving feedback linked to performance^[20].

Literature further indicates that when specific training goals are established may help result in extra advantageous organizational objectives for example reduction in absenteeism, turnover and lateness. Goal setting enjoys support from managers as a way of improving and sustaining performance^[19]. The argument on the goal of learning as postulated by this theory is particularly relevant in that trainees can adapt to new and changing situations, an argument supported by Luthans^[21].

Additionally, VandeWalle^[22]; VandeWalle, Cron & Slocum^[23]; VanYperen & Janssen^[24] indicate an orientation of a learning goal has a positive effect on work-related performance and behaviours. Hence and from the foregoing, it is apparent that setting of clear training objectives has the potential of influencing the resultant behaviour of trainees in their workplace through enhancing learning transfer among trainees, as envisaged by goal setting theory.

Advanced by Thorndike & Woodworth in 1901^[17]; Identical Elements Theory postulates that the level of transfer of training depends on association between training and work or performance environments of the trainees. It further postulates a positive relationship between performance environments and training context and the training transfer level by learners. The greater the intentions to transfer, the easier the learning; an argument supported by Tracey & Mandel^[25] in their book 'Lenses on Reading'.

The review established different models that have been developed to direct trainers in carrying out effective evaluations of training. Every model has a fairly dissimilar standpoint; but a number of comparisons. Below, the review discusses these theories and depicts their relationship.

Kirkpatrick's Model, one of the most usually utilized models for training evaluation was developed by Donald Kirkpatrick (1959) and further reviewed in 1976 and 1997. This is a four-level evaluation model that facilitates measurement of different training outcomes; trainee reactions, learning transfer, job related behavior and organizational outcomes. Most accepted approach to training evaluation by institutions nowadays; Kirkpatrick's (1976) model outlines four training outcomes: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Level one deals with assessing reaction of trainee participants. There has been evolvement of measures at this level, usually focusing on evaluating trainees' emotional response on aspects of quality, for instance satisfaction with the instructor or relevance. Learning evaluates the second level dealing with measurable indicators of learning that occurred during the course of training which defines transfer of learning^[26].

The third level on behaviour outcomes tackles either the degree to which skills and knowledge acquired during training were actually applied on jobs done by the trainee or if it resulted in enhanced job-related performance. Lastly, level four on outcomes are projected to give some impact on training measure which has wider organizational impact. In current practice, typical emphasis of these measures have been on financial measures and organizational effect.

According to Kirkpatrick partners, trainers should start planning training with preferred outcomes and then establish what behaviour is required to achieve them. Training institutions are supposed to design training founded on backwards planning, beginning with what the learner must be able to perform by the end of the training, and hence Kirkpatrick's model encourages the backward planning idea^[26].

Developed by Hamblin in 1974, Hamblin's Model prescribes five levels; Level one deals with reaction determining learner's reaction to a course^{[27][28]} (Rae, 2002). It is largely comparable to Kirkpatrick's model where the trainers ask questions on reactions of learners immediately following a course. The second level deals with learning focusing on determining whatever the learners have learned regarding skills, attitudes and knowledge after training. This is also comparable to Kirkpatrick's model where the trainers evaluate the student's learning. Level three deals with job behavior and focuses on assessing any change in performance of the job resulting from learning; comparable if not alike Kirkpatrick's model in which an assessment of change in employee performance following training intervention is evaluated.

Level four deals with functioning which focuses on establishing the outcome of training on the entire institution considering such measures for instance analysis of cost benefit; however Hamblin divides this into organizations' levels/departments and afterward further into the total organization or company. Level five deals with ultimate value focusing on assessing how an incident has affected the organizations ultimate profitability and/or survival. It is worth noting that this general, company-wide level is not integrated in the Kirkpatrick model. According to Hamblin, evaluation can be seen as any effort to get feedback or information on the training program effects and to evaluate the training value to learners in the light of that information^[27].

Developed by Bushnell in 1990, Bushnell's systems approach model is founded on the argument that the ending will be only as good as whatever is put into the process. This model stresses that measurement of evaluation must happen between every stage to ensure that the training program is well designed and meets its set goals^[29].

Developed by Kaufman, Keller, & Watkins in 1995, Kaufman's Modellinks performance to expectations. Five evaluation levels were proposed by Kaufman; Level one deals with processes and resources, it's divided into two; 1a and 1b. Level 1a aims on the evaluation lens on inputs, for example the materials' quality and availability required to support effort of learning while Level 1b puts into consideration processes and attempts to answer the questions 'what's their quality? Are learners satisfied with them? Are they efficient?' Compared to Kirkpatrick's Level one (reaction), Kaufman's Level one aims not only on satisfaction of the learner, but also on the factors of the organization which can impact satisfaction of the learner^[30].

Level two deals with acquisition, it is aimed on payoffs of small group and individual referred to as micro benefits. This attempts to answer the question; 'are the learning intervention desired outcomes or objectives met?' It is similar to Kirkpatrick's Level two evaluation (Learning); although Kaufman reported the intervention of learning might not essentially be training. Level three is on application, it is as well as macro analysis, examination of small group and individual impacts. The pertinent question is whether newly acquired skills and knowledge are being put into practice at work places. Level three is comparable to Kirkpatrick's Level three on performance/behaviour of the trainees^[30].

Level four is on Organizational payoffs, in this level, the analysis evaluates macro benefits answering the question; 'what are the benefits from a standpoint of an organization?' Level four is similar to Kirkpatrick's Level four (Results). Level five is on societal contributions, Kaufman regards this a super analysis, it attempts to answer the question; 'how is the organization contributing to its society as well as clients? Is it responsive to needs of the society/client?'

Founded by Stufflebeam in 1971 and referred to as Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP), Stufflebeam's model is an evaluation model used in management training evaluation; it's a four-stage evaluation model. This model stresses gathering information from various sources to present data for better decision making^[31].

Brinkerhoff (2005) developed the Brinkerhoff's Six-Stage Model of Evaluation which is founded on the Instructional Systems Design (ISD) cycle of training and follows a circular pattern. The model emphasizes significance of incessant evaluation and the need of changing a strategy if the

anticipated approach is not working to ensure that training actually leads to transfer of Knowledge^[32].

IV. METHODOLOGY

The review adopted a desk research approach to review previous research findings on training evaluation frameworks; utilizing desktop review, the researcher identified four training evaluation theories and six training evaluation models mostly quoted in literature. These were then reviewed and cross examined to gain a broad understanding of their contribution in informing training outcomes.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The review established there exist different goal based and system-based models for conducting evaluation of training; goal based includes: Kirkpatrick, 1959, 1976; 1997; Hamblin, 1974; Baldwin & Ford, 2009; Kaufman & Keller, 1994; Tannenbaum & Woods, 1992; Holton, 1996; and Brinkerhoff, 2005^{[26][27][30][33][34]}. System based models includes: Stufflebeam, 1971 Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Model; Training Validation System (TVS) Approach; and Input, Process, Output, Outcome (IPO) Model^[35] and the Training intervention effectiveness research (TIER) model^[31]. A recent and closely related is the Pineda-Herrero, Quesada *et al*; factors for indirect Evaluation of Training Transfer (FET) model^[36]. Another transfer of learning research model was established by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in 1999, the model is referred to as the training intervention effectiveness research model (TIER model)^[37].

Vrooms Expectancy Theory^[15] faces a few challenges since it will not work in practice without active participation from organizational managers since it assumes all components are already known. Managers must know what works better for different participants. Whereas this theory is inherently rational by positing that staff always act purely out of self-interest and desire for a reward, it omits the possibility that an employee may be driven by other factors. Goal-setting theory^[16] on the other hand could face challenges that can impair performance if organizations fail to align goals between the organization and the individual; similarly, multiple goals may impair attainment of each other. Identical elements theory^[17] may face challenges when trainees fail to recognize set of expected stimuli impairing transfer of learning, however identical elements theory has heavily influenced subsequent transfer of learning theories.

Though these models present good frameworks for training evaluation at reaction, learning, behaviour and impact level and inform various approaches adopted by various institutions in terms of approaches taken by their institutions in evaluating their training programs, the six models have a lot of similarities with Kirkpatrick's model. Kirkpatrick's model remains a preferred model. The model has been used in a number of studies on training evaluation and enjoys support from a number of authors (Saad & Mat; Davi & Shaik; Ngure & Njiru; Punia & Kant^{[3][38][39][40]}). The model is also the most widely acknowledged training evaluation model^[41]. Quite a number of organizations have tried to gauge transfer of learning based on Kirkpatrick's level one particularly using what is largely known as 'happiness sheets' which are basically simple questionnaires administered post training though such approaches rely on subjective

judgments; Dhal argues that such questionnaires do not take account of the complexity of the topics studied in such training session neither does such approaches consider challenges faced in unfamiliar areas^[42].

Kirkpatrick argues that evaluation of transfer of learning is done to determine the training program effectiveness. He further points out that, transfer of learning can be assessed by use of the four-level model: results, learning, behavioral changes, and reaction. Nevertheless, these need to be operationalized to allow their measurement^[43]. Holton; Bersin; Kirkpatrick; Noe and Tai argues that, it is vital to determine the degree to which predetermined objectives of training are attained after the training to benefit both the organization and the trainees; this may be assessed by use of a mixture of four constructs: satisfaction, learning individual performance and organizational performance^{[44][45][46][47][48]}.

Holton redefined Kirkpatrick's 1959 levels two, three and four as learning performance, individual performance, and organizational performance^[44]. In spite of the fact that Holton did not include the first training evaluation level in Kirkpatrick's model, a study done by Bersin revealed that satisfaction otherwise positive reaction towards training of trainee is a great instrument to forecast transfer of learning and it is a more suitable term to be used as compared to reaction since it differentiates the positive reaction towards transfer of learning and training design effect^[45]. Consequently, integration of transfer of learning models by Holton and Kirkpatrick, four measurements: learning performance, satisfaction, organizational performance and individual performance may be used to establish transfer of learning^[44].

Such is in agreement with Bersin sentiments that Kirkpatrick's model positions the levels as a hierarchy instead of dimensions which ought to be measured jointly to establish the transfer of learning status^[45]. It has been noted that Kirkpatrick's model learning and reaction changes are measured simultaneously, following the training completion^[47]. He further indicated that learning performance is utilized to measure attainment of predetermined objectives of training, implying that learning performance is utilized to establish the training roles in improving the trainee's qualification as well as capability; especially to perform in their jobs at their places of work. Therefore, it is clear that majority of the researchers approved that every level in the Kirkpatrick's model measures a dissimilar dimension and it has its own reason reinforcing the fact that learning performance, satisfaction, organizational performance and individual performance may be utilized as the transfer of learning dimensions.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The review concludes that though these models present good frameworks for training evaluation at reaction, learning, behavior and impact level and inform various approaches adopted by various institutions in terms of approaches taken by their institutions in evaluating their training programs, the six models have a lot of similarities with Kirkpatrick's model.

The review further concludes that despite the wide use of Kirkpatrick model, not a lot has been done on the entire four levels; most researchers have focused mostly on level one and a few on level two.

The review also concludes that despite growth in approaches and changing situations in training evaluation, the four theories Vroom's Expectancy theory, Goal Setting Theory, classical

organization theory and Identical Elements theory provide a solid framework that adequately anchors training evaluations.

The review recommends increased adoption of level three and four of Kirkpatrick's model by researchers', scholars', professionals', institutions and organizations to support generation of better metrics that can better inform training decisions; this offer a research opportunity.

The reviews also recommends that, the designers of training should adopt backward planning by first considering preferred training outcomes and resultant behaviour from trainees so as to develop effective training programs that can deliver value to organizations.

Since most studies have employed Kirkpatrick model on most training evaluations albeit mostly only the first two levels, there is need for increased uptake of other models so as to provide adequate opportunities for gross examination and comparative analysis of results with a view to increasing effectiveness of training evaluations.

In view of future scope, there is need for future researchers' adopting training evaluation theories and models to utilize the above different theories and models in different studies and or undertake similar studies with different theories and models so as to enable comparative studies in an effort to improving existing models.

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