

# Factors Affecting Transfer of Training of School Leaders in Ghanaian Basic Schools

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## Abstract

This study investigates the learning transfer factors perceived to be influencing the transfer of training of leaders in Ghanaian basic schools. Convergent parallel mixed method design was employed to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic to best understand the research problem. 150 school leaders were sampled from one educational district in Ghana for the survey while 21 leaders were interviewed. Results from the study showed that transfer effort – performance expectations, motivation to transfer, performance self-efficacy, peer support, and transfer design were perceived as the key factors that facilitate the transfer of learning. The study concludes that educational authorities and training organizers in Ghana should consider systematizing interventions to sustain the motivation of leaders to stimulate the application of leadership learning in schools.

**Keywords:** Training transfer, school leaders, motivation to transfer, basic schools, Ghana

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, organizations invest significant amount of resources on management and supervisory training programmes (Kirwan & Birchall, 2006) since training programmes are viewed as a strategic function of human capital management (Bhatti, Battour, Sundram, & Othman, 2013; Park, Kang, & Kim, 2018). From these training programmes, organizations expect that the knowledge, skills and behaviours acquired by trainees would be transferred to the workplace, maintained over time, and generalized across contexts (Govaerts, Kyndt, Vreye, & Dochy, 2017). However, while training is an investment and is expected to be effective (Renta-Davids, Jiménez-González, Fandos-Garrido, & González-Soto, 2014), training budgets do not automatically lead to improved individual and organizational effectiveness (Ford, Baldwin, & Prasad, 2018).

In Ghana, research affirms that school leaders benefit from a wide range of in-service professional learning programmes which aim at increasing the capacity of the leaders and to bring about improvements in student learning outcomes (Kusi & Mensah, 2014; Malakolunthu, MacBeath, & Swaffield, 2014). These training programmes which are mostly in the form of workshops and seminars are organized by the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, and some international agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank (Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Despite the series of training interventions that are organized for basic school leaders in Ghana, research suggests that the quality of leadership and management in basic schools remains poor (Donkoh, 2015; Oduro, Dachi, and Fertig, 2008) as the leaders lack the appropriate leadership skills and hence focus on managerial and administrative duties to the exclusion of leadership functions (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003; Zame, Hope, & Reppes, 2008). Oduro & Dachi (2010) asserted that many headteachers in Ghana see themselves as custodians who guard resources while very few view themselves as leaders who link their roles to pupils learning.

The prevailing situation seems to suggest that little of what leaders acquire in training programmes is transferred back to the school context to improve their own performance and student learning outcomes. The extant literature suggests that most investments in training and development are wasteful because the knowledge and skills gained in training are not fully applied on the job (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). It is, therefore, advocated that organizations wishing to enhance return on investment from training interventions need to understand all the factors that affect the transfer of training and then intervene to eliminate factors inhibiting transfer (Holton, Bates, & Ruona, 2000). Yet, to date, no study has investigated the factors that influence the transfer of learning of school leaders in Ghanaian basic schools to improve the returns on training interventions.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the learning transfer factors that influence the transfer of the professional learning of school leaders in Ghanaian basic schools. Significantly, such an investigation will unmask the enabling as well as constraining learning transfer factors that enhance or hinder the return on training investments in a context where most training interventions for school leaders are donor-funded (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Oduro, 2003).

## 2. Literature review

Transfer estimates reported in training research and in practice indicate a poor return on investment (Blume, Ford,

& Baldwin, 2010). As a result of the transfer problem, a great deal of progress has been made in understanding the number of factors that can influence learning transfer in the workplace (Chen, Holton, & Bates, 2006) while a number of models have been put forward in the literature to explain their many and varied influences (Kirwan & Birchall, 2006). Holton et al. (2000) developed the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) as a diagnostic tool to assess the degree of support in the learning transfer system. As a theoretically-based, psychometrically-sound, and generalizable model (Holton and Baldwin, 2003), the LTSI has been tested and recommended for its ability to identify factors affecting transfer in various training contexts and work environments including Africa (Coetsee, Eiselen, & Basson, 2006).

The model postulates that three classes of factors believed to be the primary factors interact to affect the transfer of learning from the training environment to the work environment. These factors are the ability of trainees to use knowledge, skills, attitudes in the job context, motivation to use knowledge and skills learned and work environment factors supporting the use of the knowledge and skills learned. The model further includes secondary influences (trainee characteristics) that affect learning transfer through their influence on motivation. Each of the four learning transfer domains represents a system of factors important to learning, individual performance, and, ultimately, organizational results (Holton et al., 2007).

Ability factors include the factors influencing learning transfer through the opportunity to use learning, personal capacity for transfer, perceived content validity, and transfer design. Holton, Bates, & Ruona (2000) further categorized motivation factors which included motivation to transfer, transfer effort - performance expectations and performance - outcomes expectations. Moreover, work environment factors include supervisor support, supervisor sanctions, peer support, resistance to change, performance coaching, personal outcomes positive and personal outcomes negative. While the model regards ability, motivation, and work environment factors as primary transfer influences because they directly influence individual transfer performance, individual characteristics have been shown to be important factors in the transfer process primarily through their influence on motivation. These secondary influences include performance self-efficacy and learner readiness.

Despite the varied transfer system factors, it is observed that a combination of elements come together to shape the transfer process and must be understood holistically. A number of studies have examined the interconnectedness among the learning transfer variables and the fact that they may operate together as a constellation to influence transfer (Holton, Chen, & Naquin, 2003; Kirwan & Birchall, 2006). For example, a study by Waller (2012) found that the characteristics of the individual, whilst critical to transfer, may be influenced by other areas of the transfer system. Thus, the efforts of trainees to transfer their learning are likely to come to nothing if the programme is not relevant to their role, does not nurture their confidence to use their learning, or they do not find support from the work environment to which they return to apply what they have learned. Similarly, without the necessary time, energy, or mental space, even the most motivated individual is likely to fail to apply their new skills (Kirwan & Birchall, 2006). Holton et al. (2003) equally found that the level of readiness of the trainee was to some degree shaped by the trainee's perception of how the organization will react to the trainee's application of training on-the-job. In that respect, if the trainee expected resistance to change, lack of supervisor support, or received negative personal outcomes from previous attempts to apply training, then the level of readiness for future training is less positive (Antle, Barbee, Sullivan, & Christensen, 2009).

Despite the interconnectivity among the learning transfer factors, it is suggested that transfer systems are not uniform and stable but vary depending on the type of organization, the socio-cultural and economic contexts of the organization, and the type of training (Donovan & Darcy, 2011) and thus effective interventions to improve transfer should vary depending on the organizational culture and type of organization and training involved (Holton et al., 2003).

Past studies suggest that problems that school leaders in African cultural settings face are uniquely and typically associated with developing countries and not necessarily problems faced by their counterparts in developed countries (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Kitavi & Van Der Westhuizen, 1997). Thus, considering that the extent of transfer and the factors that explain it vary due to type of organization and socio-cultural context, it is possible that organizations from developing countries such as Ghana and specifically from educational institutions are likely to provide different training transfer results. Besides, none of the existing studies was carried out in an educational setting and in Ghana thereby giving credence to the investigation of the learning transfer systems within the Ghanaian basic schools.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

This study employed convergent parallel mixed methods design. In using this approach of mixed methods study, quantitative and qualitative data are collected, analysed, and interpreted at (approximately) the same time (Creswell, 2013). The researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time during the study and then integrated them into the interpretation of the overall results. Rationale for combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods was that of complementarity as it sought to obtain different but complementary

data on the same topic to best understand the research problem. Thus, the results obtained from the qualitative analysis were interpreted to enhance, expand, illustrate, and clarify the findings derived from the quantitative results (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

### *3.2 Research Site*

The study was conducted in the basic schools of one educational district in Ghana. In Ghana, basic education comprises two years kindergarten, six years primary education and three years junior high school (JHS). Basic education in Ghana is centralized and all students are exposed to the same curriculum.

The selected district is a small one containing less than 70 communities. Most of the communities typical of the district were without pipe borne water supply and depended on water from the streams and rivers that were also polluted. Main economic activity for the people in the district was peasant farming focusing on pineapple production as the main activity. The district was chosen due to convenience because the district educational authorities granted permission for the study to be conducted in their schools.

Three groups of school leaders were selected for the study. These were headteachers, assistant headteachers and form masters. In Ghana, headteachers serve as the head of schools at the basic education level responsible for the management of the school. They may undertake teaching responsibilities as the need arises, but their main responsibility is the management of schools. Assistant Headteachers, are teacher leaders appointed to deputize and act for the headteacher at the basic education level of the educational system. They undertake full teaching responsibility in addition to their leadership roles. Finally, form masters are teacher leaders appointed by the headteachers to be responsible for the management of a class at the JHS level. They are full-time teachers in addition to their assigned leadership roles. Both assistant headteachers and form masters report directly to the headteachers while headteachers report directly to their circuit supervisors. While headteachers receive responsibility allowances for their leadership roles, assistant headteachers and form masters at the basic level of education in Ghana do not receive responsibility allowance for their leadership roles.

### *3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique*

Respondents for the research were selected using purposive sampling methods. In purposive sampling, cases are selected because they are information - rich and illuminative as they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest and relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2002). All the respondents sampled exercised leadership in schools and engaged in leadership learning thus possessing the required expertise to provide relevant information about the factors that facilitate their own leadership learning. While the selected district for the study had a little over 60 basic schools, the researchers restricted the selection of schools to only basic schools with all the three segments of basic schools (kindergarten, primary school, and JHS) in place. The reason was that such schools were under one leadership with one headteacher (HT), one assistant headteacher (AHT), and three form masters (FM) at the junior high school section.

Overall, 50 schools qualified for the study and thus the targeted population for the study was 50 HTs, 50 AHTs, and 150 FMs. Considering the small number of schools (N=50), all HTs and AHTs were the targeted respondents for the survey. In addition, HTs in each school were asked to nominate the most experienced FM in their school to participate in the study. Thus, respondents for the quantitative part were 150 school leaders comprising 50 each of HTs, AHTs, and FMs. For the qualitative part of the research, 21 school leaders comprising seven each of HTs, AHTs, and FMs were selected to be interviewed. The inclusion of AHTs and FMs in the study was informed by the increasing recognition that school leadership is not confined to HTs but is widespread and distributed in most effective organizations (Bush & Jackson, 2002; Spillane, Healey, & Parise, 2009).

### *3.4 Instrument and Data Collection Procedure*

The study used the 4th version of LTSI instrument upon seeking approval from the author's representative, Professor R. A. Bates of Louisiana State University, USA. The 4th version of the instrument is 48-item self-report questionnaire measuring 16 constructs likely to influence transfer consisting of 11 specific constructs and five general constructs. Answer scales in the LTSI were Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in the Asikuma Odoben Brakwa district with 30 school leaders. Overall, the internal consistency reliability of the LTSI for the current study ranged from .54 to .80 and was considered acceptable for research purposes. This is because the use of the LTSI instrument in other cross-cultural settings had yielded quite similar internal consistency reliability values ranging from .53 to .87 in Jordan (Khasawneh, Bates, & Holton, 2006), .58 to .87 in Germany (Bates, Kauffeld, and Holton, 2007), and .62 to .87 in Ukraine (Yamkovenko, Holton, & Bates, 2007).

Further, an interview guide was prepared based on the 16 LTSI factors to explore from the leaders the various factors that facilitate or constrain the transfer of their learning. Depending on the response to the main questions asked, some follow-up questions were asked to provide more detailed descriptions and explanations. Some of the

questions from the interview guide were: What personal factors facilitate the transfer of what you learn during training to improve teaching and learning in your school? What personal factors hinder your desire to transfer your professional learning activities in your school? During your training sessions, what factors positively affected your learning performance which ultimately affected the learning transfer? Reflecting on your school environment, what do you perceive as some opportunities that promote or encourage you to apply what you have learned to improve teaching and learning in your school? Reflecting on your school environment, what do you perceive as some of the challenges that prevent you from applying what you have learnt to improve teaching and learning? Prior to the data-collection process, the researchers sought permission from the district education office of the selected district to conduct the study in their schools, and consequently permission was granted. The researchers thereafter visited the schools to present copies of the permission letter obtained from the district education office and to distribute the questionnaires to the participants. Consent of each individual leader was sought and were made aware that their participation and involvement in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw at any stage. In all cases, the researchers returned to the schools on an agreed date to collect the completed questionnaires. During the same period, the participants selected for the interviews were contacted for their consent to be interviewed. Once consent was given, dates convenient to the interviewees were fixed. All interviews took place at the headteachers' offices and after school hours. Each interview session lasted about an hour. All the interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining permission from the respondents and were fully transcribed in preparation for the analysis.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics 21 was used to organize and analyze the quantitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive analysis (means and standard deviations). The analysis of the qualitative data consisted of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, reducing the data into themes, and finally representing the data through the researchers' interpretation and in light of perspectives in the literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative data analysis began with the transcription of oral data generated from the interviewees. Upon reading through several times to immerse ourselves in the data (Silverman, 2010), the data were then categorized into themes which were informed by the labels of LTSI used in the questionnaire and thus were identified before analysis and then looked for in the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This process was chosen since the interview guide was prepared based on the survey instrument. The analysis was carried out manually because the volume of data collected was manageable. The two sets of data were merged in the discussion of findings.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Of the 150 respondents sampled for the quantitative part of the study, the majority (77.3%) were males while females formed the minority. The result also showed that a small majority (55.3%) of respondents had served five or fewer years in their current leadership position while more than half of the respondents (68%) were less than 40 years of age. Regarding the educational qualification of leaders, the analysis showed that while 71 (47.3%) had qualifications of Certificate A or below, 79 (52.7%) possessed qualifications of Diploma or above.

### 4.2 Factors influencing learning transfer gathered through the survey data

This section presents findings of the most likely learning transfer systems that the leaders perceived to facilitate the transfer of their leadership learning. This was analyzed through descriptive statistical analysis by computing the means and standard deviations for each of the 16 LTSI factors across the three different leadership levels in the study. The ranking, means, and standard deviations of each of the three groups of leaders for the 16 LTSI factors are presented in Table 1.

Results from the study showed that headteachers highly ranked transfer effort – performance expectations ( $M = 4.41, SD = 0.56$ ), motivation to transfer ( $M = 4.33, SD = 0.56$ ), performance self-efficacy ( $M = 4.12, SD = 0.53$ ), peer support ( $M = 4.10, SD = 0.73$ ), and transfer design ( $M = 4.01, SD = 0.73$ ). Similarly, assistant headteachers highly ranked transfer effort – performance expectations ( $M = 4.23, SD = 0.68$ ), motivation to transfer ( $M = 4.03, SD = 0.69$ ), peer support ( $M = 3.96, SD = 0.69$ ), performance self-efficacy ( $M = 3.95, SD = 0.62$ ), and transfer design ( $M = 3.79, SD = 0.79$ ). Finally, form masters highly ranked transfer effort – performance expectations ( $M = 4.11, SD = 0.63$ ), performance self-efficacy ( $M = 3.99, SD = 0.69$ ), motivation to transfer ( $M = 3.93, SD = 0.56$ ), peer support ( $M = 3.91, SD = 0.72$ ), and transfer design ( $M = 3.79, SD = 0.78$ ).



Table 1  
 Descriptive statistics of the LTSI for headteachers, assistant headteachers, and form masters (n = 150)

Learning transfer factors	HT		AHT		FM	
	M(SD)	Rank	M(SD)	Rank	M(SD)	Rank
Transfer effort - performance expectations	4.41(0.56)	1	4.23(0.68)	1	4.11(0.63)	1
Motivation to transfer	4.33(0.56)	2	4.03(0.69)	2	3.93(0.69)	3
Performance self-efficacy	4.12(0.53)	3	3.95(0.62)	4	3.99(0.69)	2
Peer support	4.10(0.73)	4	3.96(0.69)	3	3.91(0.72)	4
Transfer design	4.01(0.73)	5	3.79(0.79)	5	3.79(0.78)	5
Opportunity to use learning	3.95(0.58)	6	3.62(0.69)	10	3.57(0.67)	8
Perceived content validity	3.90(0.70)	7	3.71(0.82)	7	3.52(0.70)	9
Performance – Outcome expectations	3.83(0.77)	8	3.71(0.82)	6	3.69(0.77)	6
Personal outcomes positive	3.80(0.79)	9	3.69(0.85)	8	3.33(1.00)	9
Performance coaching	3.69(0.91)	10	3.48(0.80)	12	3.65(0.70)	7
Supervisor support	3.62(0.80)	11	3.68(0.79)	9	3.12(0.82)	12
Learner readiness	3.49(0.88)	12	3.54(0.87)	11	3.48(0.79)	10
Personal outcomes negatives	2.75(0.98)	13	2.71(0.95)	13	2.47(1.03)	13
Resistance to change	2.25(0.94)	14	2.36(0.84)	14	2.46(0.96)	14
Personal capacity for transfer	1.88(0.70)	15	2.13(0.80)	15	2.12(0.87)	16
Supervisor opposition	1.55(0.71)	16	1.87(0.83)	16	2.39(0.99)	15

Notes: HT = Headteachers; AHT = assistant headteachers; FM = Form masters; M = mean; SD = Standard deviation

It is evident from the analysis that the top five strongest LTSI factors perceived to facilitate the transfer of the professional learning of the three level of leaders were similar with little variation in the order of ranking. In addition, while the three groups of leaders reported strong peer support, they relatively rated supervisor support low. Finally, the three groups of leaders rated transfer design relatively higher than perceived content validity while learner readiness was rated among the least ranked factors.

#### 4.3 Factors influencing learning transfer gathered through the interviews

This section presents the results on the perceived learning transfer systems that facilitate the transfer of the professional learning of school leaders in Ghanaian basic schools as gathered through the interviews. It needs to be pointed out that before exploring the factors that the participants perceived as influencing the transfer of their leadership learning, they were asked to report on the professional development activities they engage following their appointment into leadership positions. Participants recounted a number of professional development activities which were both formal and informal learning interventions. For the purpose of this paper, we present on only the perceived learning transfer factors that influence the transfer of their learning. Thus, findings regarding the learning transfer factors that facilitate or constrain the application of their learning is not attributed to a particular training programme but a series of training and learning interventions that leaders reported they engage in.

First, school leaders interviewed indicated that they were internally motivated to transfer their professional learning. They noted that they had the interest to transfer what they learn to others in their schools. HT-3, for example, commented that ‘as far as I have chosen teaching as a profession, I am always self-disciplined, internally motivated and that I am always ready to deliver’. HT-1 emphasized that ‘what urges me to transfer my professional learning is self-motivation. Without this, I can’t transfer any knowledge’. AHT-4 passionately highlighted that:

I love to impart knowledge and skills onto both young and old. By doing this I will be able to help to transform the lives of the pupils I teach and help them to acquire knowledge and skill to become responsible citizens in future.

Thus, across the leaders interviewed, internal or intrinsic motivation emerged as one of the key factors that facilitate their learning transfer.

Second, school leaders highlighted the influence of the training design as another key factor that facilitates their learning transfer. Recounting the training programmes they had attended, school leaders commented on the use of suitable and meaningful teaching methods, continuous use of general principles or techniques, orderly and organized presentation of the training programme, quality of resource persons, and encouragement and motivational messages from resource persons which influenced their learning and ultimately their ability to transfer. The resource personnel who handled the professional learning programmes attended by the school leaders were regarded as influential because they were highly equipped and possessed brilliant mastery of the subject matter. Additionally, they commented on the methodical presentation and systematic delivery of the training sessions, successful use of teaching aids, effective interpersonal relations between instructors and participants during training sessions and the smart use of group work approaches which characterized the training sessions.

Despite these laudatory attitudes towards training, the school leaders were critical of their own preparedness and readiness for training programmes that they had attended and the relevance of the contents of some of the training programmes. They would have preferred to offer their views on topics prior to the training programmes and to be given more advanced notice of the timetabled professional development programmes. For example, FM-1 commented that 'I think the organizers of these training programmes need to seek our views and make us part of the design of the programme'. AHT-7 also noted that: 'we need to be well-informed in advance so that we can prepare ... at times we are told on short notice and because the training is mandatory, we need to prepare for it'. There was a view about perceived relevance of training that some training programmes had not overtly focused on school leadership and management. For example, HT-7 reported that:

The last training programme we attended was on HIV/AIDS. The workshop was to make the pupils aware that AIDS is real. The workshop focused on the effect and the prevention. This workshop took three days. These kinds of workshops do not directly impact on my leadership skills as a headteacher.

AHT-2 echoed that 'the workshop took one day to talk to us about malaria prevention and also took another day for tree planting. Their primary aim for the planting of the trees was to beautify the environment'. These comments suggested that while the leaders praised the usefulness of the learning design, they were critical of the content and the perceived relevance to leadership.

Third, the leaders interviewed highlighted peer support as another factor that influenced the transfer of their learning. According to leaders, encouragement from their colleagues influenced them to transfer their professional learning. HT-3 remarked that: 'the cooperation from other staff members encourages me to transfer my learning'. AHT-1 further noted that: 'peers also assist me to find solutions to challenges pertaining to the knowledge acquired and that encourage me to transfer what I learn'. Similar comments emerged from FMs as they noted that as peers, they encouraged themselves a lot in their work which facilitated the transfer of their learning to improve teaching and learning in their schools. FM-2, for example, commented that: 'the congenial atmosphere in the school, as well as the good interpersonal relationship, create room for my peers to advise, encourage, and assist me in my work and that helps me to transfer my learning'. Thus, on the whole, the different leaders cited support from their peers as a facilitating factor to the transfer of their learning.

Fourth, the school leaders interviewed were of the view that when they put into practice their leadership learning, their performance would improve and that influenced them to transfer what they learn. First, five headteachers indicated that they would like to see improvement in their school results and so they need to transfer what they learn. They hinted that each time the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results are released, all the schools in the district are ranked based on their performance in the examination and thus, they were always eager to apply what they learn to maintain a good image for their school. HT-5 commented that 'I think that if I constantly put into practice what I learn, my school will not lag behind its competitors'.

The leaders were also optimistic that transferring what they learn in training programmes would enable them to resolve the challenges they face in their school. HT-3 noted that:

We face a lot of challenges in our school. Some pupils and teachers are always late to school and poor school-community relationship exists over here. How do I tackle these issues? I think that the way forward is by constantly putting into practice the new things I learn and initiating programmes resulting from my learning.

Similarly, they added that when they transfer their leadership learning, it would result in the improvement of their own individual job performance. AHT-6 commented that: 'much is expected from me by my pupils and the headteacher. They expect excellent performance from me. To meet my expectation, I must put into practice what I learn'. Also, FM-6 added that:

Some people have this erroneous impression that as teachers we know everything. That is never true. I don't think so... We learn much on the job to improve our own performance and that of the children we teach. I believe that the more I learn and put into practice, I improve my own performance and that of the pupils.

Thus, the leaders interviewed were clear in their views that when they transfer their learning it would lead to school improvement and improvement in their own performance.

Fifth, self-efficacy emerged as an influencing factor for headteachers as they deemed themselves capable of transferring their learning experiences to improve teaching and learning in their schools. Comments such as 'I always try to bring out what is in me' (HT-4), 'I always want to make things happen' (HT-7) and 'I have the feeling that I can make someone learn' (HT-2) were used by respondents to show that they were capable of transferring their learning to their school.

Sixth, the leaders highlighted moral and religious duty as a factor that facilitates their learning transfer. They indicated that they were morally and religiously obliged to transfer what they learn. For instance, HT-3 observed that 'I feel it is my religious duty to make children know what they are expected to'. Similarly, HT-5 commented that 'I have been helped by somebody to become what I am. I must also help somebody to fit in the society'. In much the same way, FM-1 observed that 'I am self-disciplined and that I always think about the welfare of the children'. FM-5 added that 'I always believe in doing the right thing so the moment I had the chance to learn something new, I decide to share with students to improve the learning process'. These comments do have moral

as well as religious implications.

All of these factors emanating from the interviews that impacted the ability and practice of school leaders transferring their leadership learning can be regarded as factors that facilitate transfer and factors that impede learning transfer.

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the learning transfer systems that are perceived to be facilitating the transfer of learning of leaders in Ghanaian basic schools. Past research in Ghana has shown that training interventions for school leaders are mostly donor-supported and 'the training programmes cease once the project is accomplished because the Ghana Education Service reports lack of money to sustain them' (Oduro, 2003, p. 309). Successful identification of factors affecting learning transfer in such context was therefore deemed crucial to assist educational authorities to develop interventions that will remove or minimize barriers hindering transfer of leadership learning and to encourage the creation of a conducive environment that will yield better returns for investment in training.

Findings from this study showed that the two top-ranked learning transfer factors perceived by respondent to be facilitating the application of their leadership learning were transfer effort-performance expectations and motivation to transfer. According to Devos, Dumay, Bonami, Bates, & Holton (2007), transfer effort – performance expectations refers to the extent to which individuals believe that applying skills and knowledge learned in training will improve their performance. This includes whether individuals believe that investing effort in utilising new skills has made a difference in the past or will affect future productivity and effectiveness. Similarly, motivation to transfer refers to the direction, intensity, and persistence of effort towards utilizing knowledge and skills learned in the work context (Devos et al. 2007; Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanagh, 2007). Research has shown that highly motivated individuals will actively strive for possibilities to transfer what they have learned in training into practice (Gegenfurtner, Veermans, Festner, & Gruber, 2009).

There was general agreement on the part of respondents in the study that when they transfer their professional learning, improvement in their performance was likely to occur and they were well motivated to learn and use their learning at work. While some respondents believed that their learning transfer would result in improvement in their own performance, others felt that applying their learning would result in improvement in student learning as well as solving the challenges they face in their schools. Similarly, they were personally motivated, intrinsically motivated, internally motivated, self-disciplined, and had the interest to transfer what they had learned to others. These findings align with studies that have found motivation to transfer as a key factor that facilitates transfer of learning (Bates, Kauffeld, and Holton, 2007; Grohmann, Beller, & Kauffeld, 2014) and other motivation studies that intrinsic motivation is more powerful than extrinsic motivation to drive improvement (Blume et al., 2010).

Another learning transfer system factor that was highly rated by the respondents in the study was performance self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs in his/her capabilities to meet task-specific demands and to successfully carry out a particular course of action (Bandura, 1997). Research has shown that when trainees feel confident in their ability to perform, the more likely they are to transfer such learning and skill on the job (Velada et al., 2007). Findings from this study indicated that the leaders were confident in their ability to transfer their learning. They had a strong belief that they were capable of transferring their learning to their job contexts. It could be argued that since the leaders reported that they were highly motivated to learn and transfer their learning, it was also reasonable that they rated performance self-efficacy as one of the scales with a high mean score. Other research has concluded that self-efficacy partially contributes to transfer through its influence on motivation (Chiaburu & Lindsay, 2008). Thus, individuals who are high in self-efficacy will be more likely motivated to transfer their learning (Grossman & Salas, 2011).

Moreover, respondents rated peer support as another key factor that facilitates their learning transfer. Peer support measures the extent to which peers reinforce and support the use of learning on the job (Holton et al., 2000). Elements that affect the transfer of training through peer support include setting learning goals and giving assistance such as offering positive feedback (Van den Bossche, Segers, & Jansen 2010). The respondents in our study reported that they received encouragement from their peers and they shared ideas, skills, and knowledge among themselves which facilitated the transfer of what they had learned in the training attended. Result from the current study suggests that school leaders had cordial relationships with their peers to a greater extent than with their supervisors since supervisor support was rated lower than was peer support.

Transfer design emerged as another factor that facilitates the transfer of the professional learning of school leaders. Transfer design refers to the degree to which training has been designed and delivered to give trainees the ability to transfer learning to the job and how training instructions match job requirements (Holton et al., 2000). Holton (2005) observed that trainees were more likely to transfer the training content to the work context when they perceived that the development programme was designed and delivered in such a manner that maximized their ability to transfer the training to their job. This perspective is consistent with the present study as respondents commented on the use of suitable and meaningful teaching methods, continuous use of general principles or

techniques, orderly and organized presentation of the training programme, effective use of teaching scaffolds, good interpersonal relationships among instructors and participants during training sessions and the use of group work approaches that enhanced their learning and ultimately their transfer.

While training design was highly rated by the respondents, scales such as the perceived content validity and learner readiness were rated relatively less favourably in the study. This suggests that from the respondents' perspective, the training programmes they had attended were not seen as particularly relevant to their role as school leaders. Also, they had little knowledge before the training sessions of what the specific training content was to be and how it was supposed to benefit them. These findings confirm the findings of past studies that had investigated the weaknesses of existing training programmes in Ghana (Kusi & Mensah, 2014; Oduro, 2003). Headteachers studied by Oduro (2003) reported that some of their training programmes were skewed towards the acquisition of pedagogic knowledge and not towards school administration and leadership. Similarly, the headteachers in the study by Kusi & Mensah (2014) complained that the programmes were organised at short notice and they were therefore always ill-prepared for attending them.

In much the same way, participants from this study reported that their views were not sought in the design process and they were usually notified on short notice and thus they were not fully prepared for the training. In this vein, while transfer design scale emerged as one of the key factors that facilitate their learning transfer, it is possible that meaningful transfer would not occur if the relevance of the training content does not match their job role and also their readiness for the learning events remain low. Arguably, if trainees are pre-informed about the training programme and are asked to make inputs towards the organization process, they could develop goals that can be achieved in the learning process. Similarly, they would know beforehand what to expect from the training session and they can easily assess their learning gaps and expect to fill those gaps during the training. This is in recognition that trainees who receive information about the training prior to their participation have superior intentions to transfer and apply what they learn back to their respective job settings (Saks & Belcourt, 2006) and show strong self-efficacy in communication and application (Bhatti et al., 2013).

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

The study supports the integral role of motivational factors in facilitating the transfer of learning and suggesting the need for educational authorities and training organizers in Ghana to put in place interventions to sustain the motivation of leaders to enhance the application of their learning. Educational authorities need to ensure that both intrinsic motivation is sustained and that extrinsic incentives are provided to maintain a highly motivated school leadership workforce. Again, it emerged that while the transfer design variable remained highly rated, content validity and learner readiness remained low. As a result, organizers of training programmes need to ensure that the training has appropriate content, is relevant and provides practice in congruence to the actual job situation of school leaders. This can be stimulated when needs analysis is conducted prior to training programmes to identify leadership skill and knowledge gaps of leaders as well as school needs so that leadership development intervention is targeted to meet the specific needs of schools. Davis (2013) maintains that conducting a thorough and objective needs analysis helps the organization invest in leadership in a strategic way that maximises the value of the initiative to the organization. Also, school leaders should be included in the planning, design, and production of professional development programmes to bolster their preparedness since addressing learner readiness prior to training interventions can increase the effectiveness of learning transfer by as much as by 70% (Leimbach, 2010). A key contribution of this study is that it opens up the discussion on learning transfer among school leaders in a developing country context which has not received much attention in the international literature. Overall, the study sheds light on the key learning transfer factors that facilitate or hinder training application among school leaders and that has the potential to shape the organization of training programmes in the Ghanaian school context. Nonetheless, a major limitation of the study is its relatively defined sample which might not be large enough to warrant a broader generalisation of the result to other districts in Ghana. Thus, future research could replicate the study in basic schools in other educational districts by drawing on a larger sample so that generalizations to the basic schools in Ghana can be made.

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