

**EVALUATION OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
TRAINING FOR PRIVATE BUSINESSES
IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Anh T. Phan

Business & Management, Faculty of Enterprise and Innovation
Buckinghamshire New University

Brunel University

June, 2008

Abstract

The process of economic innovation in Vietnam since the late 1980s presented its human resources in the private sector with constant challenges in terms of continuous improvement for operating effectiveness and efficiency. The challenges have been met by substantial investment of resources in business and management training. Returns from this training, however, have not received due attention. The study sets out to examine the reality of acquiring and utilising business and management training in local private businesses in Ho Chi Minh City, the country's economic centre. In doing so, the study is expected to provide a better understanding of the characteristics of business and management training in Vietnam, and how this human resources development activity assists private businesses in a transitional economy.

Based on Kirkpatrick's evaluation framework, findings of the study revealed not only different approaches to business and management training but also the limited effects of the training on the trainees and private companies. Knowledgemania, or training for the sake of pursuing knowledge, was still very prevalent among the group of 'Oriental' companies whilst a more practical approach towards training aimed at meeting explicit business objectives was adopted by companies exposed to Western management practices. The research revealed that among the factors facilitating or hindering learning transfer within the case study companies, the ability to manage the training process and cultural values were the most influential.

The research study also introduced two refined frameworks for training evaluation, aimed at small family and larger private businesses respectively. These refined frameworks incorporate not only the spirit of simplicity and practicality of Kirkpatrick's framework but also relevant contextual factors. These frameworks are, therefore, able to serve as evaluation tools to reveal both training outcomes and spot the opportunities to further improve management of training. The experience and process of developing the frameworks gained in this research may assist future researchers when undertaking training evaluation in other business contexts.

Contents

Abstract	ii
Contents	iii
List of Illustrations	vi
List of Tables	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Abbreviations	x
1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1. Research Aims	3
1.2. Organisation of the Thesis	5
2. TRANSITION AND THE CASE OF VIETNAM	8
2.1. The Transition of the Communist System	8
2.2. Transition in Vietnam	12
2.2.1. The Evolution of Economic Transformation	12
2.2.2. Achievement and Issues Facing the Economy after Doi moi	13
2.3. The Characteristics and Implications of Transition	17
3. TRAINING AND TRAINING EVALUATION MODELS	21
3.1. Human Resources and Business Competition	21
3.2. Training, Education and Development	24
3.3. Training – Benefits, Approaches and Process	27
3.3.1. The Benefits of Training	27
3.3.2. Training Approaches.....	28
3.3.3. The Training Process.....	30
3.4. Evaluation of Training Effectiveness	32
3.4.1. Evaluation	32
3.4.2. Evaluation of Training	33
3.4.3. Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Model	34
3.4.4. Variants of The Four-Level Model	39
3.4.5. Other Models.....	41
3.5. Training Evaluation in Practice	43
3.6 Summary	55
4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	57
4.1. A Comprehensive Model for Training Evaluation	57
4.1.1. Kirkpatrick’s Model Revisited	58
4.1.2. The Proposed Model	61
4.2. Research Questions	68
4.3. Research Design	71
4.3.1. Rationale	72
4.3.2. Limitation of the Design	76
4.4. Methods of Data Collection, Analysis and Presentation	77
Introduction to the Cases	85
5. CASE ONE: SOURCECODE CO.	91
5.1. Introduction	91
5.2. SourceCode Business Profile	91
5.2.1. Company History	91
5.2.2. Industry Context and SourceCode’s Business Focus.....	93
5.2.3. Human Resources	94

5.3. SourceCode’s Training Activities and Outcomes	96
5.3.1. Training Overview	96
5.3.2. Emerging Issues of Training	99
5.3.3. Research issues discussed	106
5.4. Summary of Case One	118
6. CASE TWO: CLOTHPRINT CO.....	119
6.1. Introduction	119
6.2. Company and Business Profile	119
6.2.1. Company History and Business Development.....	119
6.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus	121
6.2.3. ClothPrint’s Human Resources	123
6.3. Training and Outcomes in ClothPrint	125
6.3.1. Training Overview	125
6.3.2. Emerging Training Issues	126
6.3.3. Training and Outcomes Discussion	132
6.4. Summary of Case Two.....	141
7. CASE THREE: STREAM CO.	143
7.1. Introduction	143
7.2. Company and Business Profile	144
7.2.1. Company History and Business Development.....	144
7.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus	145
7.2.3. Human Resources	147
7.3. Training and Outcomes in Stream	149
7.3.1. Training Overview	149
7.3.2. Emerging Training Issues	152
7.3.3. Discussions on Training and Training Outcomes	160
7.4. Summary of Case Three	169
8. CASE FOUR: WOODFURN CO.....	171
8.1. Introduction	171
8.2. WoodFurn Business Profile.....	171
8.2.1. Business History and Development	171
8.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus	173
8.2.3. Human Resources	174
8.3. Training and Outcomes in WoodFurn.....	176
8.3.1 Training Overview	176
8.3.2. The Training Issues	177
8.3.3. Training and Outcomes Discussion	183
8.4. Summary	193
9. CASE FIVE: EYEHEALTH CO.	195
9.1. Introduction	195
9.2. The Hospital and Business Profile.....	196
9.2.1. Business History and Development	196
9.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus	197
9.2.3. Human Resources	200
9.3. Management Training and Outcomes.....	202
9.3.1. Training Overview	202
9.3.2. Emerging Training Issues	205
9.3.3. Training and Outcomes Discussion	216
9.4. Summary	225
10. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS.....	227

10.1. Introduction	227
10.2. The Five Companies and Their Training Issues	228
10.2.1. SourceCode	228
10.2.2. ClothPrint	229
10.2.3. Stream Co.....	230
10.2.4. WoodFurn	231
10.2.5. EyeHealth.....	231
10.3. The Proposed Model Revisited and the Strategy of Cross-case Analysis	233
10.4. Cross-case Analysis	235
10.4.1. The Way Training was Adopted and Conducted.....	235
10.4.2. Insights into Training Purposes.....	247
10.4.3. Training Outcomes and Learning Transfer	258
10.5. Summary	275
11. CONCLUSIONS	276
11.1. Introduction	276
11.2. Summary of the Research	276
11.3. Contributions of the Research	279
11.3.1. Training Practice in Private Companies Exposed.....	279
11.3.2. Reflection on the Proposed Model.....	283
11.3.3. Contributions – Research Perspectives	287
11.4. Limitations of the Thesis	289
11.5. Implications for Further Research	290
11.6. Concluding Remarks	291
Appendix 1 Milestones of Transition in Vietnam	293
Appendix 2 Holton’s Training Evaluation Framework	296
Appendix 3 Outline of a Case Study Report	297
Appendix 4 Data Collection Guide	298
Appendix 5 A Sample of Post-Training Questionnaire	305
Appendix 6 Biographical data of informants interviewed during fieldwork	308
References	310

List of Illustrations

Figure 3-1: The human resource development process	26
Figure 3-2: A simple cycle of systematic training	30
Figure 3-3: The training wheel	31
Figure 3-4: Traditional and alternative causal linkages in Kirkpatrick’s model	37
Figure 3-5: Holton’s conceptual evaluation model	42
Figure 3-6: Common measures of firm performance and contingency variables	50
Figure 3-7: HRM activities in relation to outcomes and performance	51
Figure 4-1: Proposed training evaluation model – abridged version	62
Figure 4-2: Proposed general training evaluation model	64
Figure 4-3: Actors’ attributes affecting the effectiveness of training	66
Figure 4-4: Summary of research questions	69
Figure 5-1: SourceCode organisational structure	95
Figure 5-2: Training decision in SourceCode	109
Figure 6-1: ClothPrint organisation chart	124
Figure 6-2: ClothPrint – Training decision	134
Figure 7-1: Stream’s organisational chart	149
Figure 7-2: Stream – Training Objective	161
Figure 7-3: Facilitators and inhibitors of learning transfer in Stream ..	169
Figure 8-1: WoodFurn organisation structure	175
Figure 8-2: WoodFurn – Training decision	185
Figure 8-3: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer in WoodFurn	193
Figure 9-1: EyeHealth organisation chart	200
Figure 9-2: EyeHealth – Training objectives	218
Figure 9-3: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer in EyeHealth	224
Figure 10-1: Evaluation framework - abridged version	233
Figure 10-2: Oriental vs. Western training purposes	257
Figure 11-1: Refined training evaluation model – small family businesses	285
Figure 11-2: Refined training evaluation model – larger businesses	286

List of Tables

Table 2-1: Vietnam GDP Annual Growth Rate 1996-2006	14
Table 2-2: Vietnam export contribution by industry in 2006.....	16
Table 3-1: Kirkpatrick’s four-level model	35
Table 3-2: Comparison of Kirkpatrick’s model and its variants.....	41
Table 3-3: Summary of studies of training impacts on firm performance	53
Table 4-1: Specific research questions.....	69
Table 4-2: GDP structure by Economic Sectors (2003)	75
Table 4-3: Synthesis of data collection methods employed.....	79
Table II-1: Basic characteristics of the case companies and the number of interviews conducted	86
Table II-2: Consolidated data on informants of the research	88
Table 5-1: Training outcomes in SourceCode.....	112
Table 5-2: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer at SourceCode	117
Table 6-1: Distribution of Garment and Textile Output in Vietnam by Ownership (%).....	121
Table 6-2: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer in ClothPrint	141
Table 7-1: Distinguishing features of training in Stream	163
Table 10-1: Characteristics of training conducted in the five companies	236
Table 10-2: Characteristics of the training process.....	238
Table 10-3: Rationales for training	249
Table 10-4: Training outcomes – classified following Kirkpatrick’s (1959) model	259
Table 10-5: Outcomes under the influence of business environment factors.....	262
Table 10-6: Hofstede’s cultural indices – Vietnam and some other nations	268
Table 10-7: Summary of cross-case analysis	274

Acknowledgements

It took me far more time beyond the designated three years to complete this thesis, and it could have been impossible for me to finish it if I had not received the fine support and encouragement from my research supervisors, professor Vincent Edwards and doctor Lorraine Watkins-Mathys. Besides their precise academic guidance always, their understanding and patience lifted the pressure from the research work, especially towards the end of my writing. Their generous support in other matters of my student life was precious and contributed enormously to my completion of the thesis. My words are not enough, Vince and Lorraine, thank you very much.

The scholarship for my study came from 'the school.' I did ask around to know specifically from whom or where the resource came from, but the answers were not conclusive. Therefore, I would like to extend my gratitude to the school, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, which in April 2004 gave me an opportunity to come and do research.

The data collected from the informants in Ho Chi Minh City were key to my thesis. I am indebted to all my informants, most of whom found my research healthily curious and so willingly collaborated to provide thought provoking information for my study. I understand that sometimes their positions in the organisational hierarchies prevented them from giving away more than they could, but their willingness to share was immense and I sincerely treasure it.

Many other people gave me their helping hands during my time with the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College and then Buckinghamshire New University. Professor Boylan from time to time headed the thorough annual reviews to give me the realistic perspective about my work and practically the efforts still having to be made. My fellow Ph.D student Asanka Gamage was the one I confided in to share the joy and difficulties while our work was coming close to the end. Thank you Howard and Anne for your support from High Wycombe in research related matters. Thank you very much Laura for looking after all administration work in Chalfont campus. Jonathan Hill was very kind to pop in my office once in a while to say hi and chew the cuds so that I did not feel lonely. The others like Frances, Olga, Roland, Mohammed, Paul, Anna, Mike, Lucia, Helen, Colin, Neil, Andrew

were also very nice in various encounters around the Learning Resource Centre, computer labs, and Reprographic.

My landlady Dorothy J. Stonebanks and Ann Hill helped in their thoughtful care about my family in Vietnam. I realised that I missed Dorothy quite a lot when she was away at the southern coast with her sister leaving the house for me, even though at home our conversations were limited mainly to the weather forecast, supermarket special offers and pulling the right wheelie bin out on Tuesday. And I will always remember her motto: “Don’t get old!”

Over the years, Tony became a great ‘mate’ who exchanged with me his expertise and view about the Premier League, which we always had contrasting ideas about what turned out in May, travel, politics, family and relationship, and especially cross culture issues during my four years in England. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Brauers for their kindness and support.

To my family, I would like to say that I am deeply sorry for keeping you waiting for so long. You deserved much more than this book or my degree or anything I achieved after a long time away from home.

Finally, I would like to say ‘thanks’ to myself for finishing this work at long last.

Abbreviations

AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CIRO	Context, Input, Reaction, Outcome
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDI	Human development index
HEPR	Hunger elimination and poverty reduction
HRM	Human resource management
ILO	International Labour Organisation
OEM	Organisational element model
PPP	Purchasing power parity
ROI	Return on investment
SB	Starting Business
SME	Small- and medium-sized enterprise
SOE	State-owned enterprise
VAT	Value added tax
VCCI	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industries
VND	Vietnamese dong, Vietnamese currency unit
WTO	World Trade Organisation
YEA	Youth Entrepreneurs Association

**PART ONE:
LITERATURE REVIEW
AND RESEARCH
METHODOLOGY**

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam, after the collapse of the communist system during the late 1980s, remained a communist state, and has managed to stand firm with its ideology for nearly twenty years. It is among the rare countries still run by communist governments nowadays. More surprisingly, it seems that Vietnam, along with its big brother China on which it has always kept a watchful eye, is growing very quickly in terms of economic development. To date, this is clearly attributed to a decisive economic innovation policy, popularly referred to as *doi moi*, when the country was on the brink of collapse. In retrospect, the innovation has not only rescued the communist state but also conveniently led the country to a period of great economic growth.

Since the transition from central planning, basic elements of the market-economy have been installed. The fundamentals and principles of a free market have been introduced and accepted. Nowadays, though still under a communist regime, Vietnam is considered to have a complete market economy in operation.

Developments in Vietnam over the transitional period have been characterised by gradual changes introduced to the market and businesses over time. There was no disruption in every respect of the transitional society. The remains of the old economy can still be observed in the state sector. The private sector on the other hand has forged ahead when it had experience with and more freedom to adapt to the market. Along the way, training and education have helped in transforming the economy. As early as the late 1980s, modern Western management science was introduced in state universities. Business training gradually became popular as more sophisticated, contemporary subjects hit businesses wave after wave.

Nowadays, business training is a lucrative industry. It provides services to businesses of all sizes, most popularly in the form of public evening classes for managers and employees who want better functionality and career advancement opportunities. As long as companies remain competitive and do well in business, along with the stable and growing Vietnamese economy over the last two decades, training was never put in question about its influence on business performance.

Vietnam is still a developing country in essence, even with dangers of being left behind economically by neighbouring countries, so resources must be looked after carefully. Compared to other capital investments in business, training may not take

up immense physical resources. However, when business training became popular, and personal investments into the activity are taken into account, total social loss as opportunity costs would be considerable if training were not able to benefit businesses and employees as expected. The issue would be more critical for small businesses because of their limited resources as is usually the case. Research into training for small, private businesses and especially the effects of business training in those settings would be instrumental in directing this HR development effort more effectively.

A primary review does not show that training and training evaluation for businesses in Vietnam so far have been covered adequately. On a broader scope, they have not been attended to appropriately within transitional economies. Perhaps the importance of the matter has not been recognised, or maybe the common wisdom about invariably positive outcomes of training prevailed. In either case, as mentioned above, taking stock of business training may profit businesses, training institutions and trainees in terms of realising the value of training and investing their resources more efficiently. On the other hand, reviewing the effects of business training in an oriental transitional environment may benefit academic researchers as well. The research may contribute to developing an appropriate method of training evaluation in this specific business context. Furthermore, data from the research may be used for making comparison of effects of training conducted in other western business settings. Therefore, lessons learned in terms of the appropriateness of training content, the way training is conducted and evaluated, issues of migrating western contemporary business training to a transitional environment, can be drawn. So this research is set out in the hope of benefiting business practitioners and academic researchers alike.

1.1. Research Aims

To serve the purposes of discovering the training impacts on Vietnamese private businesses as well as identifying the success and failure factors of business and management training for that specific group, the research aims are as follows:

First, the thesis sets out to review theories of training evaluation as well as empirical research on the subject. The critical review and examination of the topic are intended to help in defining appropriate analytical tools for use in the later stages of the

research. In particular, a framework for evaluation is developed to undertake the management training evaluation set out in this research. Under the review, different types of impacts of training on business performance and how these were revealed in smaller businesses are given due attention in order to build the foundation to undertake training evaluation in the Vietnamese context.

Second, the thesis aims to portray the current range of training activities inside private companies in Vietnam. It looks into the process of training from start to finish, from pre-training period to post-training, and from training purposes to training results. It also sets out to explore the roles of companies' management, their employees, and the training institutions in transforming classroom knowledge into work performance. This is achieved by exploring training-related activities inside a set of selected private companies. This is also a stepping stone, planned to supply data for identifying the factors that influence the relationship between business training and companies' performance.

Third, the thesis identifies training outcomes and impacts on the trained people and the businesses under research. This is to assess the benefits of training in relation to training efforts made by the trainees and investment from the organisations. In this inventory, the negative effects, if manifest, are also taken into account. The aim is to illustrate the full range of effects, including those explicit and welcomed, as well as those unrecognised or not welcomed. Time and financial constraints prevent longitudinal research in order to identify more long-term training effects, but the research aims at revealing most of those effects existing in businesses up to the time of the field visit.

Finally, the thesis seeks to answer the question of what factors contributed to facilitating or inhibiting the process of interpreting knowledge into actions after training in the specific Vietnamese private business environment. In other words, in addition to fulfilling the previous third aim of illustrating the training results, the thesis aims to provide an explanation of the magnitude of success and failure in the companies under research in the utilisation of training to improve business performance. This ultimate aim is to draw some practical experience or lessons learned about what to focus on in order to get the best out of training in the context of private businesses. A by-product as a consequence of achieving the last aim is a

refined analytical tool which may be used to practise training evaluation for businesses, evaluators and researchers.

In realising these above-mentioned research aims, a set of research questions and sub-questions is to be prepared. The complete list of questions can be found later in the chapter on research design.

Realising the above aims, in terms of contribution to knowledge, the study is expected to provide a better understanding of the characteristics of business and management training in Vietnam, and how this HR activity assists private businesses in a transitional economy context. A critical review of the literature on training evaluation, theoretically and empirically, is also provided. A conceptual framework for training evaluation, hopefully useful for both academics and practitioners, relevant to business environments of transitional economies, in other settings in terms of culture and socio-economic condition, is another product of the study. In addition, even though qualitative inquiries have not been popular as an approach to social research among Vietnamese academics and researchers, this study has nevertheless been planned in this direction. Significant results from this study might encourage local researchers into the areas of business training and HR development employing this research strategy, which could be appropriate to provide insights into their research issues in the cultural low-context environment.

1.2. Organisation of the Thesis

In realising the research aims, the thesis is presented in two parts. Part One, consisting of the first four chapters, addresses theoretical aspects of the research, and Part Two, consisting of the remaining chapters, covers mostly field research and empirical issues.

After this introductory section, Chapter 2 presents the context of Vietnam, its transition to a market economy for an overall presentation of the national and economic context before addressing the business training issues. The chapter presents Vietnam as a special case among prior members of the communist bloc, that accepted a market-driven economy while maintaining the existing political system. It concludes by listing the implications in terms of human resources that the country and its people have to face in order to integrate the market into its economy.

Chapter 3 looks into the development of theories on training and training evaluation. This is essentially an inventory of concepts and tools for training evaluation that were developed and used up to the time of the research. These tools are to be critically reviewed in order to identify their advantages and disadvantages so that hopefully an improved evaluation model can be developed and applied in this research study. Besides, findings on training evaluation in the reality of business are also discussed to gain understanding of the practice and inventory the plausible outcomes of training to inform the field data collection. The review of evaluation in reality also gives an indication of how training contributed to business performance in reality.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to designing an appropriate research strategy to address the research aims. The conceptual framework as well as the research questions are to be discussed in detail in this chapter. Based on the nature of the questions, the research design and data collection methods are identified, presented and justified. Possible limitations of the design and obstacles during the data collection phase are identified and measures to overcome these obstacles are suggested.

Given the complexity of training evaluation issues, especially the process of translating novel classroom knowledge into actions, and the number of parties involved in the process, multiple case studies are considered as a suitable design, and the in-depth interview with selected training ‘players’ is the major data collection method. Qualitative data analysis is key in interpreting the research data and answering the research questions.

Part Two of the thesis includes the individual case studies, cross-case analysis and conclusion chapters. Each company under research is presented in a separate chapter, in which industry and business backgrounds are illustrated. The organisation of training in every company is introduced, leading to the emergence of major internal training issues/problems. Evidence from sources inside and outside the companies is used to illustrate and substantiate the emerging issues. Based on each company’s background information and opinions/accounts from the staff as well as the management, a primary explanation of the training phenomenon in that company is given.

The penultimate chapter, a cross-case comparison, forms the major component of Part Two. In this chapter, the conceptual framework developed earlier is put into application. Data from the individual cases are compared to obtain more general insights about the practice of management and business training in small business in Vietnam, and the effects on business performance. Based on the framework, analysis of the advantages/benefits and disadvantages/impairments from training on the companies is conducted. From the results of the analysis, factors influencing the outcomes and impacts of training are identified. The chapter applies training evaluation theory to the set of rich field data to generate a conclusion about the general picture of business training for small businesses.

The final chapter summarises research objectives, recapitulates the major findings of the study and cross-references these with the literature on training evaluation. It also provides reflection on research methodology, contribution of the research in theoretical and practical perspectives, points out the limitations of findings and indicates opportunities for further research.

2. TRANSITION AND THE CASE OF VIETNAM

One of the most remarkable political phenomena in the world by the end of the twentieth century was the disintegration of the communist system in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Together with the vanishing of the bipolar world, the former communist states started a transition process away from the communist ideology. Vietnam is among a few countries where the communists remain in power. The success of Vietnam during the early stage of economic transformation provides an example of a unique transitional model where gradual economic reform combined with minor political changes led to substantial growth. However, though the Vietnamese people have experienced profound changes and enjoyed important results of the open-door policies, Vietnam has not been recognised as a nation that is competitive because of its human resources. Transition and especially economic transformation have worked to keep the country from collapse, but to fully exploit the advantage of the market economy, besides governance, the business community also has to adapt to the new environment. This chapter reviews the literature on the transition of the communist system, the characteristics of the Vietnamese transitional process and draws implications of the changes for its human resources.

2.1. The Transition of the Communist System

After the revolutionary period of the end of the 1980s to the early 1990s, only China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba and North Korea were left as communist states, and each had its own socio-political model and direction for survival and development (Riedel and Turley, 1999). These countries themselves have experienced a different transformation at different levels socially, politically, and economically. Europe nowadays no longer has any communist regimes. Classical communism currently exists in only two countries: Cuba and North Korea.

The following section provides an overview of transition from a range of perspectives, and the future of the countries under transition.

The major change occurred during 1989-1991 when the whole Soviet bloc in Europe experienced the breakdown of the ruling communist regimes. Poland and Hungary started the change in early 1989 and the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of communist power. The collapse of communism necessitates

the journey to another socio-economic model for former communist states, and this is the start for 'transition.'

It was recognized since the beginning of the process that there is no consensus in the literature on what should be termed 'reform,' 'restructuring,' 'transformation,' 'transition,' or 'revolution' (Kornai, 1992). Nonetheless, Pickles et al. (1998) point out that transition is an attempt to construct a form of capitalism on and with the ruins of the communist system. Two issues are to be highlighted here: a form of capitalism; and the lingering of communism, at least temporarily. If this definition is acknowledged, then with transition, the basic characteristics of capitalism are applied in the new states, and they still have to live and work with the remains of the old regimes for a while. Hare et al. (1997) suggest another definition, that transition is the shift from centrally planned economies controlled by one-party communist regimes to democratic, market-type systems. Here, the characteristic of the target of transition as market-oriented was emphasised. The absence of market characteristics in the formerly centrally-planned economy contrasts it substantially with the economy under transition in particular. Transition is considered to exist if there is a significant market signal¹.

Lavigne (1999) suggests that insofar as the word is concerned, transition means transitory, and hence temporary. The issue of whether temporary or permanent transition is emphasised is related to whether transition is a stage, or state, or process. The reality is that fifteen years after the collapse, the former communist states were at different levels of transition towards a market economy and albeit the impacts of the market could be found in most, if not all, countries, some are still considered as transitional countries. Lavigne (1999) otherwise contradicts herself in suggesting, "transition may well never be over," mentioning the gaps between developed and transitional countries. In addition, Stiglitz (2002) argues that the economic transition in Central Europe and the former Soviet Union is far from over. From the economic perspective, this latter argument is quite convincing as some countries achieved only a poor economic performance in the last decade. They were even involved in social and political crises on many occasions as economic outputs fell for a long time after

¹ In this thesis, 'transition' is understood as the total changes in all aspects of a society away from the communist ideology while 'transformation' is used for the evolution of, say management, as the result of transition.

the beginning of the post-communist era (Jeffries, 1993; Lavigne, 1999; Holmes, 1997; Stiglitz, 2002).

To Holmes (1997), along with the transition in progress or ‘crystallizing,’ former states have to attain a certain level of development to be considered as having left communism behind. Therefore, the destination lies ahead and consequently, transition is a temporary phenomenon. Even though it has been lasting for more than a decade, eventually it would terminate. The end of transition is literally ‘like “the West,” politically, economically and socially’ or ‘perceived to have arrived and settled at this destination - or even at some other’ (Holmes, 1997). It is also reflected in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development exercise in 1994 (cited in Hare et al., 1997) completing a checklist in which level of transition completeness of a country was measured by level of privatisation of banking institutions, enterprise transformation, market, trade... However, considering the case of China, which has been experiencing (successful) transition for a quarter of a century so far, it is by no means politically similar to the West. Another case in point is the former Asian and Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union, where signals of dictatorships and kleptocracy prevail. The state of transition therefore is a relative term, as long as it is seen as ‘creative destruction,’ where an old economy is terminated by a new one (Stiglitz, 2002).

Holmes (1997) argues that not all countries had to experience all stages of the transition, or follow a predetermined sequence of such a process. Since the big collapse, the implementation of transition proved to be diversified. The main streams of implementation consist of ‘gradualism’ (e.g. China, Vietnam, Poland, and Hungary, supported by the World Bank) and ‘shock therapy’ (e.g. Russia, Czech Republic, supported by U.S. financial institutions and the International Monetary Fund). While gradualism gives priority to social and economical stabilisation, shock therapists recommend swift privatisation of the economy. After more than a decade, gradualists proved to have advantages over shock therapists in economic growth, social stability, poverty reduction and equality (Stiglitz, 2002).

Many have argued without reaching consensus on the pace and sequencing of economic change (Holmes, 1997; Alexander et al., 1994; Lavigne, 1999). It is exactly there that the discussion of whether or not the target of transition is capitalism emerges. There are experts such as Kornai (1992) who stresses that ‘there

can be no comprehensive and consistently radical transformation in other spheres while the key feature of the old classical structure, the Communist Party's power, remains.' The debate has seen others put forward a 'third way' solution for former communism states. In between of the two extremes of communism and capitalism or along another dimension, there are possible models of a 'dual system' (Kornai, 1992); 'forced market socialism' (Nuti, 1993); 'the mixed post-socialist transition economy' (Chavance, 1994, cited in Lavigne, 1999) corresponding to the magnitude of liberal economy. A system that combined the innovation and efficiency of market economics with socialism's ideals of fairness and the pursuit of social justice as described by Alexander (1994) is to some extent market socialism and judged as a utopian model. However, the opposition to the feasibility of variants of market socialism can be found widely, such as those of Stiglitz (1993), Kornai (1993), and Holmes (1997). The search for a feasible model did not stop when Alexander (1994) proposed discussion on a 'fourth way' by proposing particular legal and economic institutions that are asserted by being more concrete and less utopian. Considering developments so far, countries following gradual reforms seem to have achieved better performance than those committed to swift and profound reforms. However, even the most cautious countries have to refuse the centrally-planned economy and pursue a specific type of market economy to enter transition; in itself this was a radical change to formerly communist states, irrespective of whether it was shock or not. In fact, there was 'shock' in any reform and resistance to change is inevitable.

The death of communism lies at the centre of its fundamental principles. And the most important point for transition is introduction of a free market, as Pierson (1995:80) observes that 'even the most centralized command economies had recourse to (albeit grossly distorted) markets in labour and consumer goods and if social democracy is admitted as a form of socialism, it is clearly a form in which markets have a central place'. In reality, countries in transition following either the shock or gradual approach and all have accepted the market mechanism. In addition, besides the disintegration of the old bloc is the integration in the world market, and the new participants have to learn and accept a new set of rules (Wang, 1996, Quelch and Dinh-Tan, 1998). Producing to international quality standards, relaxing state subsidies and opening the market to foreign competitors, and business transparency are among the new requirements of the new economy. Therefore, knowledge and

skills for businesses to operate in the market environment is one of the necessities during transition.

2.2. Transition in Vietnam

The transition in Vietnam is genuinely different from any in Eastern Europe or in China. Vietnam did not allow the full migration from communist ideology as in Europe, while the transition itself was not the result of the implementation of regional pilots decided by policy-makers from the ruling party as in the case of China. Transition in Vietnam can be characterised as gradual, cautious and bottom-up changes, while socialism has always been maintained as the sole, predominant ideology of the country. The following section discusses the process of transition, its achievements and challenges, and highlights characteristics of the transition in Vietnam.

2.2.1. The Evolution of Economic Transformation

Many authors state that officially the transition in Vietnam started from the sixth congress of the ruling Vietnam Communist Party in 1986 (Jeffries, 1993; Williams, 1992; Kamoche, 2001). This preceded the fateful collapse of communism during 1989-1991. It was in this congress that the party admitted 'severe mistakes' of its leadership in redeveloping the economy after the Vietnam war (1954-1975), and started the changes towards a market orientation. The year 1986 was, however, only the official landmark of the commencement of economic renovation, or '*doi moi*' in Vietnamese. After a period of gloom at the end of the 1970s when the euphoria over the military victory encouraged the leadership of the country to follow a centrally-planned economy with utopian socio-economic targets, the genuine transition in Vietnam started. 'Fence-breaking' (or '*xé rào*' in Vietnamese) activities were carried out by people at the grassroots level and then made official by directives from state management (Fahey, 1997; Williams, 1992; Fforde and de Vylder, 1996). While for-profit enterprises were not considered legal, instead of merely fulfilling the State plans and operating within the designated boundary for insufficient return, people tried to gain more income from 'informal' activities. Under the form of experiments, and implemented by reform pioneers in a number of places, goods could be exchanged or sold on grey markets to raise cash for other materials or incentives for workers. In agriculture, peasants gradually extended the private plots while working

less on cooperative fields, and had more products to sell for their own pockets. These initiatives had not been set off from the top, but gradually permitted when they were retrospectively recognised as solutions for the weak economy. Emphasis on heavy industry was relaxed while light industry, foreign trade and the production of consumer goods were extensively encouraged (Fahey, 1997; Fforde and de Vylder, 1996).

After 1986, central planning coexisted alongside market-type relations (Williams, 1992) and the first ever foreign direct investment law was promulgated in 1987. In 1989, central planning came to an end and market-determined factors were promoted. Resources were to be traded on the free market at fair prices. Heavy subsidies from the state in terms of distorted price inputs were totally abolished and the decision-making process became based on market-determined factors. Foreign economic relations also experienced a boost when the government abandoned its centralised control and adopted an ‘open door’ policy, to ‘make friends with all countries.’ Since 1989, the authorities started to formally allow non-state sectors to participate in the economy even though opportunities to access official investment were rare. The early 1990s witnessed the merger of some 3,000 state-owned enterprises, and the dissolution of a further 2,000 (Williams, 1992). The private sector and market-orientation were officially recognised in the main legal document of Vietnam, the Constitution, in 1992 though the state and collective sector were still seen as fundamental (Jeffries, 1993). Central planning was due to end in 1989. However, it was not until 1993 that Vietnam experienced substantial growth when changes enacted at the beginning of the 1990s such as interest rate reforms, de facto privatisation of State assets, and rationalisation of companies in the state sector started to have their impacts (Fahey, 1997). Meanwhile, the communist party strictly maintained its power, even though its role in running the economy was unofficially intended to be reduced. Fahey (1997) noted that the maintenance of the socialist ideas in the Constitution merely bore a political meaning and did not reflect the then sentiment with regard to the emerging power of the market.

2.2.2. Achievement and Issues Facing the Economy after Doi moi

Reforms have brought about major achievements for the Vietnamese economy. *Doi moi* made it one of the fastest growing countries in the 1990s (Dollar, 2001; Williams, 1992; Fahey, 1997; Fforde and de Vylder, 1996) and it continued so in the

2000s. GDP growth rates during the 1990s and throughout the 2000s (official data from Vietnam General Statistical Office, and IMF) present impressive achievements: the rates remained well above the 5% level, except for 1999 (see Table 2-1).

Table 2-1: Vietnam GDP Annual Growth Rate 1996-2006

Year	GDP (US\$ billions)	Real GDP growth (%)
1996	24.7	9.3
1997	26.8	8.2
1998	27.2	5.8
1999	28.7	4.8
2000	31.2	6.8
2001	32.5	6.9
2002	35.1	7.1
2003	39.6	7.3
2004	45.5	7.8
2005	53.1	8.4
2006	61.0	8.2

Source: World Economic Outlook Database, IMF, 2007

Twenty years of economic transition helped Vietnam to escape the group of most under-developed countries. During the 1990s, Vietnam ranked fifth in the world on GDP per capita annual growth rate (UNDP Human Development Report, 2001), and the absolute value measured by purchasing power parity (PPP) method reached US\$ 3,070 in 2005.

Doi moi has introduced significant changes to Vietnam's economy (see Appendix 1: Milestones of transition in Vietnam). The principles of a free market have gradually been applied, accepted and officially recognised as the country's future development direction. Economic achievements in national production growth, export volumes, hunger elimination and poverty reduction (HEPR) have attracted international interest. International donors and financial institutions considered Vietnam a reliable partner. Foreign direct investment increased over the years, reaching USD 20 billion annually in the mid 2000s. Vietnam's diplomatic and economic ties with neighbouring countries, the western powers, its old allies and international financial

institutions have been strengthened. Besides, the legal foundation and political commitment have gradually been developed, facilitating progress toward a market economy (Vo, 2004).

However, one of the most important achievements of *doi moi* was the recognition and development of the private sector. The long familiar roots and latent market-economy seeds have helped to create and maintain entrepreneurship, which had existed before the country's reunification in 1975 (Zhu, 2003), and provide the people with opportunities to experience the market mechanism. In reality, the transformation to a market economy materialised rather smoothly with little turbulence. In the picture of transition since the beginning of *doi moi*, besides the consistent inflow of foreign direct investment, the rapid development of the private sector in the Vietnamese economy was phenomenal. Officially recognised and equally competing with other sectors in principle, the Vietnamese private sector emerged as an arena for a generation of new entrepreneurs to make their careers. The role of the private sector has been recognised by many authors including Dapice (2000), Cohen (2004), Dollar (2001), Riedel (1999), McKenzie (2000), and Leung (2006). The private sector was hailed by its contribution in job creation, significant investment in the economy, share of GDP, and provision of efficient services the State could not cover. Nowadays, while the State sector is maintained by the official media as the 'locomotive' of the economy but having troubles to cope with increased competition, the private sector is very dynamic, adaptive to market changes and really a very important contributor.

Vietnam continued to maintain strong growth towards the end of the 2000s. However, the challenges to the economy are also significant. Its economic growth seems to be desirable for many countries but there were voices of concern, for example as regards poor economic policies, weak economic institutions, low investment saving rates, and lack of export competitiveness (Dollar, 2001; Thayer, 2000). This is partly reflected in the contribution to exports by industry, with dominant shares from natural resources, or labour-intensive ones, as illustrated in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2: Vietnam export contribution by industry in 2006

Industry	Percentage
Crude oil	20.8
Coal	2.3
Rubber	3.2
Rice	3.2
Coffee	3.1
Marine products	8.4
Garments	14.6
Footwear	9.0
Handicrafts	1.6
Electronic goods and components	4.3
Other	29.5

Source: Vietnam Country Report, IMF, December 2007

The competitiveness of the Vietnamese enterprises still ranked low in the world chart. The World Economic Forum ranks Vietnam at 76 out of 127 countries on the business competitiveness index, while in terms of sophistication of company operations and strategy, Vietnam was at 79/127 (Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008).

As for government's role, issues related to policies were most frequently mentioned, as observed in Freeman (2001), Dollar (1999), and Litvack (1999). Foreign authors and international donors urged for further and more comprehensive reforms. However, the party's main focus has been directed to maintaining political stability, and inertia on economic issues has been exposed (Thayer, 2000; Kamoche, 2001; World Bank Annual Report 1997). Dollar (2001) warns that, by 'conditional convergence', if Vietnam does not take further reforms, the country's high growth rate will decelerate, and Vietnam should tackle this 'apparent anomaly' (i.e. substantial growth vs. poor economic institutions) to sustain economic development.

At the business level, a number of problems are still to be resolved. Among them are a lack of market experience and management expertise, lack of credit channels for private enterprises, and limitations in modern technologies (Tran, 2001; Duong, 2002). In addition, the serious shortage of skilled labour has made Vietnam less competitive than neighbouring countries (Collins, 2005). Just one third of enterprises were satisfied with the qualification of their recruits (Truong and Le, 2004). Weaknesses in terms of technology and business practices have been widespread in both the state and private business sector. So besides the achievements due to timely economic reform, very basic disadvantages still linger to challenge further economic development in Vietnam.

2.3. The Characteristics and Implications of Transition

As discussed above, the process of transition in Vietnam was initiated from the grassroots level (Fahey, 1997; Fforde and de Vylder, 1996). Vietnam's economic transformation did not follow any 'big bang' theory. This distinguishes Vietnam from other countries under transition. Compared to the top-down method from neighbouring China, the bottom-up approach in Vietnam arrived at a similar destination: a mixture of a communist regime and a market-driven economy. In other words, 'the party plus capitalism equals socialism' (Watts, 1998).

Of the two basic transitional dimensions, i.e. 'marketisation' and 'privatisation', Vietnam performed substantially well on the former, as Williams (1992) recognised. Even before the formal economic transformation commenced, the market economy had existed in essence. The market has existed in Vietnam for quite some time prior to the launch of *doi moi* in the form of spontaneous grey markets to exchange food, agricultural products and ration tickets (Fahey, 1997; Fforde and de Vylder, 1996; Williams, 1992). However, as for the aspect of privatisation, the State showed itself to be rather watchful and hesitant (Kamoche, 2001). The imbalance between marketisation and privatisation manifests special political and economic characteristics. Though Dollar (2001) identifies and warns of decreasing growth unless further institutional reform is implemented, alongside China, Vietnam presents the paradox of transformation under communism with major economic achievement. It is uncertain whether Vietnam can continue with communist rule, mixed with the operating mechanism of a market economy, or there will be a radical political reform (Warner et al., 2005). But from the above two points, it seems that

further changes will continue happening in the economy as it progresses towards a fully fledged market economy, as economic achievements have proven to fortify the power of the communist party.

Beside the opportunities *doi moi* has been bringing about, the challenges of effectively competing with rivals outside the country's border, coping with international laws and regulations and benefiting from globalisation require Vietnam to have transparent and effective economic policies, a competition-enabled business environment, adequate infrastructure, and competitive human resources particularly (Mallon, 1993; McDaniel et al., 1999; Dapice, 2000; Thayer, 2000; Dollar, 2001).

Therefore, people in the business environment have to make adjustments and the country is constrained by a dearth of well-trained managers (McDaniel et al., 1999; Neupert et al., 2005). On the face of it, business operations since transition have been adopting a more market-led approach, and the advantage is that Vietnam has never lacked the 'spirit of entrepreneurship' (Fforde and de Vylder, 1996). Nevertheless, some skills required for the market economy were novel to the labour of the transitional age. Besides, companies' businesses were extended to broader fields and geographical locations. Gradually, western concepts in business and management such as corporate culture, business ethics and brand management emerged.

Therefore, besides taking advantages of the newly open economy, the Vietnamese firms had to update their human resources with skills to maximise profits rather than fulfilling State plans (Zanko, 2003). These practical skills ranged from basic communication, interpersonal, problem solving skills, and using foreign languages to more sophisticated ones at the firm level like strategic management (Neupert et al., 2005). Moreover, new activities have been added, such as marketing and sales, and customer service. Furthermore, the need for the firms' capacity in data collection, data processing and decision-making as well as handling legal matters was increasing (Sidel, 2003; AusAID, 2000; Vo, 2004; Gerrard et al., 2002; Kamoche, 2004; Neupert et al., 2005). On the other hand, the function of some activities has been redefined, enlarged, and augmented, such as human resource management, and finance management (McDaniel et al., 1999; Gerrard et al., 2002). In addition, new opportunities and business partners meant new markets, cultures, customs, languages, and updated knowledge of the specific regulation of specific markets. Therefore, domestic firms encountered significant challenges in building and

maintaining the free-market skills of their staff. In comparison with the pre-transition period, these are completely new and challenging tasks.

Arising from the requirement to update entrepreneurial skills (McDaniel et al., 1999; Friedman, 2004; Kamoche, 2001), the transition has brought about new educational opportunities. At the least, joint ventures brought new lessons to old domestic firms (Kamoche, 2001). The door to the West is open, and market economy concepts have been widely adopted in training and education. Not surprisingly, after *doi moi*, business-related faculties have the largest number of enrolments and volume of entrants in Vietnamese tertiary education. This is partly reflected in the statistics of university enrolment 1998-2003, where faculties of business administration had the most students registered.

Beside the opportunities, the threat of competition, not only domestically, but also internationally (Cohen, 2004; Cohen 2002; Wattanaputtipaisan; 2003) brought about the need for better skills in business and management. Businesspeople had to upgrade their skills to adapt to the competitive environment and training was one of the important solutions to solve the problem. A new set of skills has been defined and needs to be achieved as a necessary condition for capable human resources to develop. Acquiring and updating skills are a continuous practice, which can be observed in the new Vietnamese society (Quelch and Dinh-Tan, 1998; Kamoche, 2001; Truong, 2003). Furthermore, in a society where education and degrees have always been respected (Moock et al., 1998; McDaniel, 1999), the pressure to update knowledge for better opportunities is expected to continue for years.

From the points presented above, transition in Vietnam revealed new requirements for the skills of human resources. These requirements have been partly met by numerous training activities initiated by both business and individual programmes. Business and management training has developed strongly into a substantial market, in which the private sector showed an evident training need (McKenzie, 2000). The Asian Development Bank's programme assessment (2005) considers that demand in the market of business support services which include training, consultancy and advisory services is expected to grow as business standards are raised, and competition intensifies with accession to the WTO. Management training has gradually been recognised as potential for business (McKenzie, 2000), especially those in the more dynamic private sector. An examination into business and

management training activities of the Vietnamese private sector during transition would be necessary in order to make clear how they helped the businesses and how the businesses would utilise business training better. The next chapter will discuss the role of business training and training evaluation issues before discussing the methodology to accomplish the research aims.

3. TRAINING AND TRAINING EVALUATION MODELS

Human resources are widely recognised as an important asset of firms. Unlike other types of resources, once developed and utilised appropriately, human resources become unmatched competitive advantage because of their inimitability. Firms can build *core competences* (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990), which enable them to compete effectively, through their human resources. Though unlike physical assets, core competences do not deteriorate but grow when applied and shared. Consequently, they need to be nurtured and protected.

Training is a critical activity of HR management, contributing to the improvement of the firm's human resources. Training is not only a solution for short-term skill shortage, but is also a strategic function in nurturing the human resources of a company.

Nevertheless, training without evaluation is like an investment without estimation of return. Evaluation of training has been considered a constant need in human resource development. Efforts have been made to streamline training evaluation, and Kirkpatrick's model is one of the leading and most important contributions in this undertaking. The model, even though having a number of revealed shortcomings, is still a straightforward and useful guideline for conducting evaluation.

The chapter will consequently review the importance of human resources to businesses as well as discuss the approaches, process and benefits of training. The major part of this chapter will be dedicated to analysing Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation, the predominant tool in the field, its variants and other evaluation frameworks. Particularly, Kirkpatrick's model is to be described and discussed thoroughly with the views of its exponents and critics. Empirical research studies applying Kirkpatrick's model will also be reviewed with a view to evaluating the lessons learned from applying the model in practice. Finally, based on the analysis undertaken on the various training evaluation models, conclusions on theoretical issues and evaluation practice are drawn.

3.1. Human Resources and Business Competition

By and large, the importance of a capable human resource for a country or for a firm has been widely recognised (Pfeffer, 1994; Senge, 1990; O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000;

Peters and Waterman Jr., 1992; Carlzon, 1987). As a result, since 1993, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has annually been ranking countries by Human Development Index (HDI) instead of the monetary-biased GDP alone. Current wealth makes a country highly admired; nevertheless it is the human factor that enables it to enjoy prosperity in the long run.

In the 1991 World Development Report, the World Bank recommends countries under transition to 'invest in people' to sustain economic and social progress. Five years later, the 1996 World Development Report reiterates the importance of developing 'a skilled and adaptable workforce' to sustain economic growth, after the transitional economies had enjoyed tremendous economic gain in the early period of transition.

To compete and grow well in the market economy, where competition is the core concept, besides other physical and organisational infrastructures, the human resource is an important factor. The reality that management gurus praise the virtues of investing in people and treating employees as the fundamental to attain competitive advantage is commonplace. Among the most famous names are Pfeffer (1998), Ulrich (1997), and Prahalad (1995). From a resource-based perspective, according to Holbeche (1999), there are three types of resources that can bring about competitive advantage: physical capital, organisational capital, and human capital. At least, human capital is given the same importance as the other two resources. However, Pfeffer (1994) recognises that traditional sources of competitive advantage like land or technological supremacy are less important when many countries can display equal advantage in some aspects. The same argument can be found in Reed (2001), where he argues that in the economy nowadays, the importance of land and capital is limited, and it is people who are the determinant of commercial success. Consequently, these talents are well paid, hard to recruit, and difficult to retain as their values are appreciated *more* than other types of capital. Porter (1980) in his model of *value chain analysis* recognises human resource management as an important support activity adding value to all other activities in the primary process. One can observe the progress of the recent fast development in technology, but only the companies with talent, effective management structure and enabling culture that are involved in and facilitate change can enjoy sustainable growth.

Furthermore, the ability to coordinate individual skills and resources to create value is the most desired property for any company. Prahalad and Hamel (1990) suggest that the ability to mobilise internal human resources is the solution to achieve advantage in the future. Organisations increasingly compete with each other on the basis of effective people management and development by tapping into the ideas of workers and organising their work in more effective ways (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2003). Hence, the secret lies not only in individual capability or the existence of talents in companies, but also in the working coordination and management that facilitate continuous improvement and lead to success. On the whole, the recent research of Wright et al. (2003) reveals that human resource practices are significantly related to operational measures of performance, as well as operating expenses and pre-tax profits. Meanwhile, Tyson and Fell (1995) assert that “the future will see a world based more on skills than on organisations.”

In the history of human resource management, there existed the belief that the nature of employees was to be lazy, requiring constant direction and supervision from the management (theory X). By contrast there was theory Y, which assumes that human nature is self-directed, taking responsibility and willing to take on initiative. The “human” in “human resource” makes it the most special resource, where creativeness determines the level of value added during the production or service process. In addition, the potential of human resources can be upgraded through education, training and development. The dynamic nature of the human resource in development makes it hard to control or manage. But when the human resource is mastered, its potential is unleashed and the benefit is significant. The well-known industrial manager and leader of General Electric, Jack Welch, was frequently quoted as saying: “an organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage,” (Krames, 1997:67). Besides, the intelligent combination and interaction of human resources create *synergy*, so human resource management proves to be rewarding, but also demanding. The involvement of culture as a factor in human resource management makes it even more challenging than ever (Schneider, 1997). And as long as technology still tries to find a perfect replacement for manpower in production and services, the human resource is indispensable.

Buckley and Caple (2004) assert that in order for a company to achieve success, lead and survive, companies have to (i) diversify and continuously create new products; (ii) review organisational structure; (iii) master technology; and (iv) focus on customers. No matter which aspect is examined: be it production and operations, research and development, sales and customer service, ultimately, a capable human resource must be secured, or effectively selected and nurtured. Naturally, upgrading and maintaining high-quality human resources rely significantly on training, learning and development.

According to Reed (2001) and Collin (1997) to learn is to change, and change is needed for maintaining or improving organisational effectiveness (Hayes, 2002). Stewart (1999) argues that the training function can impact positively and thoroughly on the management of change. Hence, it is clear that training and development are crucial to business in the marketplace nowadays. On the other hand, the role of training and development are of more importance when inadequate learning capabilities limit most change initiatives (Senge et al., 1999). More generally, Harrison (2000) puts it: “Developing people is a critical process whose most powerful contributions to the business are to do with productivity, performance, knowledge development and organisational process” (p.1). Besides, the development process also benefits employees, when it enhances their competence, growth, adaptability and continuous employability (Harrison, 2000; McKenna and Beech, 2002).

Because of the importance of this special asset of the firm, the following section provides a brief discussion on some of the basic forms of developing human resources.

3.2. Training, Education and Development

The concepts of training, education and development are not easily and clearly differentiated (Buckley and Caple, 2004; Stewart, 1999; Harrison, 2000, Collin, 1997). Some recognise the interchangeability of the usage of these terms (McKenna and Beech, 2002; Collin, 1997)

With reference to a number of sources, the following definitions are thought to be most systematic and concrete.

Training is a planned and systematic effort to modify or develop knowledge/skill/attitude through learning experience, to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to enable an individual to acquire abilities in order that he or she can perform adequately a given task or job. (Buckley and Caple, 2004, p.5)

Education is a process and a series of activities which aim at enabling an individual to assimilate and develop knowledge, skills, values and understanding that are not simply related to a narrow field of activity but allow a broad range of problems to be defined, analysed and solved. (Buckley and Caple, 2004, p.6)

[Development] is used to denote learning experiences of any kind, whereby individuals and groups acquire enhanced knowledge, skills, values or behaviour. Its outcomes unfold through time, rather than immediately, and they tend to be long-lasting. (Harrison, 2000, p. 2)

Another definition of development is as follows.

[Development] as part of an overall human resource strategy means the skilful provision and organisation of learning experiences, primarily but not exclusively in the workplace, in order that business goals and organisational growth can be achieved. Such development must be aligned with the organisation's vision and longer term goals in order that, through enhancing the skills, knowledge, learning and innovative capability of people at every level, the organisation as well as the individual can prosper. (Harrison, 1997, p.7)

Similarities from the above concepts can be drawn. All focus on concepts of knowledge and skills. 'Learning' exists or is implied in the four definitions. All of the definitions have the common aspect of acquiring knowledge. Training and development concern the organisation and work environment, whilst education has a broader implication: the foundation for development in the future.

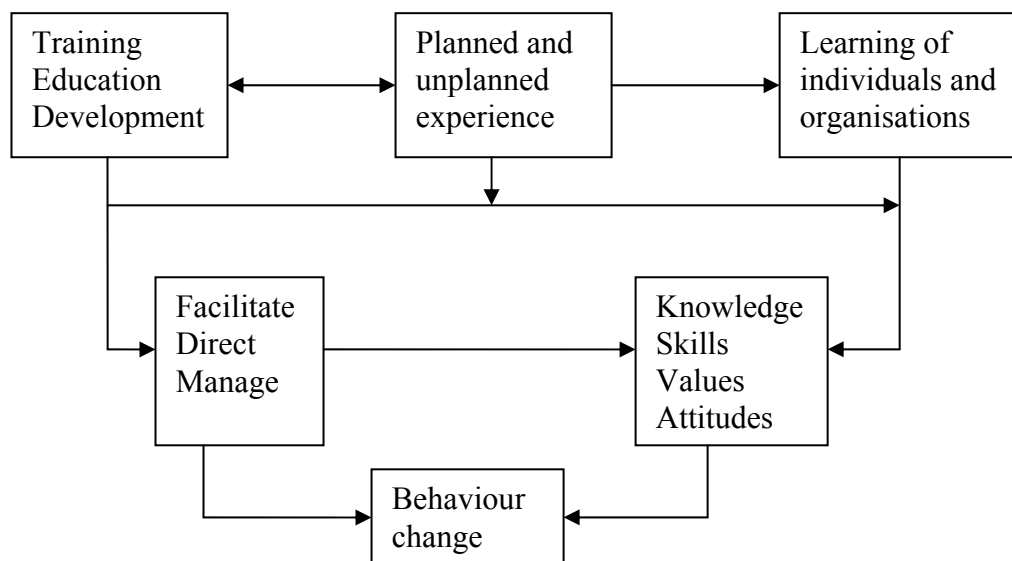
The impacts of education and development tend to be long-term, whereas training seems mainly to bring about immediate impacts and is more job-related. However, it is not to say that training does not provide long-lasting effects. On the other hand, it is likely that training can help raise performance and maintain it at a new level (provided that opportunities for application of training contents exist), while the

effects of education and development are likely to materialise only after a certain period of time. Education and development give way to innovation, rather than being a solution for an immediate issue as is the case with training.

Buckley and Caple (2004) suggest that there is an interrelation of education and training where levels of ability, knowledge and skills acquired in either process are influenced by those acquired with the other previously. Besides, they also recognised an important concomitant: planned and unplanned experience, which forms a vital component of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle. Stewart (1999) proposed, in agreement with Harrison (2000), the model of human resource development (including planned interventions and learning process), which allows education, training and development to be encompassed within the concept of human resource development.

Based on the models of Buckley and Caple (2004), and Stewart (1999), the human resource development process is depicted in the following figure:

Figure 3-1: The human resource development process



Source: Adapted from Buckley and Caple (2004) and Stewart (1999)

There are several points which can be drawn from the above process. First, knowledge, skills and attitudes in the business environment are the result of not only formal training or education, but also from facilitation and learning. Therefore, knowledge and skills depend not only on what the trainer delivers, but also on the trainee's reception (e.g. ability, attitude, needs...), and the organisation's facilitation. Second, experience has a role in building the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the trainee besides official training. Third, skills and knowledge are not converted into

behaviour change automatically, but again under facilitating effects from the organisation. So when the process is under review, these factors and actors have to be taken into consideration.

The ultimate rationale for human resource development is to develop *core competence* (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990), ensuring survival and advancement of the organisation (Harrison, 1997), or supporting the achievement of organisational objectives through ensuring appropriate and effective learning (Stewart, 1999). Hence, the objectives of human resource development are both long-term and short-term. Theoretically, the achievement of the above objectives is conditional to successful human resource development, which depends on time, on in-house human resource management capability, on financial resources committed, on corporate business strategy, and so forth. While education has been usually provided before one takes one's first job, and it is frequently the responsibility of the individual to improve upon it, development tends to be reserved for potential management personnel and requires significant time, financial investment and other management efforts. Therefore, training is left as one of the keys not only to solve the immediate performance issues of companies but also to play a more long-term strategic role (Buckley and Caple, 2004). The development process observably embodies training or training is an indispensable part of the development process (Collin, 1997). However, training itself performs a meaningful function for organisations and has an interdependent position among others in HRM that is worth separate study.

The subsequent section is dedicated to several aspects of training in the work environment.

3.3. Training – Benefits, Approaches and Process

3.3.1. The Benefits of Training

In theory, training potentially benefits both individuals and organisations, provided that training is well-planned and conducted effectively.

Benefits to individuals can be divided into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Intrinsic benefits materialise when the employee performs his/her task more easily and better, and has opportunities to enjoy the new work experience. The extrinsic benefits relate to better financial reward due to improved performance after

training and opportunities for promotion inside and outside his/her work settings (Buckley and Caple, 2004).

Benefits to organisations are yielded from different perspectives and any list of benefits from training is not likely to be exhaustive (McKenna and Beech, 2002). Buckley and Caple (2004) emphasise the fulfilment of immediate and strategic objectives of the firm with the assistance of training. From the view of the management of change, Stewart (1999) lists the benefits of making people issues known to decision makers; helping managers to develop capacities to deal successfully with change; enabling managers to develop their own staff; obtaining employees' commitment to change; identifying further training needs stemming from additional knowledge and skills; encouraging individuals and the organisation as a whole to examine the current performance and operating environment. From the organisation development view, training is seen as a long-range, planned and organisation-wide effort to improve an organisation's health, problem-solving, and renewing processes. From the organisation culture view, training helps in cascading new values and attitudes down the organisation ladder, therefore stimulating the creation of a 'learning organisation.'

Those above-mentioned benefits reiterate the importance of training once implemented effectively to the trainees at work, and for the organisations as a whole. When the organisation is better off, its people gain further intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.

3.3.2. Training Approaches

The effort to align training to the overall organisation strategy is popularly encouraged and seen as a premise to attain competitive advantage. Buckley and Caple (2004) stress that the long-term effects of training can only be realised when training is explicitly linked to the corporate mission or purpose. From this point of view, any change in business strategy needs to be reflected accordingly in changed training programmes. Management have to regularly review the company's training policies, training needs and training outputs from the top level. This, nevertheless, may potentially conflict with individual's training needs to fulfil their own career path when training is considered from the top-down direction.

Holbeche (1999) provides more insights into this business - training linkage when arguing that training must be an integral part of human resource strategy, and this strategy in turn must be aligned to business needs. The business strategy determines the skill set of the people that the company has to obtain. A strategy focusing on the product life cycle needs to build the human resources that understand and are competent to manage at each stage of the product cycle. A strategy of differentiation will be interested in human resources with creative and innovative skills. A business following strategic intent will need people of specific competencies to help compete effectively. With a certain direction, a review of the existing skill base and identification of the missing resources will provide the company with an overall picture of training needs and a foundation for formulating a training programme that complements the business strategy (Holbeche, 1999; Rae, 2002).

Garavan (1997) simply argues that if human resources development strategy is not integrated into strategic planning, it only maintains organisational stability rather than facilitates changes in the organisation. This is not enough when a company desires growth. This is why Mayo and Lank (1997) suggest that the pace in HR development should be greater than the pace of change. And in analysing the training function of a company, a critical part is on the linkage of training and corporate strategy.

The issue of the linkage between training and business strategies leads to different approaches to training. As mentioned in section 3.2, beside the short-term effects, training, when conducted effectively and directed well, also brings about long-term effects. Those two types of effects correspond somewhat to the two approaches of training: reactive and proactive, as classified by Buckley and Caple (2004).

The *reactive* approach to training is mainly referred to as an immediate performance problem-solving solution. Because of the existence of a problem and an emergency that requires remedial action, sometimes training is not preceded by an inspection to answer two basic questions. Whether or not training is the appropriate solution for the problem? Is training the unique solution for the problem, and if this is not the case, is it the most economic solution for the performance problem? Therefore, to secure the effectiveness of training of this type, and to avoid wasting training investment, companies have to investigate the performance problem to verify whether training is an alternative, and if so, the only one.

The *proactive* route to training, in contrast, focuses on future changes in organisations, in view of the coming changes in the business environment or transformation in the firm strategy that requires preparation of the staff. The first question mentioned above is still valid. However, as this type of training concerns future anticipated change requirements, the process has a different start compared with the *reactive* route. A deliberate environment scan with reference to company vision and business strategy is required.

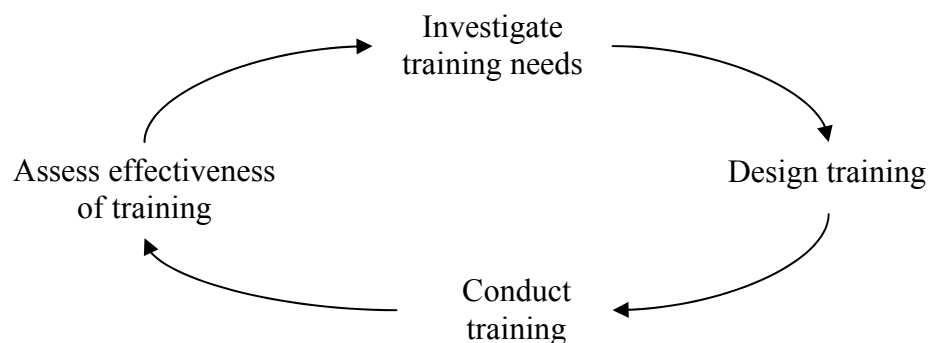
Buckley and Caple (2004) assert that no matter what approach is taken, the link between training and organisational objectives is not likely to exist in many organisations. Without careful pre-training investigation, the outcome of training cannot contribute significantly to a performance problem and, unfortunately, trainers are the most likely party to be blamed. Buckley and Caple (2004) argue that it does not always need a comprehensive study to identify a performance problem and verify the need for training, sometimes just several professional interviews can do. And once training is confirmed as the potential solution to the problem, it is then the question of design, operation and evaluation of the training process.

A closer examination of the training process can help elaborate the steps of training and the relationships between different steps.

3.3.3. The Training Process

Like any other management process, the basic components of a training process include: training needs identification/planning, design, delivery/implementation, evaluation of effectiveness. Although variations are possible, however, these four main components are commonplace for any systematic training process. Figure 3-2 depicts a simple cycle of training (Stewart, 1999; Buckley and Caple, 2004).

Figure 3-2: A simple cycle of systematic training



Source: Buckley and Caple (2004)

Further elaboration of the above basic cycle can be found in Blanchard and Thacker (1999), where ‘development’ is inserted between ‘design’ and ‘conduct’ training; or in Harrison (2000) where ‘training needs establishment’ and ‘design’ are conducted beside setting up training purposes and objectives, identifying profile of people involved, selecting training strategy, and selecting learners. Bee and Bee (1994) propose a full ‘training wheel,’ as follows.

Figure 3-3: The training wheel



Source: Adapted from Bee and Bee (1994)

The model of Bee and Bee (1994) incorporates and starts with the business needs to secure support from the organisation and provide the precise benchmark for evaluation at the end of the process. Two common aspects can be drawn from the above suggested processes: the close relation of business objectives and training needs; and training as a managerial process. The evaluation of any type of business training cannot ignore either of the two issues mentioned above.

With its important function in maintaining the effectiveness of a company's operation and in achieving business competitive strength, is the image of training in organisations definitely well-regarded? In fact, training departments are not highly appreciated in organisations, and training is rarely seen as an investment rather than a cost. Training programmes are seen as ‘acts of faith’ (Spilsbury, 1995; Hussey, 1988), and in the case of trimming expenses due to recession, training outlay is

among the most likely candidates for cutting. On the other hand, training is also seen as a panacea for any performance problem, whereas many times the problems lie in organisational structure, process supervision or ineffective motivational policies. One of the reasons that training does not have the praise it deserves is the difficulties in justifying the effects it brings about. The situation can be worse when the work environment after training is not maintained in a fashion that reinforces and consolidates skills obtained, so that they are quickly lost. Besides, training is seen as taking precious time from production, and a position in the training department is typically for pre-retired people rather than competently performing staff. So it is understandable when people in organisations brand training as cosmetic, or an ‘internal public relations exercise.’ Even more unfortunately, when performance is not improved as expected, one can always argue that training was not effective rather than training was not the solution (Buckley and Caple, 2004).

The assessment of training effectiveness after training has been delivered is defined and has its separate position among all components of the training process reviewed above. The training process will be deficient when the waste in training goes unnoticed without training evaluation. It closes the loop and starts a new cycle of the process. After discussing the role and different ways to nurture human resources with an emphasis on training, the next part of this literature review will examine all aspects of evaluation of training effectiveness in the business context.

3.4. Evaluation of Training Effectiveness

3.4.1. Evaluation

The necessity for evaluation in management processes has already been widely recognised (Rossi et al., 2004; Clarke and Dawson, 1999; Shaw, 1999; Patton, 1982; Chelimsky and Shadish, 1997). Evaluation is an important function to provide feedback to any management process. Evaluation in general identifies the weak links in the management process and provides opportunities for process improvement. Evaluation can as well serve as a gatekeeper for justification of investment and selection of investment options. It is also recognised with the role of “knowledge generalisation” (Rossi et al., 2004; Chelimsky and Shadish, 1997) and “reconceptualisation” when giving a new look to a familiar problem (Weiss, 1972). Besides, evaluation also brings about auxiliary or hidden organisational effects such

as added politics impacts, public relations (Rossi et al., 2004), or for mobilising support (Weiss, 1972). In essence, the literature recognises the role of evaluation in answering two core questions (i) has the management process delivered what had been expected (*summative evaluation*), and (ii) is there room for improvement of the evaluated process (*formative evaluation*)?

3.4.2. Evaluation of Training

As for any management process, training ends with the evaluation of the process itself and, more importantly, the outputs and impacts of training. Those two functions are termed *process evaluation* and *outcome evaluation* by Sels (2002). The roles of training evaluation can also be found in the work of Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003), Sels (2002), Bushnell (1990), and Holton (1996). In general, conducting training evaluation can help justify the use of resources allocated for training; identify opportunities to improve training quality in the future; assist in solving organisation's problems when reviewing training needs and solutions; and justify the alternatives in training implementation. Easterby-Smith (1986) summarises the roles of evaluation in three keywords: *proving*, *improving* and *learning*. Training evaluation also helps in receiving feedback to recognise changes in training needs and other aspects of the training context (Reay, 1994). Practically, evaluation of training is an evidence-based justification of the existence of the training department in organisations (Buckley and Caple, 2004; Reay, 1994; Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Given the importance of evaluation as the last component in the training process and as a key opportunity for training improvement, training evaluation theory has been developed over the last fifty years. The pioneer in this development is Donald Kirkpatrick, who in 1959 proposed a simple four-level model to evaluate a training programme. His model has been well received and applied to evaluate training and development programmes until recently (Tamkin et al., 2002; Bassi and Cheney, 1997; Bernthal, 1995). Kirkpatrick's model since its birth also received significant criticisms due to its over-simplicity and its loose structure. Based on Kirkpatrick's initial work, a number of four-level model variants have been built aiming at a comprehensive and practicable model for training evaluation. Besides, a few models unrelated to Kirkpatrick's, taking different perspectives in evaluating training, have also been proposed. Nevertheless, Kirkpatrick's classic work is still considered as the foundation for training evaluation with the advantages of its practical and simple

nature. The following section is dedicated to the analysis of Kirkpatrick's four-level model, and its variants as well as other training evaluation methods.

3.4.3. Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model

Originally, Kirkpatrick used "step" instead of "level." Later, the steps were referred to as "levels" (Kirkpatrick, 1996; Alliger and Janak, 1989) and the literature has used "four levels" when referring to Kirkpatrick's model. Following this model, training evaluation starts *after* a training programme has taken place and finished.

Level 1: Reaction. Evaluation is conducted to measure how participants *feel* about the various aspects of the training programme they have just attended. This level includes measures of participants' ideas about the training programme administration, the topic, the trainer, the schedule, and so forth. The participants' reaction is usually collected by the use of "customer satisfaction" questionnaires.

Level 2: Learning. Evaluation is conducted to measure changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes due to training. Training programmes provide participants with either background knowledge, concepts, principles, or update them with new skills or change their attitudes, or all of the above-mentioned objectives. This level of evaluation identifies the changes usually by the use of a laboratory/classroom performance test.

Level 3: Behaviour. Evaluation is conducted to measure changes in the participants' on-the-job behaviour as the result of training. This has to detect changes in behaviour that can be attributed to training. The changes can be identified and measured using different methods of observation or review of productivity data.

Level 4: Results. Evaluation is conducted to measure the final effects on organisational performance due to training. These effects include changes in sales volume, profits, cost savings, employee turnover, or product quality improvement. This level of evaluation includes methods of cost analysis, quality review or return on investment (ROI) analysis.

Kirkpatrick's model is summarised in the following table.

Table 3-1: Kirkpatrick's four-level model

Level	Evaluation type (what is measured)	Evaluation description and characteristics	Examples of evaluation tools and methods	Relevance and practicability
1	Reaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaction evaluation is how the delegates felt about the training or learning experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g., 'happy sheets', feedback forms • also verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quick and very easy to obtain • not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning evaluation is the measurement of the increase in knowledge - before and after 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically assessments or tests before and after the training • interview or observation can also be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills • less easy for complex learning
3	Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour evaluation is the extent of applied learning back on the job - implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers
4	Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results evaluation is the effect on the business or environment by the trainee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individually not difficult; unlike whole organisation • process must attribute clear accountabilities

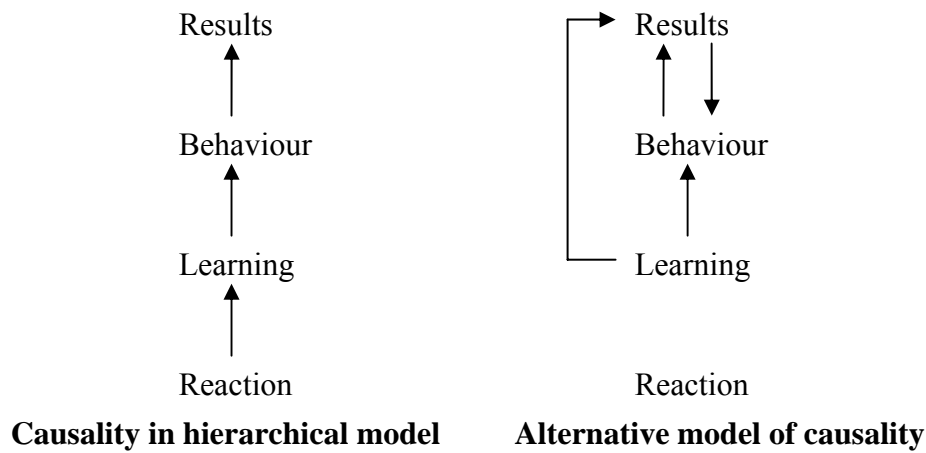
Source: Chapman (2005)

After nearly forty years since its introduction, when revisiting his model, Kirkpatrick (1996) noted that it had been widely used because it was simple and practical. Similar comments can be found in Tamkin et al. (2002), Alliger and Janak (1989), Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003), and Tennant et al. (2002). Due to its straightforward nature, the four-level model has become the standard in the field of evaluation (Holton, 1996; Bramley and Kitson, 1994) and the most popularly applied (Phillips,

1991; Donovan et al., 2001). Besides the simplicity and practicality, the model's strength was also recognised in its focus on the changes in behavioural outcomes of the learners involved in the training (Tennant et al., 2002). The four-level model has been a dominant tool for training evaluation for forty years after its introduction.

Despite the model's advantages of simplicity and practicability, since the outset, it has received several fundamental and recently increasing criticisms.

Kirkpatrick's four-level model implies a hierarchy of levels, and the levels are causally linked. Kirkpatrick (1996) affirms that the higher the evaluation level, the more difficult, complicated and expensive the practice. In addition, he believes evaluation at the higher levels is more important and meaningful than that at the lower levels. However, Alliger and Janak (1989), by comprehensively reviewing research studies since the introduction of the four-level model, cautiously study these above implications and assumptions in the four-level model and conclude that (i) it is not necessary that the succeeding level is more informative than the previous, because it is not necessary for all training to effect changes at all four levels, (ii) a weak to average degree of causality exists following the link from one level to another, and generalisation about causality should be made with care. Interestingly, they propose an alternative model of linkages between levels (see Figure 3-4), where reaction is irrelevant to other higher levels; learning induces both behaviour and results; and behaviour and results are causally interdependent (behaviour is reinforced when results have been observed as improved). However, the causal linkages in this model, as well as the conventional one, were not empirically verified. One of the reasons for the weak positive correlations between levels is possibly the noise from factors like motivation, or environment for transferring learning to work.

Figure 3-4: Traditional and alternative causal linkages in Kirkpatrick's model

Source: Alliger and Janak (1989)

One of the other significant criticisms of the model comes from Holton (1996) who argues that Kirkpatrick's model is just a taxonomy of outcomes from training, rather than a real model with complete elements and relationships between them. He argues that the four-level model does not take into account some important intervening variables that affect the learning process and the process of transfer of learning into the workplace. Those variables include trainee's readiness and motivation, training design, or the factors that reinforce knowledge and encourage application on the job. He states that no evaluation model can be validated without measuring and accounting for the effects of intervening variables. Holton also reiterates Alliger and Janak (1989) about the causal relationship among levels not being empirically tested. However, the points of Holton (1996) on taxonomy versus model would not be of much concern to training people and organisations in practice. Kirkpatrick (1996) to some extent accepts Holton's argument, however stating that ultimately it is the usefulness of the model in reality that counts.

Similar to Holton's (1996) opinion on intervening and environmental variables being not taken into account, Tennant et al. (2002) argues that Kirkpatrick's model does not cover the stages of analysing business needs, training design and development. This argument is also echoed in Donovan et al. (2001) who mention that the model does not specify the factors that reinforce training outcomes in the workplace, as well as the individual motivation of the trainees.

In contrast, looking at the nature of Kirkpatrick's model, Tamkin et al. (2002) argue that this model is for *training evaluation* rather than for *evaluation of the training and learning system*. So the aims of the model are to cover a range of immediate to distant responses to training. This argument raises the issue of Kirkpatrick's model as a tool for evaluation of training outcomes only, or for comprehensive evaluation of a training programme.

Besides, several faulty assumptions and interpretations of Kirkpatrick's model, as well as the difficulties of the evaluation process are identified by Bernthal (1995), who exposed several faulty assumptions in applying the model, and comments that Level 4 should not be superior to other levels; while evaluation at Level 1 and Level 2 can provide some of the most useful information because those outcomes are often the easiest to measure and change. They are, moreover, affected the least by the intervening factors. At the other extreme, Holton (1996) considers Level 1 evaluation of no value and suggests eliminating this level from the model. He cites the research findings of Warr and Bunce (1995), Noe and Schmitt (1986) and Alliger and Janak (1989) to argue that the trainee's reaction has no significant relationship to learning.

Bernthal (1995) also warns of the likely ambiguity in findings when conducting evaluation, and argues that evaluation value is not definitive. In addition, regarding evaluation difficulties, Stokking (1996) and Abernathy (1999) comment that evaluation of effectiveness on Level 3 and Level 4 is difficult because training is only one of the relevant causal factors. This is one of the major challenges to training evaluators, to separate effects from training and non-training effects, especially at the behaviour and performance levels. This also reinforces the need to integrate the study on environment and intervening variables in the course of evaluation. In addition, even when it is possible to measure immediate financial benefits of training at Level 4, it is equally useful to examine the impacts of training on intermediate and long-term perspectives. Therefore, indicators like sales, profits after tax, and employee turnover should be augmented by those on industry/sector performance like inter-company ratios, or market share. Pettigrew et al. (1990) suggest that firms which apply more 'soft' criteria in evaluating training, concerning intermediate and ultimate benefits, may be those most prepared to invest to improve learning capacity.

All in all, several conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the predominant Kirkpatrick's model. The four-level training

evaluation model is a comprehensive training outcomes evaluation tool. It is simple and practical to implement, and help practitioners to have an overview in evaluating a training programme. On the other hand, it is not appreciated in implying evaluation as a hierarchy, associating different values to different levels, and the higher the evaluation level, the higher the value to the organisations. The implied causal linkages leave organisations satisfied with positive results from evaluating at the lower levels (reactions) in the laboratory environment (learning) and assured that they would naturally lead to positive results at the organisational level. Besides, partly because of its simplicity, the outcome-based model fails to take into account the intervening variables that facilitate *learning transfer* (i.e. translating knowledge into actions in the workplace environment.)

Therefore, a number of modifications to Kirkpatrick's model (including the guidelines and improvements from Kirkpatrick himself) as well as originally formulated theories have been introduced. Hashim (2001) quotes Phillips (1991) as acknowledging there have been more than 50 models available. The following is a brief description of and comment on a number of significant models.

3.4.4. Variants of The Four-Level Model

Hamblin five-level model

With a model closest to Kirkpatrick's, Hamblin (1974) keeps the first three levels similar to those of Kirkpatrick's: reactions, learning, and job behaviour. The results level of Kirkpatrick is divided into two: organisation and ultimate value to form the total five-level model of Hamblin. Organisation level relates to the effects from behaviour on the functioning of the organisation: quality improvement, morale development, labour turnover, absenteeism reduction and so forth. Ultimate level relates to the financial benefit or cost-efficiency of training. Unlike Kirkpatrick, Hamblin explicitly expresses the cause-and-effect linkages of training effects between the levels of his model.

CIRO framework of evaluation

Proposed by Warr, Bird and Rackham in 1970, CIRO (Context, Input, Reaction, Outcome) expanded the training process backwards to include examination of the organisation's operational situation (context) and information about resource availability for training (input). Reaction level is the same as Kirkpatrick's, and

outcome level is divided into: immediate, intermediate, and ultimate outcomes corresponding to learning, behaviour, and results of the four-level model. Containing both process and outcome evaluation, the CIRO approach is recommended for evaluation of management training programmes.

The five-level ROI framework

The author of this framework is known for his concentration on return on investment (ROI) analysis of training throughout his writing. Phillips (1991) maintains his model quite similar to Kirkpatrick's, but adds a fifth level named 'return on investment' considering the financial benefits of training in comparison to its cost. The first level is named 'reaction and planned action' to include training participants' plans for applying what was obtained from the training programme. The fourth level named 'business results' measures improvements at business level like product/service quality, customer satisfaction.

The organisational element model (OEM)

Kaufman and Keller (1994) note that Kirkpatrick's model was for training evaluation, and they want to have a robust model for other types of development in organisations as well. They expand Kirkpatrick's model backwards to include needs assessment, planning evaluation, expected results evaluation, review of availability and quality of resources. They also add one level forwards assessing the societal consequences of training. The OEM model consists of the following six levels:

- Input: the availability and quality of human, financial, and physical resources (reaction)
- Process: the perceived acceptability and efficiency of method and processes (reaction)
- Acquisition: individual and small-group mastery and competence (learning)
- Successful application: individual and small-group utilisation within the organisation (behaviour)
- Organisational results: organisational contributions and payoffs (results)
- Societal consequences: societal and client responsiveness, contributions, and payoffs.

Table 3-2 presents a mapping of the different elements of Kirkpatrick’s model and its major variants. In general, the modifications to the four-level model call for inclusion of ‘pre-reaction’ steps (review of organisational context, degree of business needs, training strategy alignment) and ‘post-results’ steps (explicit return on investment analysis, societal impact of the training activities).

Table 3-2: Comparison of Kirkpatrick’s model and its variants

Four-level Kirkpatrick	Five-level Hamblin	CIRO Warr et al.	ROI Phillips	OEM Kaufman and Keller
		Context		
		Input		
Reaction	Reaction	Reaction	Reaction and planned action	Input/Process
Learning	Learning	Immediate outcome	Learning	Acquisition
Behaviour	Job behaviour	Intermediate outcome	Job application	Application
Results	Organisation	Ultimate outcome	Business results	Organisational results
	Ultimate value		Return on investment	Societal consequences

Source: The researcher’s compilation

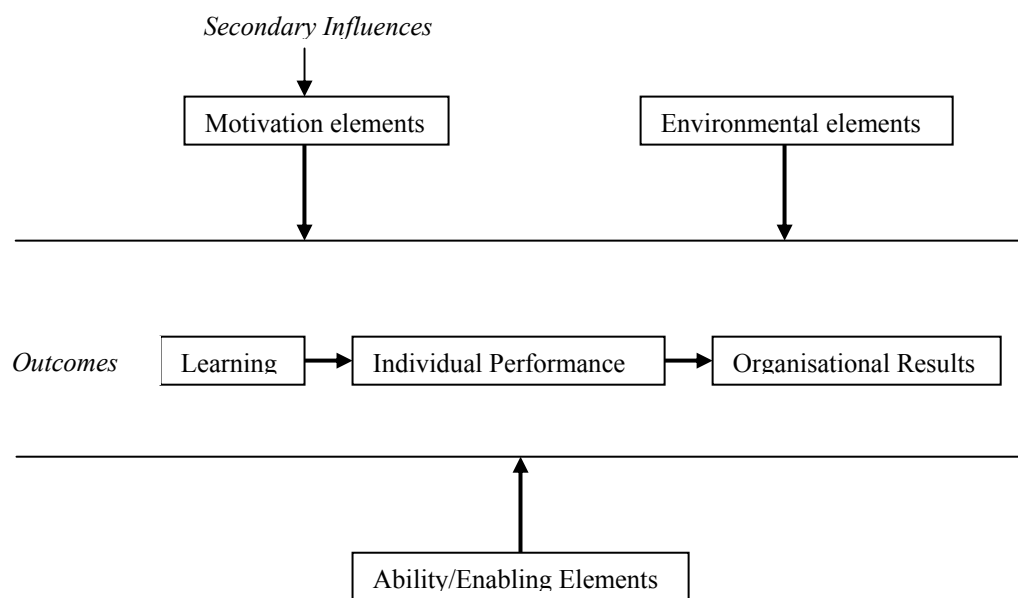
3.4.5. Other Models

A number of models taking approaches other than that of Kirkpatrick’s have been introduced in the literature. Some of them embed a thread of linkages along the learning transfer process, while others focus on discrete components of evaluation.

Holton’s model (1996) based on Alliger and Janak (1989), and Dixon (1990) research showing controversial relationship between ‘reaction’ and ‘learning,’ proposes the omission of evaluation of ‘reaction’ in his model, because it is not considered a direct outcome of training. The important contribution in this model is

the inclusion of primary and secondary influences on outcomes to be evaluated, based on Noe's (1986) framework. Primary influences include individual ability, motivation and environmental categories. Secondary influences include those that affect motivation. The conceptual evaluation model can be found in the following Figure 3-5 and the complete evaluation research and measurement model can be found in Appendix 2. Holton (1996) recognises that in applying this model, a large amount of data has to be collected, and the validation of relationships in this model requires sophisticated statistical techniques. Parts of the empirical evidence on the intervening variables affecting training outcomes can be found in Donovan et al. (2001) and Boselie et al. (2001).

Figure 3-5: Holton's conceptual evaluation model



Source: Holton (1996)

Pulley (1994) proposes responsive evaluation, which is a customised tool to communicate effectively evaluation results to decision-makers. From customer's point of view, Pulley suggests that different decision-makers have different ways of receiving and responding to information, so that evaluation should be tailored to fit the needs of decision-makers. The stages of responsive evaluation are:

- Identify decision-makers
- Identify information needs of decision-makers
- Systematically collect both qualitative and quantitative data

- Translate the data into meaningful information
- Involve and inform decision-makers on an ongoing basis.

The evaluation perspective from the viewpoint of customers has support from a number of authors like Abernathy (1999) and Bernthal (1995).

Kaplan and Norton (1996) suggest that measuring innovation and learning has the same importance as measuring financial standing in evaluating a company's competitive position. The process aims to balance business management by measuring across four different perspectives: finance, customers, internal business processes, and learning and growth.

Besides, one can mention other perspectives in training evaluation such as Input-Process-Output (Bushnell, 1990), organisational culture approach (Lewis and Thornhill, 1994), or evaluating training against business criteria (Bramley and Kitson, 1994). Other practical techniques for training evaluation can be found in Newby (1992) and Rae (2002).

Training evaluation models differing markedly from Kirkpatrick's generally take the environment variables into account, in other words, are very context-specific. The evaluation strategies are tuned depending on the audience of the evaluation, while the linkage between training outcomes and business objectives is emphasised.

3.5. Training Evaluation in Practice

Abernathy (1999) reviews the practice of evaluation and notes that training evaluation is currently conducted the same way as it has been for many years. She also quotes McEvoy and Buller as mentioning that written guidelines for evaluation have remained consistent over time and across authors. This view recently was repeated by Sloman (2004), who insists that the fundamental approach to training evaluation has scarcely changed for nearly half a century. Although Sloman recognises the contribution of the classic four-level model, he appreciates the complications and severe difficulties in conducting training evaluation at higher levels of the model. Therefore, in his view, the practice of evaluation of training effectiveness at result level should give way to efforts to align business goals to training programmes. This sounds rather radical, yet reflects the dilemmas in evaluation practice.

It is popularly recognised that the evaluation of training effectiveness following the four-level model of Kirkpatrick is the most popular in literature and in practice (Bassi and Cheney, 1997; Donovan et al., 2001). The reason for this popularity is not only its simple and intuitive nature, but also the embedded commonsense causality logic from training to reactions, learning, behaviour and performance. It is believed that many organisations consider they are already better off in operations and performance when the final tests and the course-end questionnaires show positive scores and favourable reactions. To them, performance must be improved though only positive reactions mostly about course administration and logistics are confirmed. However, as mentioned above, theoretically, there are doubts and calls for reservation in making such causal linkages. Even worse, evaluation is considered the least well-conducted aspect of all training activities (Lewis and Thornhill, 1994; Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, it has recently been recognised that training evaluation has been conducted more carefully and strategically than in the past (Bassi and Cheney, 1997) though there is still more talk than action (Spilsbury, 1995; Hashim, 2001). The span of evaluation, while mainly overlapping the steps Kirkpatrick recommended, are more diversified considering a broader scope of stakeholders in addition to survey and feedback forms. A noticeable trend in training evaluation is the introduction of intervening, or mediating environment factors into the evaluation model, following the theory of Mintzberg (1973), Schuler and Jackson (1987), and suggestions from Holton (1996).

The following review is to provide an overview about training evaluation in practice, and findings from research at each level of training outcomes.

Level 1: Reaction

This is the most practised evaluation step (Gordon, 1991; Bramley and Kitson, 1994; Hashim, 2001; Sloman, 2004). Vu (2004) presents a case of evaluation practice that embodies all training effectiveness measures at Level 1. The traditional tools for collecting data at this level are questionnaires, or comment sheets or reaction forms. One review by Hashim (2001) indicates that this type of data collection is implemented by more than 80 per cent of training institutions. Many times dubbed as 'happy sheet' or 'smile sheet', the reaction questionnaires, especially right after the training course, usually produce very positive results. Though frequently

administered on an anonymous basis, feedback received from the reaction form about training is favourable about the training especially when the trainees are sponsored to attend. The evaluation in this level is more meaningful for aspects such as satisfaction, enjoyment, training administration, logistics, training topic, or teaching method, rather than suitability of training topics, the usefulness of knowledge obtained from the training, or plan to apply the new skills into work environment. Therefore, the interpretation of training effects from this level needs to be cautious, and is more useful in terms of improving the training organisation, curriculum, training delivery for courses in the future, rather than gauging the knowledge improvement of the trainees, or predicting the behaviour changes when they return to work. Decisions on retaining or dropping the outsourced trainers/training institution have to be based on further data than the result of the evaluation at this level.

Kirkpatrick (1996) however defends the value of reactions data, asserting that the information from trainees' reactions helps in improving design and delivery of training courses in valid ways. In practice, trainees' reactions are found to have certain associations with learning and work behaviour, but provide little predictive value to long-term transfer of learning. Tan et al. (2003) identify a relation between 'cognitive reactions' and employee learning and behaviour. Interestingly, they find *negative* 'affective reactions' (enjoyment) best predict employee learning. Alliger et al. (1997) find the trainee's perceived usefulness and enjoyment associated with subsequent job performance with modest correlation indices of .18 and .07 respectively. However, the longitudinal research by Warr et al. (1999) indicates that there is no significant correlation between reactions (Level 1) and job behaviour (Level 3). Only connections between perceived usefulness, perceived difficulties, motivation (Level 1) and learning outcomes (Level 2) were identified. With similar findings, Axtell et al. (1997) argue that perceived relevance/usefulness of the course appears to have an indirect effect on later use of new skills.

In general, the value of reactions evaluation is not well recognised. The practice of reactions evaluation is exercised because of its convenience and habit, rather than for systematic follow-up after the training courses. Anyway, the efforts of analysis of data at this level may provide some insights into forecasts of training worth to organisations.

Level 2: Learning

Evaluation on the level of knowledge, skills, or techniques taught in the training courses account for the second largest exercise in training evaluation (Bassi and Cheney, 1997). Sometimes, evaluation at this level also focuses on the attitudes or values of the trainees as in the case of equipping the trainees with a new attitude toward a special communication technique (Warr et al., 1999). The evaluation at this level is rather straightforward: to measure what remains with the trainees after training. The most frequent methods used are pencil-and-paper or demonstration of the ability to operate equipment. It is not to say that it is always that simple when it comes to measuring knowledge of disciplines like communication skills, marketing, or human resource management. In such cases, training evaluation has to rely on techniques like role playing, simulation, or case studies. The inclusion of both pre-training and post-training in evaluation is ideal for measuring knowledge as the result of training, though evaluators frequently measure only post-training indicators as they just want to validate that trainees have reached a certain predefined standard.

Guerrero and Sire (2001) explore the French training environment and establish the linkages between training motivation and satisfaction (Kirkpatrick's Level 1) and learning (Level 2). They also establish the reverse linkage, when the trainees' learning has effect on their satisfaction (from Level 2 back to Level 1).

Alliger et al. (1997) report the consistently low association between trainees' reactions and their learning. In their empirical study of the first three levels of Kirkpatrick's model, Warr et al. (1999) identify the predictive value of trainees' reactions to learning scores, that echoed the study of Alliger et al. (1997). However, reactions are *not* significantly associated with later job behaviour. The possible intervening powers of trainee characteristics, learning strategies, and transfer climate are mentioned.

The real work environment, with the organisational factors affecting trainees, cannot be found in the laboratory environment during training. Therefore, the prediction of improvement in the workplace from learning data cannot be made explicitly and the further step of behaviour change evaluation is necessary. On the whole, evaluation at the learning level helps organisations to ensure the course's pre-defined learning objectives are met, and the interpretation of scores at the end of the training course has to be made in a cautious manner.

Level 3: Behaviour

Behaviour after training includes the expected changes in job performance or the result of 'learning transfer.' As reported by Bassi and Cheney (1997), evaluation practice in this level is much less frequently exercised than at the previous two levels. Methods applied in this type of evaluation usually include supervisor ratings before and after training (Warr et al., 1999) or observation. Self-assessment, performance record review or peer review may also be employed. The main concern from the researchers is the poor rate of transformation of knowledge obtained from training courses into actual behaviour changes in the work environment. Several research studies confirm this apprehension, and the arguments are mainly about the favourable or unfavourable factors in the work environment to maintain or discourage behaviour change.

Warr et al. (1999) identify a significant relationship between trainees' learning confidence and support climate with changes in job behaviour. There is no significant relationship between immediate learning and job behaviour changes. Hence, the mediating environmental factors play a greater role than the obtained knowledge or skills in Level 3 of Kirkpatrick's model.

The longitudinal research of Axtell et al. (1997) concludes that factors which promote initial transfer of learning, such as perceived relevance/usefulness of training, have an indirect effect on later use of acquired skills. It also reveals that those with more autonomy in their jobs are more likely to apply the new skills. Time, another dimension related to transfer of learning, is examined in this research. The authors conclude that the application of skills and knowledge in the workplace is not significantly different between one month and one year after training. The role of autonomy given after training is added into the set of factors affecting behaviour change after one year.

Another research study by Santos and Stuart (2003) reveals that those who perceived training as leading to higher pay or better promotion prospects are more likely to induce learning transfer. The likelihood of transfer has no relationship with the perceived intrinsic benefits of training, such as increased organisational commitment or motivation (largely contrary to the research of Axtell et al. (1997) mentioned earlier). The research also reveals a significant association between the trainee's satisfaction with pre-training and post-training activities and the extent of returning

to the old behaviours on the job during the post training phase: who had been dissatisfied reported lower levels of behaviour change after training.

The specific research reviewed above cannot be representative of the general issues of behaviour changes after training as they are conducted on several specific types of training and enterprises. Nonetheless, the role of the environmental factors has always been highlighted and validated so that the generalisation of 'more learning equals more transferring' cannot be easily or simply applied.

Level 4: Results

The training evaluation at this level has received increasing interest from academic authors as demonstrated by the availability of the recent empirical enquiries. Many believe that only at this level does the training reveal whether it pays off and is not a cost but an investment (Kirkpatrick, 1959; Bee and Bee, 1997, Phillips, 1991). For different reasons, few companies assess value of training at the fourth level. The reasons for significant but less practised evaluation at this level include the difficulties and costs associated with data collection and interpretation at this level, and the delay in training - behaviour change - performance that requires a long-term evaluating perspective. Training is obviously only one of the many factors affecting organisational performance. Therefore, the separation of training effects and others is difficult. Besides, the lack of some standard measurements in terms of performance (e.g. hidden costs, potential benefits of training) makes contrasting training costs and training benefits ineffectual. To make the situation worse, benefits from training also include intangible dimensions in addition to the financial figures. Last but not least, the measurement of performance improvement is usually reported for the whole organisation rather than being attributed to an individual, so the calculation of effects of training by a person after being trained seems to be impossible. Perhaps, for the above-mentioned difficulties, there is more research on the impacts of human resource practices as a bundle (where the training function is embedded) upon firm performance than those on the impact of training alone.

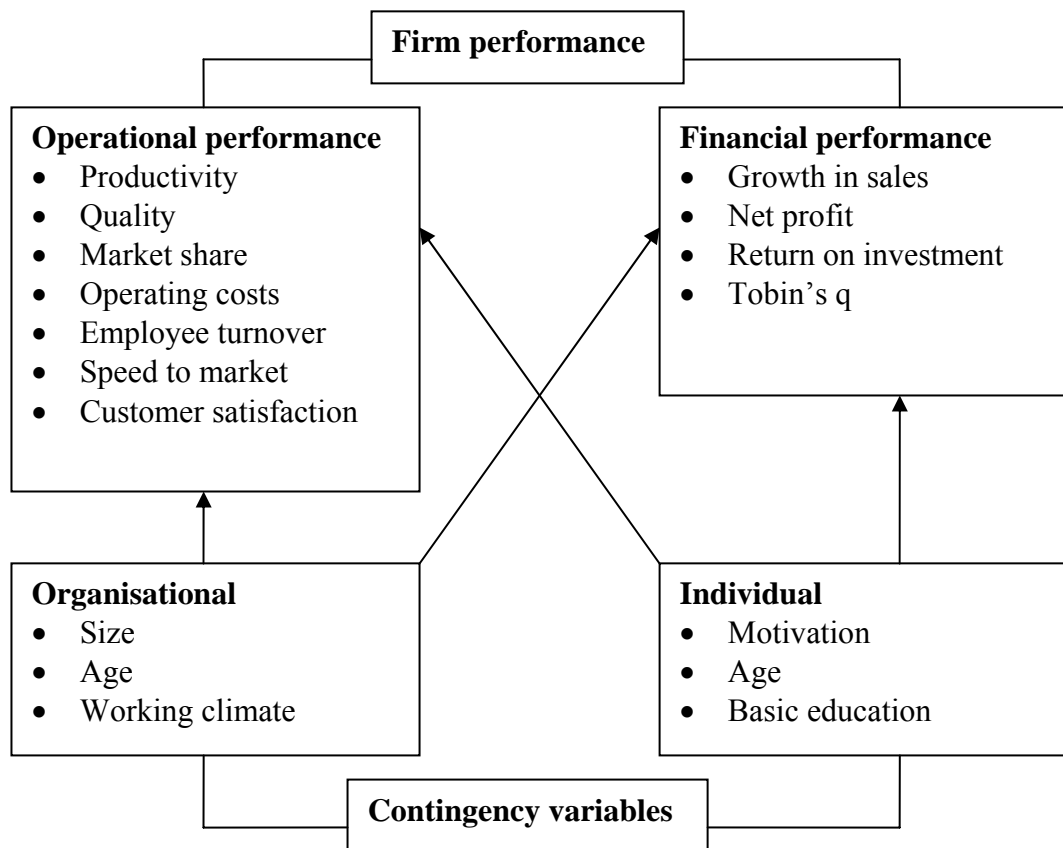
In general, most empirical research suggests positive linkages between (strategic) human resource management practices and firm performance (Huselid, 1995; D'Arcimoles, 1997; Wright et al., 2003; Boselie et al., 2001; Bae et al., 2003; Park et al., 2003; Li, 2003; Paul and Ananrathaman, 2003; Rodriguez and Ventura, 2003; Richard and Johnson, 2001; Chan et al., 2004). In particular, training is also found to

be more or less related to operational measures of performance (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003; Cosh et al., 1998; Storey, 2004; Jones, 2004; Ng and Siu, 2004). From the empirical research results, the positive effects of human resource practices as a whole ('synergistic system' as mentioned by Park [2003]), on firm performance is found rather solid, while the relationship between training and performance is not always significantly proven.

Most research relies on cross-sectional rather than longitudinal work (Boselie et al., 2001), so that it is rather difficult to establish the causal relationships between human resources practice and training in particular, and the outcomes. Therefore, calculations of correlation between training and performance are utilised, and different regression models are applied to predict changes in firm performance associated with training and human resource practices. The methods of measuring firm performance vary among research reports. Little research considers the benefits to companies in terms of monetary units. Difficulties in collecting sensitive data on firm financial performance partly explain the paucity of research using such measurement. Another reason for not using financial measures mentioned by Bae et al. (2003) is that different accounting standards can make research comparison misleading. To overcome this specific type of difficulties, some utilise data from statistics in existing business databases from specialist organisations or censuses (Li, 2003; Jones, 2004). Usually, perceived financial performance indicators (i.e. firms' subjective opinions of their financial position, or their position in comparison to those of competitors), measured on a Likert-scale are employed to represent firm performance (Paul and Anantharaman, 2003; Bae et al., 2003). Other performance measures include company market value, market share, productivity, customer satisfaction, product/service quality and so forth.

Again, the role of control and/or contingency variables is of interest to a number of researchers. Boselie et al., (2001) in reviewing a repertoire of research studies, argue that control variables found in organisational characteristics (firm size, technology) and personal characteristics (age, income level, position in organisation, etc) can explain much in such relationship research.

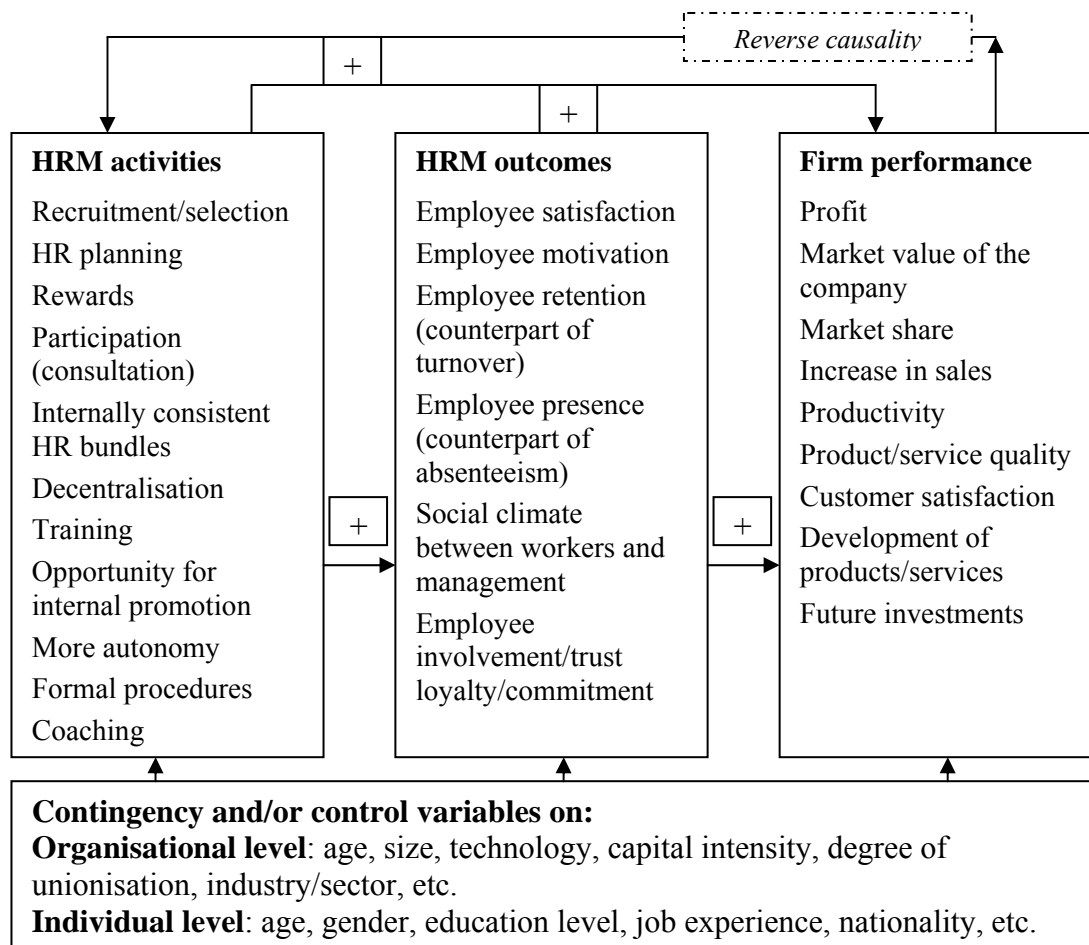
Figure 3-6 summarises the common measures of performance and the contingency variables found in recent empirical research.

Figure 3-6: Common measures of firm performance and contingency variables

Source: The researcher's summary from various research studies

The majority of empirical research studies focus on a specific sector, with samples of companies of the same size, in which small and medium sized companies received most attention. There are several research studies looking at companies from different countries to identify the effects of human resource practice (Bae et al., 2003; Park et al., 2003; Boselie et al., 2001), or training (Aragon-Sanchez, 2003; Storey, 2004) on firm performance in different contexts. However the results seem to be convergent. The review of various studies by Boselie et al. (2001) confirms the positive impacts of human resource practices, including training activities, on firm performance (see Figure 3-7). The relationships among human resource activities, outcomes and performance in this figure are all positive. It is also notable that there is *reverse causality* where (better) firm performance has an encouraging impact on human resource management activities: better performance enables more strategic human resource activities.

Figure 3-7: HRM activities in relation to outcomes and performance



Source: Boselie et al. (2001), synthesised from various research findings

Some detailed findings specifically related to training can also be highlighted from the human resources management – performance research. D’Arcimoles (1997) notes that training might enhance economic performance, in so far as it partly contributes to personnel satisfaction and commitment. Paul and Anantharaman (2003) identify in their research into the Indian software industry that training has no direct effect on financial performance, but on employee productivity. Investigating the Chinese soft drinks and electronics industries with census data from 1996, Li (2003) suggests that better employee education leads to better firm productivity. Rodriguez and Ventura (2003) study Spanish firms in manufacturing industry and find that development practices significantly and positively relate to overall firm performance. By reviewing recent studies, one can conclude that human resource bundles including

development practices consistently demonstrate a favourable relationship with subjective and objective company performance measures.

Concerning the recent research which was dedicated to exploring the impact of training activities themselves on firm performance, Table 3-3 provides an overview of these research descriptions and results.

Table 3-3: Summary of studies of training impacts on firm performance

Authors	Cosh et al. (1998)	Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003)	Ng and Siu (2004)	Jones (2004)	Storey (2004)
Method	Quantitative Longitudinal	Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative Longitudinal	Review of multiple studies
Geographical target	UK	UK, Netherlands, Portugal, Finland, and Spain	Shanghai, China	Australia	UK, compared to Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan and US
Sector	Manufacturing and business services	Multi sector	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Multi sector
Sample size	1,640	457	485	871	N/A
Firm characteristics	Small firms	Classified as SMEs 10–250 employees	SOEs and Non-SOEs	Classified as SMEs Private companies with fewer than 200 employees	Mostly SMEs
Findings	Training may influence business survival and performance for SMEs of a certain size, or in certain time periods, but not others. Impact of training on survival is positive, however not statistically significant.	Training significantly related to effectiveness, not profitability On-the-job training, in-house training with in-house trainers most related to effectiveness and profitability Short outside courses have negative effects on profitability.	Both SOEs and non-SOEs obtained a positive return from devoting resources to managerial training. No contribution to productivity was found in response to spending money on technical training.	Training is relatively consistently concomitant with SME growth. A two-way relationship exists between training and development, and SME performance.	The evidence relating management training to small firm performance is equivocal. Econometric methods linking training participation to small firm performance produce weak findings.

The relationship between training and performance is not found as consistent as that between human resource practices and performance. Research findings in the UK by Cosh et al. (1998) and Storey (2004) do not always or are cautious to support a positive relationship between training and performance while researchers elsewhere like Jones (2004), Ng and Siu (2004), and Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003) suggest that training helps the firm improve its performance in different perspectives. The roles of the contextual variables have to be studied carefully to produce linkage generalisation.

Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003) find that training on business policy, management, market knowledge, group working and job safety affect performance the most. They also find that ironically the less planned training activities are, the better the human resources and quality indicators. This is contrary to findings from Jones (2004) who asserts that SMEs on the low growth pathway appear more likely to adopt an informal, ad hoc approach to training and development. However, they agree that on-the-job training positively influences firm performance the most. From the view of a transitional economy, Ng and Siu (2004) argue for the benefits of management training to both types of firm: state-owned and non state-owned enterprises.

By and large, from the results of different studies, one has to be cautious in establishing the causal linkages from training to firm performance. The specific nature of business context makes such generalisation risky. As Storey and Westhead (1997) argue, many studies are just 'snapshots' of firms in specific geographical areas, and the impacts of training are not assessed in enough time. Jones (2004) as well as Boselie et al. (2001) agree that the likelihood of reverse linkage (i.e. performance – training) should also be considered. Meanwhile, following the universal belief about the benefits of training, as well as the importance of human resources as a competitive advantage, firms are relying on training as an answer for performance issues. Storey (2004) therefore warns that efforts in promoting the benefits of training to owners/managers in order to increase formal training are misguided.

Research findings are favourable to the notion of the positive impact of training on organisation performance. However, the study of training impacts at the third and fourth levels of Kirkpatrick's model has to take into account the contingency variables

associated with study targets in order to justify the improvement of firm performance as a result of training.

3.6 Summary

This section summarises the main points derived from the literature review undertaken in this chapter which focused on theories and practice of training evaluation.

With regard to training evaluation discussed in the literature, it was considered to be the weakest link among all activities within the training process. Meanwhile, researchers and practitioners alike, nevertheless, continue with their endeavours to improve training evaluation and develop 'best practice.' The quest for more efficient training evaluation continues.

Having reviewed the literature on training evaluation, Kirkpatrick's four-level model emerged as a dominant tool in this field since its introduction. The strengths of the model lie in its simplicity, intuitive, modular, practical and straightforward nature (3.4.3). These advantages enable practitioners to start at any single level, at the same time communicate without difficulties with all parties involved in evaluation. However, the weaknesses of the model have also been recognised as focusing solely on the post-training phase and training outcomes, neglecting the whole training process and environment factors that possibly influence learning transfer, and the characteristics of different people directly delivering and receiving knowledge through training. Yet Kirkpatrick's model was still the most popular instrument for training evaluation, and there have been a number of improvements to the model to overcome its shortcomings (3.4.4).

Empirical research data show that consistently, HRM activities as a whole were found to be contributing positively towards a firm's performance. However, the positive relationship between training and performance was not always justified, or more training did not always mean more learning transfer (3.5). Therefore, the training – firm performance relationship appeared to be quite complicated requiring appropriate designs and research in order to achieve a thorough understanding of how training contributes to the firm's business.

In terms of methodology, the empirical studies reviewed in this chapter were mostly cross-sectional research conducted by quantitative approaches. It is noticeable that establishing the causal relationship between training and outcomes at various levels was problematic because of the difficulties in defining training and outcomes, collecting sensitive data, and isolating the effect of training on performance among influences from other sources. Furthermore, several environmental factors were also included in these research studies and were proven to contribute to the training – performance relationship (3.5).

The literature review also revealed that most of the research on training evaluation has been conducted largely in Western developed countries. There were quite a number of studies on HR management and development practices in Asia, emerging economies or developing countries (3.5), but those on training evaluation outside the developed part of the world were not readily available. Given the less than robust linkage between training and performance, and the effects of environmental factors on learning transfer (as mentioned in the previous point), research into training evaluation issues in Vietnam may help researchers as well as practitioners to gain new and valuable insights into the subject. Furthermore, Chapter 2 has described Vietnam as a unique transitional environment, where modern business and management knowledge are very much in demand. This, together with the lack of research on training evaluation in developing economies, makes researching training outcomes in the Vietnamese context using Kirkpatrick's model an interesting research focus that will make a contribution to the field.

The next chapter is dedicated to developing research questions, an appropriate design, and addressing methodological issues for this research. In view of the points drawn from the literature, a context suitable framework for training evaluation is needed to explore fully the results of business training in Vietnam. Besides, decisions on the key training issues to be investigated and the corresponding data collection, analysis and presentation methods are also to be made. Those will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Issues and major models of training evaluation have been discussed in the previous chapter. The prevailing model and its shortcomings as well as inputs for improvement have been identified. Kirkpatrick's model which embodies noticeable advantages is worth developing to better attend to one of the major issues in human resources development.

In this chapter, based on more detailed analysis of Kirkpatrick's work and other inputs, a comprehensive model for training evaluation is proposed. The proposed model is to be used as the main tool to examine the results of business training for private enterprises in Vietnam. The model is constructed from the literature as a tool for evaluation in a general business context in the first place. It can be universally applied because the model's elements and their relationships are general initially. This research study as a consequence is first to benefit from the new model by utilising it to find the answers to the research questions in the specific Vietnamese business environment. It is hoped that by the end of the research, a fine-tuned model is obtained with potential of application in similar business settings.

The remaining part of the chapter is dedicated to the development and discussion of research questions, research design, data collection and analysis methods.

4.1. A Comprehensive Model for Training Evaluation

To evaluate a training programme comprehensively, both *summative* and *formative* perspectives of evaluation have to be taken into account, as discussed in 3.4.1. The review of training outcomes helps to determine whether or not training delivered what had been expected. It concerns more or less measuring the impacts that training has delivered. At the same time, concerning the process of training, with reference to the resultant training impacts, a carefully conducted evaluation can help to reveal the opportunities for improvement (Reay, 1994; Hussey, 1988; Sels, 2002). Kirkpatrick's model provides the framework only for the requirement of measuring outcomes at different levels. Therefore, a more general model will be developed to serve both *outcome evaluation* (for which Kirkpatrick has laid the foundation in his model) and

process evaluation (Sels, 2002). The following discussion is to establish such a model, based on the re-examination of the advantages and disadvantages of the classical work of Kirkpatrick and inputs from his critics.

4.1.1. Kirkpatrick's Model Revisited

Over 40 years of practice have revealed the model's advantages and disadvantages. The classical evaluation model by Kirkpatrick has been universally utilised (Phillips, 1991; Donovan et al., 2001; Bassi and Cheney, 1997; Bernthal, 1995), and it has been exposed to have a number of weaknesses besides strengths. The outstanding characteristics of Kirkpatrick's model lie in its intuition, simplicity, practicality, comprehensibility, communicability, and hence evaluators and others involved in the evaluation can rapidly get familiar with and put the model into practice. These advantages enable evaluators to gain a better understanding of and collaboration from the parties under evaluation. The model guides evaluators on what questions to ask at each level, and indicates several suitable measures of training outcomes. Bates (2004) suggests that the model's focus on post-training outcome measures greatly reduces the number of variables with which evaluators need to be concerned. Besides, the higher Kirkpatrick's evaluation level, the more difficult the practice, but due to the independent nature of each level, the model can even be applied partially. However, the categorisation of outcome levels provides little help in signalling the complexity of the journey from training to organisational performance, and the evaluation practice. The extent of levels of evaluation following the classical model depends on the evaluators' and companies' commitment, skills, resources, and availability of relevant data.

The four levels proposed by Kirkpatrick have not always been considered as a real model. It was argued to be a taxonomy or classification, and had significant theoretical limitations (see 3.4.3). So, it could serve as a guideline or an evaluation list rather than a detailed framework for conducting evaluation. Then, following Kirkpatrick's guidelines, evaluators have to create their own tools in practice. The proposed modification and further development of Kirkpatrick's model in the literature aim to achieve a comprehensive and, hopefully, more practical training evaluation framework. The important contributions include those of Phillips (1991) – inclusion of the fifth level of

ROI analysis, Warr, Bird and Rackham (1970) – the OEM, CIRO models, including context and inputs into analysis, and Holton (1996) – the introduction of the contingent variable class.

The introduction of ROI analysis into the model however brings about a new dilemma rather than a solution. It is always desirable to justify the positive impact of training on the bottom line. Training expenses may be considered futile unless justified by financial returns and evaluation should be considered unfinished until reaching this level (Phillips, 1991). However, no matter how robust the financial accounting system is, a bottleneck still exists in separating improved company performance and benefits due to training from those induced by other sources.

Another problem of ROI analysis regards the comprehensive calculation of the actual costs and opportunity costs of training. The sensitivity of performance and financial data needed is an obstacle in gathering complete data for calculation. Further difficulties can be enumerated here as hidden costs, differences in accounting standards (discussed in 3.5.) Therefore, ROI analysis in this case is for reference only rather than a reliable indicator, and one has to bear in mind possible distortions of ROI. ‘Level 5’ of ROI analysis complements Kirkpatrick’s work to form a comprehensive checklist rather than adding practicality to the model.

Another phenomenon in evaluation is the comments on Level 1 – Reaction, considering it a ritual after training that provides limited information for assessing training impacts. Nevertheless, this is the most exercised procedure in training reality because of the simplicity of the task, habit of the trainers/training organisers, and their inability to go beyond this level. Analysis and utilisation of information on reactions are likely to be superficial (Johnson, 2004). Trainers can even manipulate the answers on the trainee feedback questionnaires. For instance, favourable exam marking by the trainer during a training course may lead to favourable feedback in the ‘happy sheets’ by the trainees in return. Empirical research studies show the loose relations between reactions and training impacts at other levels. It is pointed out that the prediction of training impacts based on trainee reactions – Level 1, is not always valid (Alliger and Janak, 1989). From the perspective of the training providers, or customer-service point of view, information

on reactions is very useful for improving consequent training courses. From the company point of view, reactions from the trainee may reflect the effectiveness of the selection of the training partners and partly express the individual needs of the trainees. Therefore, reactions data are useful provided that they are not from the 'smiling sheets,' gather more than just the traditional administrative data, and are analysed properly. Anyway, empirical research studies have always suggested caution in interpreting data on trainees' reactions.

For the other levels of the classical model, one may ask the following question: when training impacts have been comprehensively assessed at the Results level, is it necessary to evaluate impacts on Learning and Behaviour levels? Or, when training impact evaluation at the Results level is impossible, what is the value of the evaluation at Learning and Behaviour levels? The empirical research studies give several warnings here (Alliger and Janak, 1989). Examining Learning, Behaviour and Results individually helps to track the training impacts at individual, business unit, and organisation levels, and therefore gradually justifies training efforts. Connecting them in a chain of training impacts indicates the facilitation of organisational learning in relation to training, as well as level of knowledge retention and desired practice in organisational operation. Therefore, the sole evaluation of training impact at the highest level is not sufficient. In reverse, when Results evaluation is unachievable or not reliable, learning and behaviour can serve as useful indicators, better predicting organisational results (Alliger and Janak, 1989).

To sum up, performing a sound evaluation at every level as proposed by Kirkpatrick might be more valuable and practical than trying to establish a causal chain between the levels.

It is also noted that because the Kirkpatrick model has been considered a classification, or taxonomy of evaluation, evaluation is limited in each level without examining the relevant variables with potential effects on training impacts. These variables can partly provide explanations of the corresponding training outcomes. Moreover, the classical model started *after* training delivery has finished, and the whole pre-training process is overlooked. If the training evaluation follows Kirkpatrick's model without consideration

of factors important to the firm such as business strategy, business training needs, individual trainees' training needs, the conclusion may not be robust enough. It provides only the measures of training impacts in a predetermined direction, without indicating whether the training delivered is what the company and the trainees need, whether or not the training strategy is appropriate, and whether training is the solution for the company's performance issues. Following Kirkpatrick's model, if return on training investment is positive, the company may pursue training the same way with the same trainers and for the same trainees, without recognising that other training areas, other training content, or another solution other than training can help the company achieve better performance, possibly at a lower cost. Therefore, several other evaluation models and practical guidelines introduce the important step of reviewing the pre-training process (Warr et al., 1970; Rae, 2002).

Besides, except for the period of training delivery in a laboratory environment, the outcomes of training are realised in the real work environment. Therefore, training evaluation has to take into account the influences of work environment factors. A majority of research studies largely focus on identifying or confirming the effects of those factors. Widening the evaluation perspective, one also has to take socio-economic and cultural aspects into consideration because those predate and accompany training, and are both influential and dynamic. Selecting the relevant variables depends on the specific business context, but there are conventional and confirmed variables, e.g. personal characteristics, cognitive ability, organisational commitment, training motivation, link to organisational goals as compiled by Holton (1996) with significant relationships to the levels of training outcomes. Thus, the inclusion of the facilitating and inhibiting factors relating to training outcomes might be another improvement for Kirkpatrick's model.

The discussion above leads to the proposal for the following general model.

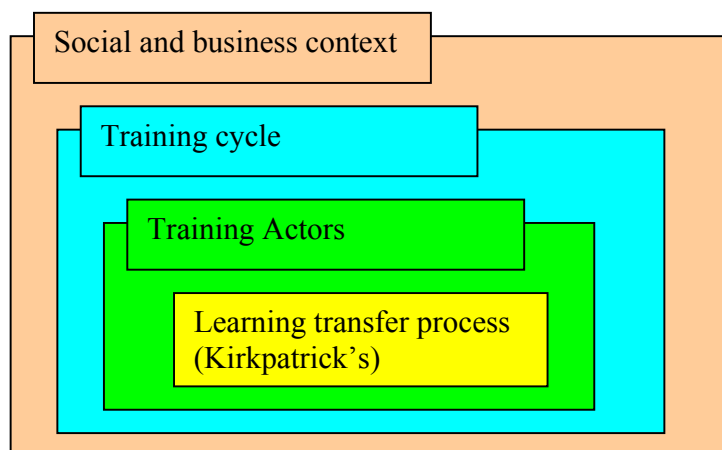
4.1.2. The Proposed Model

A typical model has to embody a number of components: elements (constructs), relationships, boundaries, system states, deductions about the theory in operation, and predictions about elements (Klimoski, 1991). Kirkpatrick's four levels are not a

complete model, but provide stepping stones for a more complete training evaluation model.

Basically, the proposed model is developed based on the classical four-level model and adjustments suggested by Holton (1995). Since Reaction has been revealed to be of controversial value to indicate the results of training, only the last three levels of Kirkpatrick's model are kept at the core of the proposed model (but Reaction is rearranged and discussed later). The results are evaluated under the influence of the training-related actors, namely trainer, trainee, and organisation. The interactions of these actors start from the beginning of the training cycle and last even after training has been delivered. Therefore, the main training related activities are included in the model, represented by the training cycle and the learning transfer process. All are embedded into a broader environment, where the relevant factors: Socio-culture, Legal, Economic, Political and Technological (SLEPT – environment analysis model [Pettigrew, 1992]) and specific characteristics of the industry are analysed. Retaining Kirkpatrick's classical elements (Learning, Behaviour Change, and Results) and with the introduction of intervening factors, the proposed model retains the straightforward nature of Kirkpatrick's work and at the same time is augmented with the power to validate training evaluations. The abridged version of the proposed model is depicted in Figure 4-1.

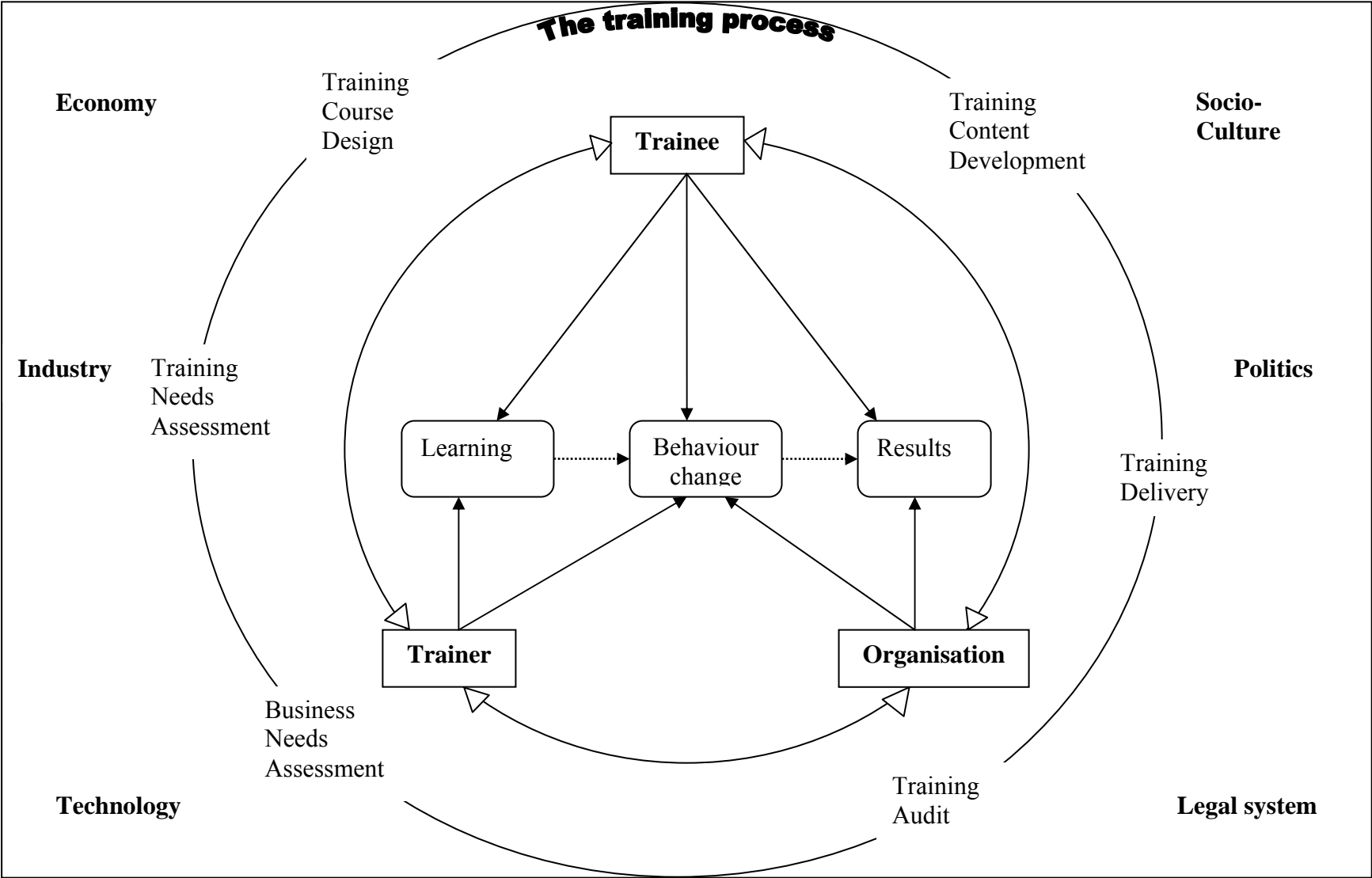
Figure 4-1: Proposed training evaluation model – abridged version



Source: The researcher's compilation

The model incorporates both the pre-training components of the training cycle and post-training learning transfer process so that it offsets the shortcomings of the four-level model in neglecting contextual factors. The model is presented in such a way that the outcomes of training have direct relations to and are moderated by the characteristics of the pre-training process and external factors. These characteristics are identified by reviewing the literature in the previous chapter and consideration of specific contextual factors. The full version of the proposed model is presented below and detailed discussion about the model is also given.

Figure 4-2: Proposed general training evaluation model



In the core of the proposed model are the three constructs of the four-level model: learning, behaviour change and organisational results, reflecting the *learning transfer* process. The linkages among these three constructs will be examined, but in essence, this examination is conducted with reference to the moderating effects of the context and characteristics of the actors. The Reaction level from the original four-level model is not omitted but integrated in the Training Audit function of the training process. The evaluation of trainees' reactions is usually conducted right at the end of any training course. The previous work of Alliger and Janak (1989) suggests using reactions as moderating factors to learning, rather than one of the outcomes of training. Moreover, reactions were not empirically proven as a reliable predictor of other outcomes, so the trainees' reactions after training courses will be considered for formative evaluation purposes (i.e. how to modify training to maximise its potential contribution to individual and organisational effectiveness).

As analysed in the previous part (4.1.1), it is virtually impossible to have reliable calculations of ROI for training activities. Therefore, ROI analysis is not included in the model at level 5, nor is considered as a function of the evaluation practice at Level 4 - Results.

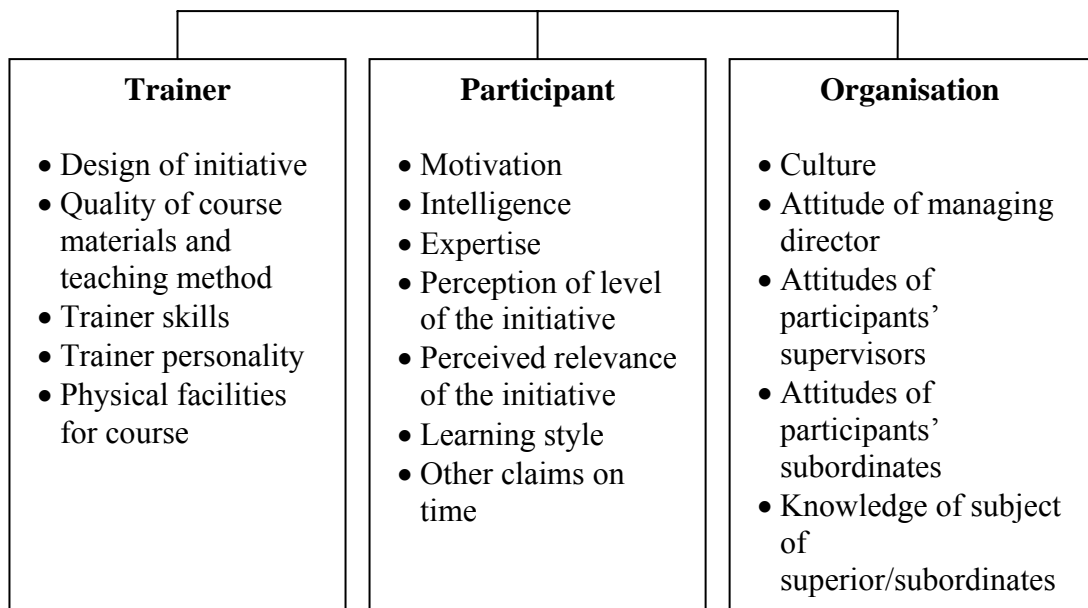
In the proposed model, three actors involved in pre-training and post-training periods are included: the organisation (the management and internal business environment), the trainee, and the trainer. They are all included inside the recurrent process of training, from needs assessment to training audit. The involvement of each actor is significantly different in the pre-training and post-training periods. The trainee's changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes are developed significantly in the classroom and his behaviour changes happen in the workplace. However, the role of the trainer is supposed to be limited mainly in the classroom during training delivery. Meanwhile, the role of the organisation, mainly in facilitating an enabling transfer environment, is crucial to the process as well as the outcomes of training (Bates, 2004).

Ideally the involvement of trainer, trainee and organisation exist throughout the pre-training process. This ensures that the needs of the organisation as well as the individual would be addressed by training. This secures the relevance of training content, or customises the content to the specific group of trainees. This helps the organisation to create favourable conditions to help its trainees to translate

knowledge into work practice. Hence, in the proposed model, the roles of the three actors will be examined at each step of the training process to provide a better explanation of the resultant training outcomes.

The outcomes at the three levels are evaluated in connection with the relationships of the players and their attributes. The attributes examined are those regarded of most importance, selected after reviewing the existing research studies. Besides, some specific characteristics of the business under evaluation might be included. Hussey (1988) provides a set of basic attributes for consideration.

Figure 4-3: Actors’ attributes affecting the effectiveness of training



Source: Hussey (1988)

At the learning level, outcomes are largely influenced by the interaction between the trainer and the trainee in the classroom environment. The existing empirical studies show that learning depends on ability, level of motivation of trainers and trainees, individual needs of the trainees, the trainers’ skills, and training facilities. Ideally, learning level is measured before and after training to identify changes, and the expectations of the trainers and the trainees have to be taken into consideration. However, it is not usually achieved in reality when the course-end examinations are usually used to screen the trainees for deciding on a certification award only.

Behaviour change happens when the trainee has returned to the real work environment. The level of behaviour change is essentially influenced by motivation

and facilitating/inhibiting factors in the work environment. If individual needs and expectations in applying new learning into practice are met, as facilitated by the immediate supervisor for instance, the possibilities to attempt and maintain positive behaviours are considerable. The role of the trainers is more limited at this level, but it is likely to have a certain influence when their assistance is another source of motivation that makes the trainee more confident. If the training course includes sections of planning for the trainee's change when returning to work, the role of the trainers needs to be examined. The trainers may provide follow-up technical assistance to the trainees in the areas that work supervisors or managers may not. The role of the organisation, from HR personnel or senior managers, is of a different importance as they can help the trainee to feel secure in transferring knowledge to work. Therefore, all three actors contribute to behaviour change and will be analysed at this level.

Once training matches business strategy, it is then realistic to link behaviour change and results. At this level, the two players to be examined are the trainee and organisation. As mentioned earlier, the ideal measure of the ultimate results from training for firms is the quantifiable improvement in financial data. Reliable information on this feature is not likely; therefore the use of several proxies showing training outcomes at this level is necessary. The proxies include output, sales, employee turnover, wastage saved, rate of accidents, sales per employee, market share, stock values. Furthermore, a number of qualitative indicators are also useful, like the competitive position of the organisation after training, opinions on perceived organisation image, capability to design, development and introduction of new products to market, and corporate values. (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003)

The modular characteristic of Kirkpatrick's original work is preserved in this new proposed model. Focus can be directed at any level, be it learning, behaviour or result, as long as the appropriate environmental factors are taken into consideration.

The model is developed with the intention of embodying the total aspects of training evaluation into a framework. This proposed model provides a general framework for training evaluation. In practice, the evaluation design has to take into account the specific evaluation environment, and the availability of various data sources.

4.2. Research Questions

The focus of this research study is on the evaluation of business and management training provided to private businesses in Vietnam. To evaluate the effects of business training, the comprehensive model developed above based on the core of Kirkpatrick's work will be employed. As discussed in 4.1, comprehensive explanation of the training effects on the organisation and its members cannot be achieved without insights into the training process. Therefore, a part of the research will be dedicated to an examination of the training process currently practised in Vietnamese businesses.

In essence, the research study seeks to answer the following four research questions.

1. For what purposes do private businesses in Vietnam pursue short-course business and management training?
2. How have the training-related activities been implemented in Vietnamese businesses?
3. What are considered the outcomes – in terms of trainee personal behaviour and organisational results – of short-course business and management training for Vietnamese private businesses?
4. Which factors specific to trainees, trainers and businesses respectively are considered to affect the outcomes of short-course business and management training identified in Question 3?

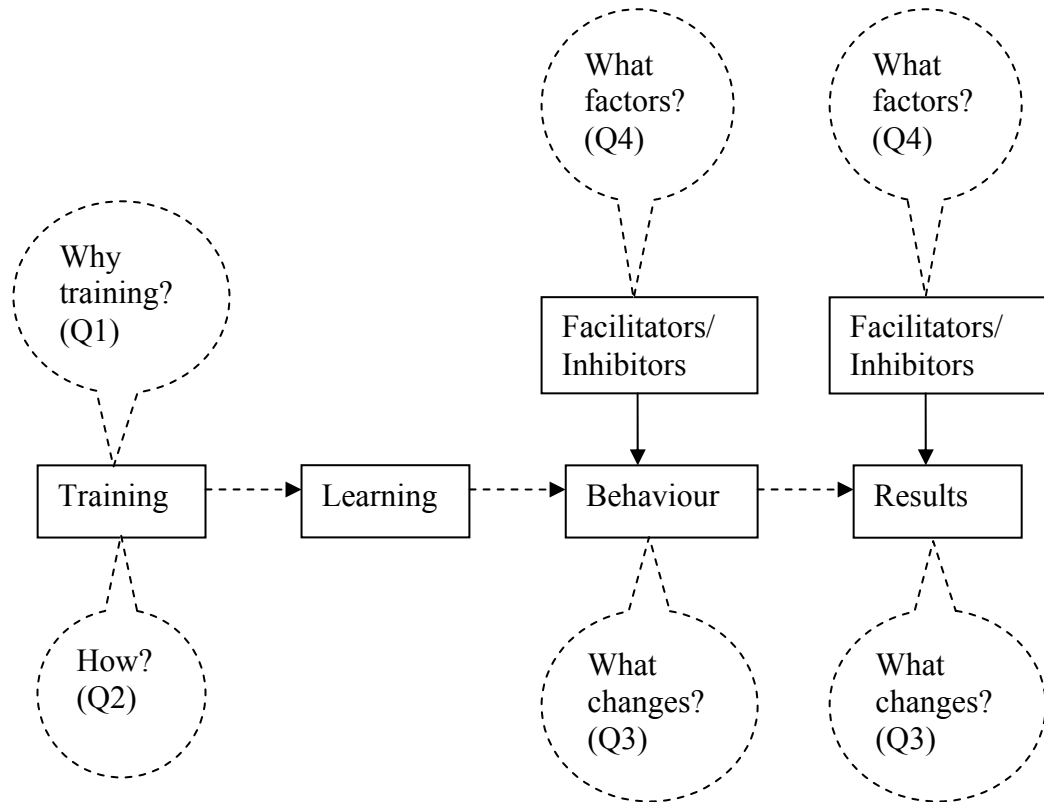
Once having answered the above questions, the following points are addressed:

1. The (probable) issues Vietnamese private businesses want to solve by training (from question 1).
2. The reality of training practices in Vietnamese private businesses, levels of commitment, investment, involvement in training of different parties (question 2).
3. The general assessment of effects of business and management training on Vietnamese private businesses (from questions 2, 3).
4. Implications drawn for Vietnamese private businesses seeking business training and training providers (from questions 2, 3 and 4).

5. Ways to attain better business training support, to acquire more quality training, and better business results (from questions 2, 4).

The following diagram summarises the areas of interest of this research within the broad topic of training evaluation.

Figure 4-4: Summary of research questions



In order to answer the above general research questions, detailed sub-questions are devised focusing on the training needs of Vietnamese enterprises, the reality of the training process in Vietnamese enterprises, perceived training outcomes, facilitation of and hindrances to the learning transfer process. In order to collect data related to these sub-questions, research instruments will be developed including self-administered questionnaires, semi-structured interview guides and lists of document reviews used for data collection in the field. The specific questions are presented in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Specific research questions

1. The rationale for business training

- 1.1 What is the nature of the firms’ human resource and HR development?

1.2 What are the general and industry requirements for business training in Vietnamese private businesses?

1.3 How does training prepare a company's human resources to better cope with competitors?

1.4 How have firms been approached by training service suppliers?

1.5 How have firms been performing? What have firms been expecting from training in certain areas?

1.6 How much resource is allocated for training in comparison to other investments?

2. Review of the training process

2.1 How is firms' training strategy described? How do firms align business training and business strategy? How have training needs been identified?

2.2 To what extent are firms involved in deciding what and how training will be conducted?

2.3 In what way are employees supported to attend business training? How is the collaboration between firms and training institutions perceived?

2.4 How is the assessment of training conducted and how are the assessment results utilised?

3. Considered outcomes of training

3.1 After training, how do changes happen in employees' performance of their work?

3.2 How are trained employees compared to corresponding untrained employees in terms of performance in training-related activities?

3.3 To what extent does training solve firms' problems?

3.4 What are the benefits and losses of trained employees to the firms?

4. Factors affecting training outcomes

4.1 To what extent does discrepancy between firms' and individual training needs exist and how do firms and their employees view those?

4.2 To what extent are the identified organisational and individual training needs satisfied?

4.3 To what extent do trainees find the training delivery suitable, and how does it compare to their expectation?

4.4 Technically, how relevant do the trainees find the training content for application at work? How much of the knowledge acquired can be applied at work? What is the role of trainers in the knowledge transfer process?

4.5 What are the official and unofficial measures taken to encourage the trainees to apply what is learnt in practice? How do firms and their employees overcome the pressures preventing employees from transferring knowledge into work and what are the results?

4.6 To what extent are firms ready to adapt to changes induced by training?

4.7 What are the problems firms and trainees face in the learning transfer process?

4.3. Research Design

The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables researchers to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible (de Vaus, 2001). Bickman et al. (1998) assert that research design is the logical linkage between research questions and data collection and analysis activities, assuring the complete research agenda to be completed. Although there are a limited number of classical and standard research designs (i.e. case studies, experimental research, cross-sectional research, or longitudinal research), Bickman et al. (1998) argue that the process of research design typically involves the development of a hybrid, reflecting combinations of designs and other features, that can respond to multiple study questions, resource limitations, dynamics in the research context and other constraints of the research situation.

The answers to the research questions substantially rely not only on the guide of evaluation theory and description of the context itself, but also on the reflection of the actors' understanding and interpretation of their training, learning and transfer environments (e.g. the alignment of business and training strategies, the firm's practice of training assessment). A substantial mix of personal experience, projection, interpretation, judgements besides facts and figures are to be recorded and analysed. Therefore, the phenomenological approach (May, 2001) is appropriate for guiding this research study.

Considerations of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 4.2, general and detailed research questions and research practicalities lead to the specific research design discussed below.

4.3.1. Rationale

Multiple case studies are employed as the principal research design for this study. Justification for the selection of research design can be found in (i) the essence of the research questions, (ii) the importance of the context of the research issues, (iii) the complexity of establishing causal relationships among research variables and (iv) limited existing knowledge of the research issues in the new context. The design is also decided considering the scope of this individual study, resources available, and practicalities in terms of data collection, which will be discussed later on.

First, the research questions have a considerable focus on describing training-related activities in Vietnamese private business, as well as delineating the recognised effects of training at individual and organisational levels. Besides, the research questions also deal with exploring the organisational perspectives of training benefits as well as the contributing factors to training outcomes. For these purposes, the case study is considered an appropriate research design. Yin (1993), Bickman et al. (1998), Dixon et al. (1987), de Vaus (2001) and Clarke and Dawson (1999) agree that case study design is suitable for an exploratory study (although not only this type of study).

Second, as discussed in section 4.1, for investigating the research issues, context is extremely important. A considerable part of the research is concentrated on the unknown factors affecting the results of business training. Outcomes of training are believed to have relationships with the training process, the training related actors, the pre- and post- training internal environment, and the external environment encompassing various business, legal, socio-economic, technological, political and cultural variables. Outcomes of training will be examined in a broad and elaborated context. Again, the case study can be well utilised for such a research situation, as case studies are designed to study wholes rather than parts (de Vaus, 2001). Clarke and Dawson (1999) stress that concentrating on measuring intended outcomes alone can lead to the unintended effects of the investigated programme being overlooked. In the current study, the importance of reflecting the pre- and post-training context

has been emphasised besides exploring the training outcomes. Putting the issues of training effects in the Vietnamese high-context social environment, coupled with the unique corresponding transitional management environmental characteristics – e.g. harmony and egalitarianism versus competitiveness, control versus empowerment, lack of strategic role for human resources and absence of active employee participation (Zhu, 2002; Warner et al., 2005) – requires the study of all training-related aspects. Filtering out the influences of such aspects in order to have a controlled examination of training effects is not the focus of this study. In contrast, the major purpose of this study is to identify what has significant impacts on business training outcomes.

Third, as discussed in Chapter 3, an outstanding dilemma in investigating the impacts of training is the difficulty in identifying and isolating training-generated impacts among those from other sources. This complexity leads to difficulties in establishing accurate causal relationship between training and outcomes on individual behaviour as well as on organisational performance. Experimental research is believed to be the best design to adequately prove or reject a causal hypothesis (Dixon et al., 1987; Rossi et al., 2004). As opposed to other areas of evaluation, it is usually impossible to control effectively experimental samples when evaluating educational programmes using experimental design (Clarke and Dawson, 1999). So far, most research studies only attempt to investigate and discuss *correlations* between training and corresponding effects on companies (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003; Jones, 2004); and employ quasi-experimental designs. On the other hand, the case study is argued to be appropriate for initial hypothesis testing (Dixon et al., 1987), so it can be employed to explore if training really introduces changes in individual behaviour, and organisational performance. Furthermore, case studies are suitable for not only descriptive purposes but also explanatory ones (de Vaus, 2001). Cases analysed under a common framework can be compared to arrive at a better level of generalisation. As concluded at the end of Chapter 3, the exploration of other contributing factors and the analysis of how they affect to training outcomes are essential in the area of training evaluation. Following this perspective, case study design is a suitable strategy as it helps in describing the process of learning transfer as well as answering the question of what factors are facilitating or obstructing that process in the context of Vietnamese private businesses.

Finally, numerous research studies have been conducted on the topic of the effects of training in Europe and North America (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003), but particular knowledge of the issue in a transitional economy - Vietnam - is very limited or non-existent. Hypotheses or research propositions cannot be specific enough to allow the utilisation of designs other than case study. Moreover, the proposed conceptual framework depicted in Figure 4.2 is rather general with only broad processes and institutions identified. For clarifying the learning transfer process and identifying the potential affecting factors, rather than examining the magnitude of known factors which suits experimental or survey design, the case study is a more realistic choice. Again, the focus on context and the exploratory nature of this research determine the case study as the appropriate design.

Besides the above theoretical rationale, the practicality of data collection is an issue of concern. By nature, this is an individual research project so resources are limited. Experimental design requires the highest degree of control of non-experimental variables. Clarke and Dawson (1999) cite Parlett and Hamilton (1976) demonstrating the difficulties of ensuring the integrity of a before-and-after research design to be maintained throughout the course of an evaluation of educational programmes. Clarke and Dawson (1999) also mention Guba's (1972) critique of scientific techniques for continually producing results that contradicted the experiential observations of educational practitioners. In Vietnam, information of company business training activities is not uniformly archived based on regularly collected data. Therefore, the retrospective longitudinal study design is not feasible. In view of the delay effect of learning transfer where it takes some time, especially in business training, for training effects to materialise; and because of limited time for fieldwork, a prospective longitudinal study design is not selected. The design of a cross-sectional survey has also been taken into consideration, but previous empirical research studies recognise a noticeably low rate of responses (mail survey response rate of 7.5% in Aragon-Sanchez et al. (2003), 5% in Chan et al., (2004)). Although the response rate is significantly improved when interviews are employed, cross-sectional design has the weakness of covering just limited aspects of the research issues.

In conclusion, the logical appropriateness of case study is the important contention for selecting it as the basic elements of the research.

The unit of analysis in this research is domestic private enterprise. It covers enterprises in different forms: household businesses, micro registered businesses, joint-stock companies, limited companies. In Vietnam, the majority of these businesses and production establishments fall into the category of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) whose registered capital is less than VND¹ 10 billion² and average number of annual employees is less than 300. Conversely, in Vietnam the term SME is mainly used to refer to the private sector.

The economic role of the private sector has been widely recognised in Vietnam (Gerrard et al., 2002), where it contributes more than 40% of gross domestic product (see Table 4-2) and is the biggest job creating sector absorbing the majority of the 1.2 million people entering the labour market each year. Nearly one third of the total investment in the economy comes from the private sector and the share has increased steadily in recent years (VCCI, 2004).

Table 4-2: GDP structure by Economic Sectors (2003)

Sector	Contribution
State and public sector	39%
Foreign invested enterprises	19%
Domestic private sector, in which:	42%
Household business	82%
Formally registered enterprises	18%

Source: SME promotion site (<http://www.sme.com.vn>) accessed on June 1, 2005

General and management training for businesses is an expanding market, given the needs for updating skills and knowledge in the changing environment and the outdated official training programmes (Pham, 2003; Ho et al., 2003; Nguyen, 2003, McKenzie, 2000). Though training supply is considerably affected by state and foreign subsidised sources (Pham, 2003), the demand for knowledge from the sector makes business training and development a promising market (McKenzie, 2000). Studies on the aspect of training effects can significantly contribute to this emerging area. Therefore, domestic private businesses are taken as units of analysis in this research.

¹ Vietnamese dong – Vietnamese currency unit

² Approximately USD 650,000 at the time the decree was promulgated.

For the decision between a unique case study versus multiple case studies, the latter is selected, for the following reasons. Normally, a single case design is less compelling, giving less insights than multiple case designs (de Vaus, 2001). Studying a single case, one cannot conduct any comparison necessary to test or to develop a theory. On the contrary, using multiple cases helps researchers to identify specific conditions under which the building of theory may or may not hold. The purpose of this research is a better understanding of factors affecting outcomes of training in a specific Vietnamese business context. At the end of the research, a revised version of the model proposed in Figure 4.2 is expected to be achieved, and multiple cases are better suited for this intention. Moreover, neither single case nor multiple cases focus on statistical generalisation but theoretical generalisation. To arrive at a justified theory using the method of analytic induction (Robinson, 1951), the use of multiple cases is essential. Yin (1998) recommends from four to six cases to be studied in a research study undertaking theoretical replication. Thus, this research will recruit for investigation at least four private companies involved in business training.

The concept of embedded units of analysis (Yin, 1998; de Vaus, 2001) will be applied in examining every single case. Data associating to different sub-units of private businesses (i.e. the three training-related actors: training service provider(s), trainees, and organisational management) will be collected. At the time of research design, the potential of collecting quantitative data of every sub-unit is considered, and in case it is practical, the cases are analysed based on the combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

4.3.2. Limitation of the Design

The main concern of case study design is its power of generalisation or external validity. Even the utilisation of analytic induction cannot ensure complete generalisation power. However, the case study distances itself from other designs in its theoretical generalisation direction: building theory rather than statistical assertion about the research objects (Yin, 1998; de Vaus, 2001). Besides, there are a number of measures to enhance generalisation power when conducting case study research. Major characteristics of the cases used in the research will be contrasted with the known population characteristics to highlight similarities and differences. Selection of cases will be made in such a fashion that maximises the typicality of the cases chosen (Gomm et al., 2000). In addition, boundaries of the cases will be drawn as

clearly as possible to specify the transferability of the application of theory established from the study.

4.4. Methods of Data Collection, Analysis and Presentation

Case study design accommodates a variety of data collection methods (Clarke and Dawson, 1999; Yin, 1998; de Vaus, 2001). As de Vaus (2001) generally puts it, any data collection method can be used with case study design as long as it is practical and ethical. Moreover, he argues that one of the distinguishing features of the case study is that multiple methods of data collection are often employed. Furthermore, Yin (1998) maintains that case studies can involve both quantitative and qualitative data, and the most desirable case studies are likely to use both types.

Interviewing is particularly popular with qualitative researchers. Interviews will be used extensively as the major data collection method for this research. Because of the need for in-depth understanding of business context, the interview is believed to be the most suitable method. Interviewing facilitates the researcher to detect relevant information and quickly clarify the important issues (e.g. the effect of organisational HR policy on trainees' behaviour change) interactively on the spot.

Yin (1998) maintains that case study interviews are of an open-ended nature. The nature allows the interviewees to mention freely what they consider succinct and relevant to the concerned issues rather than confine themselves into limited answering options. Besides what is discussed, the attitudes and non-verbal signals of the respondents are also captured and can reveal substantial information for judgment of the importance of the issues. This is considered useful and essential in the Vietnamese high-context communication culture. By using open face-to-face interviews, the exploratory and descriptive aspects of all four research questions will be addressed.

To preserve the open nature of interview and at the same time to retain the focus of the research issues, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. While such interviews let the interviewees expand upon their answers, they also allow the interviewers to probe for more information at crucial points, to ensure the total aspects of an issue or sub-unit are covered, and to maintain uniform structure across cases. Semi-structured interviews are intended for all the three actors: trainer, trainee and company management. The concern of a Hawthorne effect (biased responses

received when interviewees feel their status promoted when included in research) is minimised by providing the interviewees with information about the very nature of the research study.

When possible, quantitative data are collected within a case by questionnaires administered to the trainees, peers and direct supervisors. A wealth of descriptive data in comparable format from this instrument may enable the researcher to obtain a foundation of the business context (e.g. level of supervisor-trainee communication about a pilot project to apply new skills) as well as training outcomes (e.g. number of attempts to apply new skills). Within a case, given a rather common business environment, when information is needed on perceived values of training or rating the difficulties in learning transfer, questionnaires may provide quantitative data appropriate for analysing and identifying issues of concern from the trainees' perspective.

Another important source of information is documentary materials available to the researcher. These comprise both primary documents from the firms under study and training service providers directly related to the firms' training activities, but also the secondary ones from various sources like Vietnam General Statistical Office, Department of Planning and Investment, industry reports, and legal documents. These documents provide necessary understanding about the socio-economic, business and legal context in general as well as the operating environment of the firms in particular. Besides, they can provide evidence of firm performance and individual trainees' productivity. The training related activities and the learning transfer process will be examined in light of those collected documents.

A blend of methods of data collection will be employed in this research. Methods are determined in consideration of studied objects. Industry, business history contextual information are essentially gathered from documentary sources. The training process will be reviewed based on information from interviews with trainers, management, and trainees. The trainees will also be requested to fill in questionnaires revealing their views of the learning transfer process. Trainers and management are approached by interviews while the trainees are also surveyed through questionnaires. The mixed data collection methods are used to explore the views of different actors on the importance of environmental variables, the training process

and the resultant learning transfer process as outlined in the conceptual framework. Methods of data collection are summarised in the following table.

Table 4-3: Synthesis of data collection methods employed

Processes Actors	Environment facilitating/hindering factors	The training process	Learning transfer process/ training outcomes
Trainee	Interview	Survey Interview	Survey Documentary review
Trainer	Interview	Interview	Interview
Organisational management	Interview Documentary review	Interview	Documentary review Interview

All in all, the most comprehensive data possible are to be gathered for each case under study, utilising different data collection methods. The support and discussion of multi-method research and triangulation (either data or theory) have been widely recognised (Clarke and Dawson, 1999; Yin, 1993; Brewer and Hunter, 1989). The application of data from multiple sources provides more confidence in conclusions in the case of findings convergence. Where findings from different sources diverge, there is an opportunity to have insight into the issue by further investigation. Issues in the research are viewed from different angles by different actors, and data collection is made using various methods. Discrepancies of information are very likely because of the informants' standing and (possibly) data collection methods. However, a range of methods and perspectives are believed to be more constructive for analysis and drawing conclusions when training and post-training reality are clearly reflected and research purposes are communicated.

An approach to research targets was first made to training service providers because of their knowledge and experience of companies engaged in training. They were introduced to the whole research aims and data collection plan. The training service providers and the researcher then discussed the selection of an appropriate customer company from a list of potential candidates, whose criteria on form of ownership (private), labour, adequate number of trainees, and relevance to the current research would meet the research's aims. Data from the training service provider was gathered first. Then, by way of introduction by the training service provider, the customer company was contacted as the second step, and working sessions scheduled. After

collecting data from the management levels, the trainees were approached for interviews and filling in questionnaires. Selecting interviewees in companies with a large number of trainees was made on a random basis. Initially, the sequence was: trainer, company management, and trainees; but during the research process, time was built in to enable trainers and management staff to be re-contacted for obtaining further information or verification on arising issues. The strategy of asking for reference from the training agencies was to ensure cooperation from the local private businesses, which are not very familiar with this type of research approach, namely to have a researcher working inside the business for an extended period of time (a couple of weeks). This approach was intended to facilitate the data collection process as it was hoped that people from the businesses would be more open and give out meaningful information to the researcher whose trust was established in advance through the relationship with training service providers. Naturally, the researcher was concerned that such introductions might lead to being given access to only 'exemplary' businesses and trainees, as the Vietnamese habit of '*tốt đẹp khoe ra, xấu xa dấy lại*' (show only the good side, hide the bad side) is still very prevalent. This was overcome by being completely open to the training agencies, businesses and trainees/interviewees about the research objectives, eliminating any doubt about gathering competitive business intelligence or leaking confidential company information. Furthermore, participants in the study were duly communicated about the purposes of the research, assured of anonymity, informed that the company is in agreement with the research being carried out, and that company data would be protected. Ultimately, the researcher played a role in deciding which private businesses and trainees to interview using the necessary networks (*quan hệ*) available to gain access.

The cases are studied consequently by the researcher to facilitate theoretical replication from case to case. The investigation conducted by the sole investigator leads to better consistency which enables comparison among cases. In this case, using a single investigator also improves the reliability of data.

De Vaus (2001) cautions about substantial time spent on well-executed case studies. In addition, it is of little point to obtain a representative sample when the aim of this research is theory building rather than statistical generalisation. Considering time allocated for the whole project and the fieldwork, the inclusion of training service

companies into the research sample is primarily on a convenience basis and accessibility. Selection of the training customer companies is made following consultation with the training service provider, to identify the most suitable companies. Besides being private businesses, the companies selected have to possess diversified characteristics in terms of organisational culture, workforce, operating industries, and performance that enable multi-dimension comparison. The limitation of this approach of case selection is compensated by efforts to generate a full description of the context.

The geographical area of this research is Ho Chi Minh City, which is familiar to the researcher. Ho Chi Minh City is the economic centre of Vietnam, where the private sector expanded the fastest in recent years. GDP per capita of the city is 3.75 times higher than the national level. The average annual growth rate was 11 percent during the period 2001-2005, 1.5 times higher than that of the whole country. The non-State sector of Ho Chi Minh City accounts for 25 percent of the country's total, contributing 30 percent of the city's total industrial output and 78 percent of its retail sales (VNA, 2005). The need for business training has been recognised (McDaniel et al., 1999) and measures have been undertaken to meet the need (McKenzie, 2000). It is estimated that there are at least 50 business training service providers in Ho Chi Minh City. The research into domestic private enterprises in the city can provide substantial understanding of outcomes from business training to this group and inputs for refining the model of factors affecting the results of training.

Pilot research was planned before commencing case study data collection. The pilot is traditionally used for idea generation, preparation, methodology improvement and rehearsal for the main field work. Furthermore, the pilot helps the researcher to justify the relevance of the specific research issues, test and further develop research instruments, capture arising issues, and review the feasibility of approaching trainers, companies' management, and trainees (Bickman et al., 1998). The pilot also aims to refine the applicability of specific business and research terminologies when communicated with people related to the research. The difference in culture and language notably in the Vietnamese context in particular (McDaniel et al., 1999; Napier, 2002), would be addressed after the pilot test. As pointed out by Gerrard et al. (2002), 'using a Western-derived instrument to measure work-related values in an Eastern setting was limited, because the instrument did not capture the true values of

the subjects being studied' (p.155). The lack of appropriate technical vocabulary of management training in Vietnamese as well as the subtle regional differences in language patterns had already been highlighted by McDaniel et al. (1999). The quality of translation of the research questionnaires from English (original) to Vietnamese could also be assessed in the pilot. The ability of a large number of local people able to use English at different levels (McDaniel et al., 1999) provided an alternative for giving a better explanation during interviews. The pilot study closely followed the research plan drafted above to identify the latent design shortcomings. It was also an opportunity to review and obtain a more practical schedule of time and expenses dedicated to the fieldwork. Since the case study method is argued to be a continuous blending process of data collection and analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the researcher was able to begin these activities with the pilot. Data collection for case studies officially commenced after details of strategies and instruments have been reviewed and improved.

The pilot research was conducted before and during the earlier stage of the fieldwork. The pilot consisted in testing the research instruments, e.g. questionnaires and data collection guides among the researcher's acquaintances within the academic environment who were familiar with the subject area as well as those who were in business. From the feedback received from the participants during the pilot, data collection guides (see Appendix 4) became more robust as more diverse ideas were incorporated, the pilot also helped improve the researcher's interview skills. Also a small informal group discussion was arranged with a few people who worked for businesses of different industries so that the main research questions could be discussed in general, and the feasibility of approach small businesses directly without introductions from training agents was reassessed. During the pilot, preliminary information about the training market, current training subjects on offer, supplies and demands of business and management training were gathered to give the researcher a useful overview before approaching private companies and training agencies. The collection of such general information was garnered essentially from visits to State business assistance agencies. In all, the pilot phase was instrumental in preparing the tools and the mind of the researcher before the main data collection phase. From the pilot, the researcher had an overview of what would be expected and were ready for what would be unexpected from the field. Since the interview guides as well as the

skills of inquiry for qualitative data were tested and refined with different types of interviewees (i.e. trainer, manager, and trainee), the researcher gained more confidence and was ready to start with case study data collection.

The presentation of the individual case studies will follow Stake's (1995) outline. Basically, it is a description of the business as well as training context and one by one of major training issues emerging from the company followed by the analysis to provide accounts for the research questions. Further detail of the outline is introduced at the end of the next section of 'Introduction to the Cases.'

Above, the methodological and operational issues preceding fieldwork have been discussed. An important conceptual framework has been developed. Part Two of the thesis follows with overall information about data collection in the field, and preliminary background data of the companies under research.

**PART TWO:
FIELDWORK AND
DATA ANALYSIS**

Introduction to the Cases

Fieldwork and case studies data

Fieldwork for this research was conducted entirely in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, Vietnam from July 2005 to January 2006. Following the sample selection strategy set out earlier in Chapter 4, five training service providers were chosen through personal contact as well as randomly from those appearing on newspaper listings. Their introductions resulted in the researcher being able to contact five training corporate customers. Data for the case studies was collected during company visits and interviews with staff, who had experienced training, managers and owners of those five domestic private companies and their training service providers. In order to achieve diversity in the units of research, companies of various capital and labour sizes, industries and other business characteristics (age, level of organisational structure development, level of experience with training) were targeted, provided that they were both private and domestic. All the selected companies were headquartered in Ho Chi Minh City, and four out of the five companies served primarily domestic customers. The companies were in different manufacturing and service industries: a hospital, an electronics trading and service company, a software outsourcing corporation, an office wood furniture manufacturer, and a garment company. Organisational structures of the companies were of great dissimilarity, from very flat to heavily hierarchical. Size of the workforce also varied considerably, from as few as 30 to over 500 employees. The training service providers were also of diverse backgrounds working for state universities, foreign assisted training programmes, the Chamber of Commerce and Industries' training school, and the training division of a city business association. The real names of the companies and their training partners are withheld to preserve anonymity and the confidentiality of their human resources and operation strategies. Names of the interviewees are also not revealed, their biographical data are given in Appendix 6. The companies are summarised in Table II-1, following the sequence of the researcher's visits.

Table II-1: Basic characteristics of the case companies and the number of interviews conducted

Case	Company	Year founded	Labour size	Product/Industry	# Interviews with company staff	Training partner	# Interviews with Trainer/Organiser
One	SourceCode Co.	1997	500+	Software/ outsourcing services	6	University centre	1
Two	ClothPrint Co.	1990	100+	Children's apparel, garments, cloth printing	2	Training school of Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry	2
Three	Stream Co.	1996	60+	Uninterruptible power system/ distribution and warranty service	5	Foreign assisted training programme	2
Four	WoodFurn Co.	2001	30+	Office wood furniture	3	City's Youth Entrepreneurs Association Training Division	1
Five	EyeHealth Co.	2002	60+	Ophthalmic surgery/ health care	7	University centre	1

Basic information on the studied companies and the interviewed staff is as follows.

Case One is constructed on data collected from SourceCode Co., a fast developing software outsourcing company serving solely clients in developed countries. In the three years before the fieldwork, the company won major outsourcing contracts with renowned customers and continuously expanded its staff to meet the demand. Notably, training in 'soft skills' that facilitate collaboration among programming teams has been accordingly promoted besides technical and other management training courses. Interviewees of this case include the top manager, two training managers, and three trained staff as well as a manager cum trainer of a university training centre.

ClothPrint Co., a small garment company with its training reliant on the courses offered by the training arm of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industries (VCCI), supplies the data for **Case Two**. It is a typical Vietnamese small private manufacturing business where the key positions were all confined to the owner's family members. The management of the company attended several training courses on basic business start-up and management organised by a branch of VCCI. The informants include the company manager and his deputy, as well as two master trainers/training organiser.

Case Three is built on the interviews with the trained staff and managers of Stream Co., an authorised supplier of uninterruptible power supply (UPS) devices made by Taiwanese Star International for the Vietnamese market. The company has recently invested heavily for many staff to attend various training courses in the hope that upgrading staff knowledge would result in business improvement. One of various courses the company acquired was offered by a foreign-assisted training programme, whose mission is to support small and medium sized businesses in Vietnam. In total, there were seven interviews conducted for this case with the trainees who held managerial positions in different departments and branches, the deputy manager, and two trainers/course organisers. Although the top manager and several other staff were approached, meetings did not materialise, particularly because the company was in the busy year-end time and moving to new premises.

Case Four is developed from the materials from WoodFurn Co., a small company producing wooden office furniture serving the needs of working space in Ho Chi Minh City and neighbouring provinces. Being a member of the city's Youth Entrepreneurs Association (YEA), the owner of the company was introduced to

several training courses on business management skills, in which he and a few of his staff then participated. In total, four interviews were conducted with the business owner and his two staff as well as a trainer from the city's YEA.

Health Co. is a private ophthalmic hospital opened by an overseas Vietnamese who expected his staff to have professional service skills through various high-end training services. Several prevailing short training courses from prestigious suppliers were acquired for the hospital staff, and one of them was from a training centre of the business management faculty of a leading university in Ho Chi Minh City. The researcher discussed specific business training and its effects with the managing director of the hospital as well as six of his staff and one of the trainers. Data from these interviews contribute to the formation of **Case Five**.

Besides the information from the interviews conducted with people from the five case companies and their corresponding trainers (30 in total, detailed in Table II-1), broad training issues were also discussed with several managers of other companies and State business training assistance officers (11 altogether). From these discussions, further contextual knowledge about training in the city's and national private businesses was obtained. Table II-2 below summarises the distribution of all interviews conducted during the fieldwork.

Table II-2: Consolidated data on informants of the research

Fieldwork contacts	Cases			Others	
	Company	Trainee	Training partner	Business	Training
Top manager	5	-	2	2	3
Middle manager/trainer	4	11	5	1	5
Staff	-	3	-	-	-
Total	9	14	7	3	8
Grand Total	30			11	

On the whole, the companies under research and their staff cooperated favourably with the researcher and provided ample data for analysis. The research issues of training practice, results and evaluation were discussed as exhaustively as possible with every interviewee based on their own training experience and perceptions. The interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, and contacts for research purposes were

maintained with several interviewees after the fieldwork. Interviewees were selected on the basis of having attended short business training course(s) at least three months earlier than the interview date. To obtain the most reliable data possible, most meetings were arranged outside the interviewee's working place, and privacy was maintained throughout all interviews.

Data collection by questionnaire was once attempted with the seemingly most supportive company, and though the test phase proved the questionnaire was workable. However, as too few people were willing to participate, the method was abandoned. Relevant documents about business and training activities were also gathered from the companies as well as the training service providers.

Data analysis approach

Each of the five company data sets is to be analysed separately before a cross-case comparison is performed. The analysis template is based on Stake's 'Outline of a case study report,' as cited in Merriam (1998) and modified accordingly for the purpose of this research. The original outline can be found in Appendix 3. The adapted approach adopted for single case analysis by the researcher consists of four parts and is summarised below.

After a brief **Introduction** about the case comes the **Business Profile**, which includes the company's *history* and business development as well as the areas of *business focus* and strategy. This part also highlights the development and reality of *human resources* of the case. Mainly it is the extensive narrative description which further defines the case and its context.

The major part of the case is devoted to examining **Training Activities and Outcomes**, in which first *training situation and related activities* are described in detail. Then the *emerging issues*, based on the interviews with the case informants and relevant documents, are consequently developed and discussed. This is where the stories and accounts from the informants are categorised and contrasted to underscore the issues the company was facing. Comparison of data from different parties inside and outside the company for confirming or disconfirming training concerns is undertaken here as well. *Discussion* about training and outcomes, facilitators and inhibitors of learning transfer, i.e. affirmations corresponding to the research questions, are made at the end of this part.

The final part of the case studies is dedicated to **Conclusions**, which summarise the identified training issues and the resulting outcomes for the case company.

Following the outline described above, the research aims are generally covered when the company's training purposes are exposed, training activities are described, and the initial explanations about the extent of training impacts are made. Meanwhile, the levels of Learning, Behaviour Change, and Results of the original Kirkpatrick's model embedded in the proposed evaluation framework, are also addressed when the training outcomes are identified.

Following the individual case study, the researcher then undertakes a cross-case analysis where the main themes are examined (see Chapter 10). In particular, training issues or problems extracted from the five individual cases, and the initial reasoning and explanation for these issues are considered as the major findings from the cases. This is then followed by a cross-case analysis which compares and synthesises those findings, classifying and reorganising them into major categories that correspond to the different layers and elements of the proposed evaluation model. Tables will be used primarily to present and compare themes emerging from the single cases. The most popular initial themes will be highlighted and developed in order to address the research questions. More details on the strategy adapted for the cross-case analysis will be given at the beginning of Chapter 10 (see 10.3).

The following sections will examine data on each company's training and outcomes in turn, before the cross-case analysis is conducted.

5. CASE ONE: SOURCECODE CO.

5.1. Introduction

The introduction of the Internet to Vietnam in 1997 facilitated online connection and collaboration with business partners the world over. New opportunities for the software industry were then presented by international companies with outsourcing orders to take advantage of local software developing skills at very competitive prices.

SourceCode Co. was established coincidentally in that very year to provide services to the emerging demand. Aiming to serve solely the international market, the company had managed to survive the dot com burst there during the early 2000s and developed very rapidly after 2004. In this industry, keeping staff updated with ever-changing technical development is crucial. However, facilitating teams of engineers to collaborate effectively on a large number of projects is also important. An influential training department was set up, a training process was standardised, and an atmosphere of personal development through training was created. SourceCode has been focusing on the training of ‘soft skills’ since the quick expansion of its human resources and development project size, and reaping positive results. Training was said to help the company to communicate and negotiate better with its customers, cut costs, and provide the managerial staff with confidence in project management. Nonetheless, training was believed to have potential that had not been adequately capitalised since necessary facilitation was not fully appreciated and implemented thoroughly inside the organisation. Learning transfer was largely dependent on staff’s personal initiatives.

The case study will provide a window into SourceCode’s training related activities, describe training outcomes and discuss the effects of several factors believed to have influenced the process of learning transfer.

5.2. SourceCode Business Profile

5.2.1. Company History

Established in 1997, SourceCode has been a privately owned company to date. Located in Ho Chi Minh City, it started with a small-scale contract to perform software tests for a big telecommunication customer in North America. The contract

was unexpectedly won by family relationship with one of the customer's staff, and since then SourceCode has specialised in fulfilling outsourcing orders from a number of large companies abroad. During the early 2000s, SourceCode also had to withstand the burst of the dot-com bubble. It survived, maintained its core technical human resources, and started to win more contracts when the software market revived. In recent years, the company enjoyed rapid growth and became one of the biggest names in the IT industry of Vietnam. It provided software services of all kinds: from adding new functional modules to existing products to development of new software packages; from product testing to product enhancement, technical support and network integration. SourceCode's expertise spanned from development of classic business applications to the areas of modern telecommunication technology. Its clients were 100% from overseas markets, including well-known companies in the United States, Japan, Australia, Singapore and Canada. The company size and annual revenues have kept growing at a very impressive pace in recent years. Its number of software engineers at the most blistering period increased by 75% a year, and revenue was reported to expand 50% per annum. The company had a strong team of management and it has recently broken the boundary of 500 employees.

SourceCode has become well-known in Vietnam, and also been recognised in the international outsourcing market. The company was considered an ideal employer for IT graduates who wanted a career in software development, as it immediately provides them with practical technical experience and puts them in a genuine software project environment. At the international level, it was regarded as a reliable partner with 'offshore software outsourcing best practices,' on par with the favourites like Tata and Infosys from India.

At the time of the fieldwork, the company was in the middle of various expansion plans. New buildings were constructed to provide working space for the expected doubling in workforce by 2010. Legal procedures and lobbies were also followed to gain permission to open an own college in order to have a stable supply of engineers for the forthcoming projects.

5.2.2. Industry Context and SourceCode's Business Focus

The lucrative global software outsourcing business was said to be a worth over Euro 46 billion in 2006 (Ferguson, 2007). Vietnam was first ever ranked on the world outsourcing market at 20 among 25 countries in 2004 by A.T. Kearney, a leading global consultancy firm. Though the country managed to maintain a gross growth rate of outsourcing revenue of nearly 50% since then, so far it could enjoy only a tiny fraction of the world market value, at USD 70 million in 2005 (Kazmin, 2005).

In Ho Chi Minh City alone, about 650 local companies with 20,000 engineers were reported to participate in the software industry (Stocking, 2005). It was observed that salary for local software engineers in the industry had been doubled recently, and Vietnamese companies still enjoyed an advantage as this expense was only two thirds the level of the closest Chinese competitors.

Recognising the importance of the ICT sector in general and the potential of the national young human resources, the Vietnamese government provided full support to the sector in terms of infrastructure and policies. So far, the government has invested to establish seven out of eight software parks in the major cities to provide working and training facilities to the IT businesses and human resources. Those clusters have been equipped with the best possible transportation and communication infrastructure, advantageous space rent rates, and enjoyed some joint marketing efforts. The support of the government was also reflected in the application of tax incentives for software businesses and their employees, as well as the development of a legal framework on electronic transaction and intellectual property rights. However, significant concerns remained about human resources supplied for the industry: experts constantly complained that university graduates did not possess the right skills and all needed retraining before actual deployment. The imbalance between HR supply and demand existed mainly because technical training institutions were not able to provide quality engineers while businesses have always been yearning for more capable staff.

With the favourable condition in terms of connection, market potential, and government support, software outsourcing has been confirmed as SourceCode's mission in the next five to ten years, as the chairman revealed. Its vision was 'To be one of the top telecom R&D outsourcers and help put Vietnam on the world map of

offshore development.’ The prospect of launching original products designed and developed under the company’s own name has been deliberately declined. The local market had been once considered, however, concerns about underdeveloped market size and the risks of software piracy made the company decide to serve exclusively foreign customers. SourceCode had an R&D department, not for the purpose of creating genuine innovation but only to stay updated with promising technologies in order to serve the customers with such specific requirements in the future.

SourceCode’s delivered customer values were regarded as the results of reduction of development and maintenance costs with high-quality and low-cost solutions. The values were ensured by the company’s best practices of software development and project management, the capacity of its staff to work across languages and cultures, and leveraging time zone differences. The company has been certified by various quality control organisations to comply with general and industrial quality management systems (e.g. ISO 9001, TL 9000 for telecommunication and CMMi for software development). Besides these international procedures, SourceCode itself has succeeded in developing its own ‘Business Management Framework,’ in which all business activities were driven to achieve customer satisfaction through a series of stages and decision points. This commitment and actions regarding quality have been considered crucial in SourceCode’s business proposition.

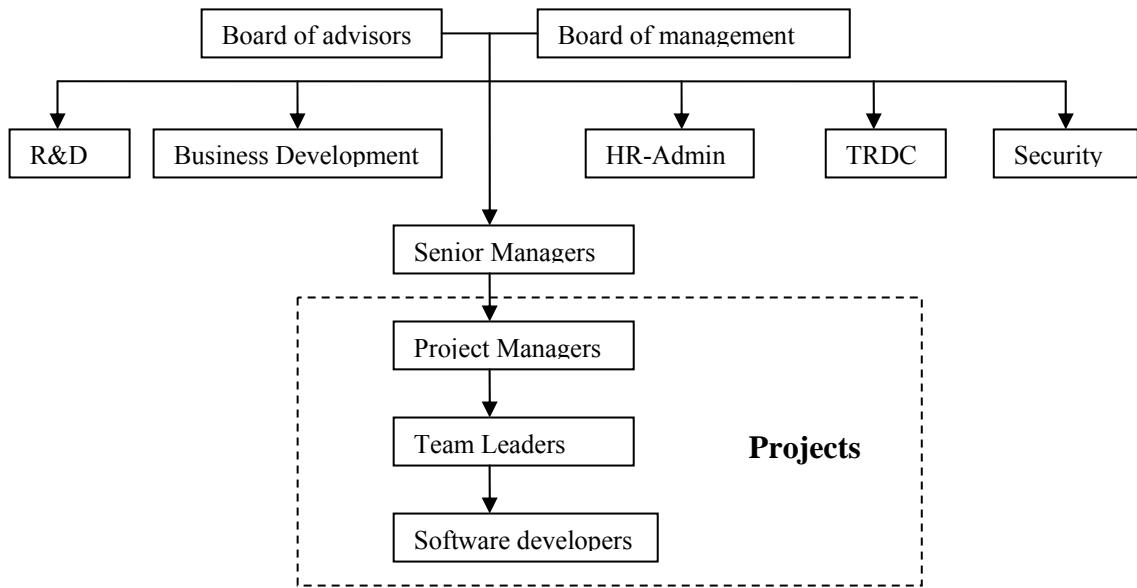
Besides the prime promotion of external customer satisfaction as most service businesses, the company also attended to its internal customer satisfaction. The working environment was reported to appreciate creativity and personal development, and value pride in work and collaboration.

In short, SourceCode has put every effort to take full advantage of the local human resources to ensure quality products and achieve customer satisfaction.

5.2.3. Human Resources

As in any service business, for a software outsourcing company, one of its most critical assets is the human resources. A local privately-owned company, with rapid expansion of staff, nowadays SourceCode had a rather complex structure.

The organisational structure of SourceCode is depicted in the following diagram.

Figure 5-1: SourceCode organisational structure

The company had a board of management and a board of advisors which consist primarily of foreigners and Vietnamese educated abroad with rich local business experience. It clearly influenced the way the company was being run and the strategic and operational measures taken to navigate it to the leading positions in the outsourcing business. Besides, the recognised management team helped to attract and gain confidence from potential customers and employees. However, in essence, it was the family members who started the business in 1997 that had the most significant influence and power in running SourceCode.

The majority of SourceCode's staff were software engineers who had graduated from top local universities. Since 2003, SourceCode experienced quantum leaps in its staff size. To meet the sharp increase of orders from foreign customers, SourceCode recruited substantially in the last few years and faced fierce competition from other outsourcing firms to attract fresh capable engineers. It started to frequently organise open days as well as company presentations and promotional activities to technical universities beside Internet advertisements. It was observed that the new recruits usually needed a period of updating with new technical development tools before being employed in real projects. The most dynamic unit of SourceCode was outsourcing projects, consisting of software developers, team leaders and a project manager, with project size usually varying from 25 to 40 people. More complicated and larger orders may entail over 50 engineer projects. The engineers were structured around outsourcing projects to work closely with customers, and moved from one

project to another. Furthermore, the engineers were encouraged to be specialised technically with the tools they used and in the functions they participated in in the software engineering process. Therefore, the structure of the management of larger projects became more layered and heavier. Following the international standards in software development required a well structured organisation, so the structure of software projects became more and more complex and stronger management was required. Coordination among projects was overseen by the senior managers. So far, the proportion of staff in management positions in SourceCode was 20 percent.

Departments peculiar to technical companies like R&D and Intelligence Security were also in place to keep up with technical progress, as mentioned above, and make sure accumulated intellectual assets were not distributed outside without proper authorisation. The business development department had not played an important role in the past, but recently it was staffed with more marketing people as competition has made business more difficult.

To coordinate and manage the training activities for SourceCode's staff, a separate unit called 'Training and Resource Development Centre' (TRDC) was instituted. The existence of the position of training manager in local software companies was claimed to be popular, but a separate training unit like that of SourceCode was not. The training department was considered a very important unit that facilitated quality HR development for incoming orders.

Engineers of SourceCode were not the highest paid in the outsourcing industry in the city. However the company still managed to maintain its attraction to both experienced engineers as well as novices, and the company managed to keep the attrition rate rather low. It was just 3 percent, half the rate for the industry. The average age of the software engineers in SourceCode was 26 and, surprisingly, in an industry where male engineers were believed to be the overwhelming majority, 40 percent of the technical staff here were female.

5.3. SourceCode's Training Activities and Outcomes

5.3.1. Training Overview

SourceCode explained its success as the result of 'heavy human resources investment and superior customer service.' The chairman of the board asserted that the company would stay in the software outsourcing industry focusing on the foreign market rather

than engineer and market its own products, and this business strategy was well communicated to the staff. SourceCode notably seemed to maintain perfect alignment of the training focus and its long-term business direction. The areas of training under concentration were English, software engineering technical skills, and 'soft' skills. Practically these areas aimed at serving the overseas customers, improving the effective collaboration inside and among teams of software developers, and the technical nature of the company expertise.

A separate department dedicated to all training activities in SourceCode was claimed to be unique among local outsourcing businesses. Its roles included coordinating training demands from projects, periodically organising in-house training courses, screening training offers from service providers as well as identifying quality trainers to arrange long-term cooperation on an individual basis. At the time of the fieldwork, it was a ten-man department, but the head of training revealed that it would soon expand up to 50 as staff size was soaring. A new training process was also developed incorporating specific training needs assessment as well as post-training evaluation. An internal source revealed that SourceCode would spend up to USD 700 per person per year on training and in the long term, it has prepared to open its own university to satisfy the projected employment needs.

Communication in English was considered a hurdle for the young software engineers though their technical skills were on par with engineers from any other country, as the chairman observed. Language courses were organised on a regular basis for the staff. They were facilitated by different tactics like having an English speaking day weekly or the policy of using English exclusively when communicating by email.

Attracting local engineers to meet the growth of the company in the recent years resulted in compromising some quality of the recruits. The SourceCode training manager said, 'We took the top 10 or top 20 graduates from the established technical universities a few years ago, now we have to accept top 50, or top 100.' However, technical expertise has not been a major concern for SourceCode or other businesses in Ho Chi Minh City's outsourcing industry. Opinions from leaders of all software businesses converged in considering the upgrade of technical skills for the new engineers unproblematic. A general manager of another leading outsourcing company pointed out, 'after two months of working with the more experienced, a newly-minted university graduate can work on a software project... In fact, the local

universities have provided their students with a rather good basic software development background, we just have to equip them with the current technology.’

In this regard, SourceCode relied greatly on in-house, on-the-job technical training where the more experienced transfer their working knowledge to the newcomers. With detailed processing procedures following recognised international standards, the project managers were confident of their technical training’s effectiveness. This type of training was mostly conducted in-house and regularly complemented by business placement, for about 100 engineers a year, to clients’ sites to build the expertise in the latest technologies.

What many leaders from the top IT companies also recognised in their staff was the lack of ‘soft’ skills which enabled them to work together effectively. Besides, assuming management responsibilities when the majority of middle managers have only technical background was a fresh challenge in any outsourcing company. Therefore, alongside the growth of the company, SourceCode has recognised the issue and focused its training on different non-technical skills. For a start, all new employees had to attend a compulsory course, where they learned about the new working environment, code of conduct, general etiquette on discussion, presentation, brainstorming, time management, and teamwork. These specific ‘soft’ skills were then cultivated in each employee through further in-house short courses by in-house trainers or visiting speakers. These training courses were opened on a regular basis and considered opportunities for colleagues to develop social bonding.

When an employee climbed up the organisational hierarchy, he was provided with more sophisticated training, which focused on skills of leadership and management. For team leaders and project managers, SourceCode has established sets of designated skills believed to help the incumbents to perform their management tasks. They also started to have the opportunity to attend short courses outside the company where they got hold of more profound and extensive knowledge (e.g. marketing) which was not available in-house. A case in point was the course named ‘Effective management skills,’ offered by a training centre of a leading university in management. The course covered subjects like problem solving, communication, conflict management, negotiation, personal management and development, which were asserted to help ‘[the company’s] development of capacity and practical skills to solve specific business problems creatively.’ The course was designed to be

learner-oriented, consisting of activities like case study and group discussion, teamwork, and role playing which were considered novel to many participants.

The pursuit of 'soft' skills was not peculiar to SourceCode. It was of interest for many businesses with large software projects. SourceCode's management maintained that this area of training would continue to be a focus as long as they still operated in the outsourcing industry. In fact, English and 'soft' skills were of greater concern to the management than building technical capacity for their staff. Among the middle managers, there was a trend to improve their managing capacity, by both official corporate training and self-learning plans.

5.3.2. Emerging Issues of Training

5.3.2.1. Practical Gaps and 'Soft Skills' Training Needs

A survey in 2005 conducted by QTSC, the first city software park, into the supply of human resources in software engineering revealed considerable weaknesses of the local engineers who had lately graduated from universities. Nearly half of them did not have specialised technical skills, over 40 percent did not have teamwork skills and were poor in foreign languages. Over 40 percent were said to be lacking in presentation and communication skills, and nearly a third lacked confidence. In particular, nearly three quarters of the interviewees were said to have had no real-life project exposure. Predictably, SourceCode's chairman reckoned that they could take in only 15 to 20 percent of fresh university graduates though the company was in constant need for more engineers.

Quality of local university outputs in general was always controversial and retraining was obvious in order to prepare new staff for their new jobs. However, as mentioned earlier, SourceCode's new recruits seemed to catch up with technical requirements very quickly by learning from the experienced colleagues during daily work. Training in skills to collaborate effectively among the engineers on the other hand was much more difficult. SourceCode observed that the 'soft' skills were of crucial importance but quality training service providers were difficult to find. Meanwhile, such skills had never been developed by universities. Furthermore, the traditional teaching, training and learning style inside universities in the past did not facilitate the experience and skills of teamwork, groupwork or collaborative working. The official education system did not provide the students with basic and practical skills

to complement academic knowledge. The chairman of the company claimed that ‘There is no organisation dedicated to such training... the newly graduated people did not have such skills. We know that they are completely ordinary skills, but no school offered them.’ The situation improved recently since university education was under public pressure to foster practicality and innovation, and more diverse training courses were offered publicly. However, ‘soft’ skills were still a rare quality in the workforce.

Serious software outsourcing projects could not be handled by a talented individual anymore. Requirements to finish sophisticated orders in SourceCode called for organised teams of experts. To facilitate technical engineers to work together successfully required training in the skills that seemed exotic to them in many cases. SourceCode’s chairman noted that even the hired employees with years of work experience elsewhere were not found fully equipped with the essential skills to collaborate in multi-phase engineering processes in his company.

Interviews with other member of the company’s management as well as other leaders of outsourcing businesses all reflected the concerns about the absence of these skills rather than technical capacity. Managers at lower levels also echoed that training in these skills had proven to be indispensable and helped their staff collaborate effectively in their projects. Together with English, ‘soft’ skills were of high priority in the company’s wish list. While a lack of tailored training supply existed, they had to rely on their own training first. Many considered the company’s standardised ‘soft’ skills training programme their valuable property, which was protected by a highly confidential policy.

The gap in the ‘soft’ quality of supply and demand of the software engineers was therefore an important driver for training in SourceCode. For the engineers as members of the software development projects, the immediate objective of training was to close the gap and quickly enable them to work together effectively. Managers at higher levels received a little more sophisticated training, essentially about people management. For instance, team leaders had one day’s training with further orientation on management when promoted. Meanwhile, project managers expressed their constant desire for further training in management, although they did not seem very well aware of which specific areas they had to concentrate on. In fact, all managers involved in projects were from the ‘technical side,’ and managing people

was a brand new subject. Training for team leaders and project managers, about 20 percent of the workforce, was hence a challenge of equal importance as providing collaborative working skills for the grassroots engineers.

In short, the current human resources supply which was deficient in the essential skills of teamwork and management created huge training needs, and SourceCode has partly addressed those by in-house programmes. The initiative was totally in line with its business focus. But provision of more sophisticated management skills for an expanding number managers at different levels remained a challenge for the company when in-house expertise was inadequate.

5.3.2.2. 'Soft' Training and Organisational Experience

Large investment in management training besides technical training was proposed by SourceCode's management as a strong ground for their customers' confidence in doing business with the company. The commitment of the company to training was also reflected in financial investment per engineer, where the proportion for soft skills and management training was believed as large as that for technical training. In terms of moral support for management training, the interviewed staff described the issue as 'hottest,' 'urgent,' and of 'high priority,' so that they were all behind the movement to equip the necessary knowledge for themselves and for their staff. The departing training manager summarised,

How to prove to our customers that SourceCode is still a top business partner? We have just two solutions: we have to have good relationships [with universities and inside the industry], have the ability to attract talent; and secondly it is training. We are willing to provide training...

Besides, the company preferred a 'promote from within' policy rather than recruiting managers from outside, so that most staff, when first promoted to leading positions, had little experience of managing. Short training was considered basically a means to build confidence in the new managers and team leaders. The new managerial staff seemed to pick up the basic skills and made good progress in their new roles. It also appeared that the issue of career development was taken into account by the management, and training played an important role in this process.

In reality, the importance of management and 'soft' skills training emerged and was gradually recognised recently. The appreciation of the skills to work together and the

trend to provide such training has appeared not only in SourceCode, but also in the repertory of software outsourcing businesses visited during the fieldwork. This area of training was made available to SourceCode's staff around two years before the fieldwork. The emphasis on management training came up with substantial moves such as developing standardised 'soft' training categories and contents, developing a standardised training process, and preparing for an own college to meet the company's own needs.

The moves provided rich data on and experience of management of training activities. On the face of it, these activities showed commitment of the management on training issues. In practice, they contributed to providing the workforce with a uniform background of knowledge. The training department was established and personnel for the department would be added in proportion to organisational growth. The head of the department himself was directly in charge of management and soft skills training. However, the training department was considered lacking in people with capacity and experience to carry out the professional tasks in the new process, e.g. conducting surveys of training needs, and evaluation of effects. Therefore, training in SourceCode was inclined towards providing the knowledge believed to be useful for the people without measures to improve the precision of investment and justify the outcomes.

The training process was in place in time to correct this in principle. But in reality, as the training manager revealed, the training process was far from perfect in application. For instance, training requests were initiated by the project managers. However, necessary skills to identify training needs were absent among those managers so that they were not sure whether or not they had filled the gap of management and soft skills for their people. As the training manager explained:

In many cases, when we sent out requests... we asked about needs, the senior managers just followed their own hunches. They felt that [the staff] needed this point, that point, and sent the staff up for training.

Furthermore, identifying training needs had been considered as the traditional function of HR people, and the overlap of that job has not been resolved. The training department therefore was not able in assisting projects to overcome the problem of identifying staff's training needs.

At the other end, training evaluation was a novel step just introduced into the standardised training process. Basically, the new training process required the administration of evaluation form right after training and a review three months later. However it has not yet been practised due to mounting workload and lack of expertise. The people in charge in the software projects found themselves confused in proceeding with the new procedure. The principle of conducting evaluation was set out in the process, but the project managers did not have the tool, a 'monitoring system' as one manager said. As they confessed, they were more familiar with software development than training related activities. Hence, building one's own capacity in the 'learning by doing' fashion was the norm, especially in the training evaluation step, and so it is not certain that in the end they acquired the necessary skills. The training manager commented:

I am not able to observe them directly. They contacted me, and I provided them with certain materials... they asked me how to conduct evaluation of the skills of their staff, to develop their staff... I provided them with such materials... but how they proceed in reality, I don't [know]...

The introduction of the training department and the training process reflected the response of the management to an emerging area of focus. On the other hand, it exposed some technical and training management problems which had to be addressed by better coordination and development of needed capacity. SourceCode has matched the challenges in principle by undergoing major moves in allocating staff and designing a framework. In fact, only few have recognised that it required specialised skills in training management to operate and benefit from the process.

5.3.2.3. A Favourable Corporate Culture

The overall policy to put emphasis on 'soft' skills and management training in SourceCode was supported by an encouraging business environment. After years in business and under the influence of the Western style of management, the company was able to establish its own corporate culture, which promoted openness and teamwork, learning and sharing, personal values and professionalism as well as practicality and initiative.

First and foremost, the spirit of teamwork and cooperation has always been cultivated. At work, staff were especially encouraged to be collaborative within

teams and proactively with customers towards the goal of problem solving. Working online with customers of different culture, far away, in different languages required more than just technical quality, so that staff and those in managerial positions were urged to update and share the 'soft' skills, e.g. brainstorming, negotiation. Learning from each other and sharing knowledge were not just catchwords, as one senior manager highlighted, but exercised in reality. A large number of training courses, on both technical and management subjects, were provided by in-house human resource people. The encouraging atmosphere has made the trained people feel responsible to transfer knowledge they collected from external public courses to their colleagues, as an interviewed project manager did. He volunteered the training on soft skills like 'effective communication' and 'professional working style,' not just for his project staff, but across the company. They in effect created an image of a high-tech company where schedules of available training were shared over the local computer network so that those who were interested could register.

The culture has effectively promoted training and learning to the staff, who were mostly young, ambitious and attracted to the trend of improving 'soft' skills. The phenomenon of a substantial number of staff tracking management jobs was recognised by a director, 'they are very young, and very quick... very dynamic. Besides developing technical expertise, they are aiming for management.' 'Soft' skills training gave them the first taste of working requirements in a professional environment, and their reactions were very positive. The in-house compulsory courses have attracted the young engineers. A veteran project manager noted, 'I found them interested in the course on soft skills... [Outcome] was also dependent on the trainers, but they liked it... and applied it.' This was also the view of the training manager as he received the responses from the trainees who described the courses as interesting and effective.

On the other hand, the culture also benefited from 'soft' skills training. From training, a common language, vision and a sense of sharing emerged. Also in this environment came the desire and interaction for personal improvement and group integration. As one project manager explained:

... When I need to solve a problem, I say 'OK, everyone, "problem solving"!' Then only those who had been trained knew what I meant by 'problem solving'. Who hadn't then tried to get trained to know what it was... Or 'six

thinking hats.’ I say ‘OK, now we think the positive way. We wear red hat.’ Those who hadn’t been trained then felt puzzled. Why do we have to wear the hat...

In this context, the ‘soft’ skills, largely facilitating interaction and team-work, were welcomed by the management and staff alike to be utilised within the organisation. An engineer considered it a ‘whole discovery’ when people learned and accepted the fine line between heated discussion on work-related matters and daily social relationships. The project managers have given the impression that they believed and counted on the people management skills to maintain their teams in harmony and the work in check. It therefore reinforced their ideas of career success based on blending non-technical skills and technical expertise in an open and sharing environment. It could be observed that the culture was finely adjusted so that it combined *skills* of the West and the *preserved relationship* of the East. The management claimed that its special corporate culture was mirrored on two aspects: technically strong, and friendly at the same time. In other words, SourceCode described its culture, as dichotomous: having ‘Vietnamese [interpersonal] relations,’ simultaneously following ‘Western working style.’

Concerted efforts were made to nurture the corporate culture. The story of the company featuring its focus on ‘soft’ training besides continuous technical updating, and the active and shared atmosphere among the young dynamic staff has appeared in local newspapers on several occasions. The chairman of the company frequently voiced his point over the media on the importance of the young, competitive and professional people. Besides, several programmes of activities outside the workplace were arranged to strengthen the relationships and build up the cooperation spirit of the employees. Various sports clubs as well as outdoor trips were organised to facilitate social bonding. The confidence and pride of belonging to a company taking distinctive care of staff in terms of providing all necessary training emerged. The culture of SourceCode which embraced the corporate image and communication, staff thinking and behaviour can be summarised in the comment of a young team leader, ‘Each of us in SourceCode seems to be provided with the energy from professionalism, personal values and responsibility of cooperation to help advance the IT industry in Vietnam.’

In such an environment, accumulation of the 'standardised' skills and the exercise of these were said to be effective, boosting the morale of the staff and benefiting the company. Reciprocally reinforcing each other, 'soft' skills training and culture were developing; training was integrated into SourceCode's culture.

5.3.3. Research issues discussed

5.3.3.1. The training decision

Examining the latest development of SourceCode and the interviews with its staff, a coincidence of timing of the company's interests in soft skills and the upsurge of the company's staff size can be recognised. The staff in charge of training in the company revealed that the need for soft skills training had been recognised and vigorously satisfied only within the last two years. During the same period of time, the staff size of the company nearly doubled annually. The need for soft skills emerged to help streamline work processes as an increasing number of software engineers became involved in an increasing number of outsourcing projects. Recognising the implacable necessity of 'soft' skills was a common explanation among the leaders of outsourcing businesses, for the efforts in improving staff quality in these non-technical areas. At a higher level, the advanced courses were for young managers to develop the necessary confidence before assuming management responsibilities.

The complexity of the larger and more complicated projects added to the needs of skills in teamwork and leading project staff to achieve objectives. The combination of people in a specific work setting as well as the phenomenon of people working across projects created the need for people management skills. One of the project managers admitted that his belief that a group of engineers following 'formulae' would definitely reach preset goals has changed since he was promoted and actually assumed a management position. The work of software developers or software processing businesses can be seen as typically technical. However, the arrangement of a number of developers working into projects corresponding to customers' orders adds to the requirements the basic communication skills to fit each piece of their work into the larger picture. The nature of a software project having specific contiguous and concurrent phases all in modular partitions required the project members to interact closely with each other to fit their assigned modules together.

Besides, the nature of uniqueness of projects in general, and the stakeholder concept require a broader skills set from the members and project leaders. One senior manager acknowledged the benefits of leaders possessing technical expertise as it would help them to win the staff over more convincingly, but soft skills were considered of higher priority in the project management positions.

Yet the decision to provide the staff with 'soft' skills stemmed from the need which the management recognised first and then took actions. The staff did not recognise their own needs to ask for the necessary training, but the management helped them in a timely fashion. Concerns about efficiency of collaboration within projects urged the management to look for assistance from training. At that stage, 'soft' skills and management training in SourceCode were short-term. SourceCode's move in stepping up soft skills training in parallel with the significant addition of staff was more of a palliative or situation-driven action.

Since being openly promoted by the management, the skills were gradually discovered by the engineers during daily work and when they were put in managerial positions. Junior managers and engineers recognised that they had been provided with a 'theoretical framework to follow,' and at the same time 'a way of self improvement,' as the training manager summarised. The discovery of and growing favourable attitudes toward the new body of knowledge further promoted 'soft' skills training.

From a different angle, young technical people were the strong majority of SourceCode staff, even in the management levels. Project managers were mainly in their late twenties, or early thirties (the latter considered themselves 'rather old.')

During the interviews, the issue concerning their trained background were the most frequently mentioned: 'we are of technical background, so we are novices in such [management or social] knowledge...' as one project manager admitted. Mismatched technical background or little experience was then compensated by soft skills and management training. It was the need recognised by the management, and it was also the desire of a large number of staff, who were ambitious in their career development.

In 5.3.3.1, the problem with HR supply for the outsourcing businesses has been analysed. The shortcoming that in the local higher education system, only academic and technical knowledge were emphasized and social skills were overlooked, was

another factor that triggered the training activities in the company. In fact, the issue of necessary 'soft' skills had rarely been perceived in education as well as in other industries. There were constant calls for university education reform to provide more autonomy to the students and equip them with practical knowledge, but the changes seemed to realise slowly. The businesses then had to bridge the gap themselves.

Also from the view of the management, characteristics related to culture were the weakness that called for intervention from training. Infamous qualities like oversensitivity, weaknesses in leadership and initiative, lack of confidence were recognised as counter-productive, and gave the company yet another incentive for sending all their staff to uniform in-house training and public courses. In fact, besides the purpose to provide the needed management techniques, confidence and leadership quality were what was most expected among the young managers after training.

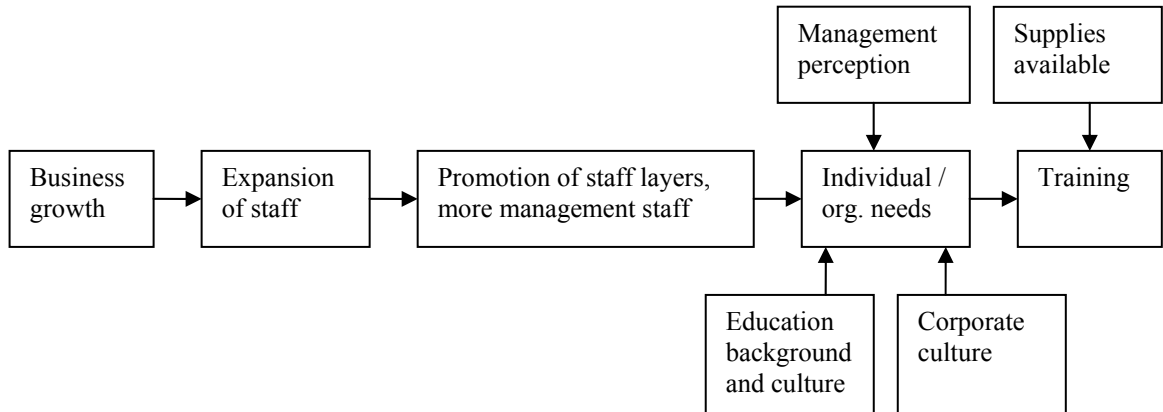
Soft skills training in SourceCode was also encouraged by its corporate culture as discussed in 5.3.2.3. The staff literally mentioned 'soft skills' in English, shared the same view about the current training needs, as well as promised and actual benefits from the training. They also shared the perception of the necessity of this training with the managerial staff. Such strong belief in 'soft' skills training benefits was found throughout the management levels. As mentioned with regard to the reciprocal relationship between corporate culture and 'soft' skills training, reinforcing corporate culture was another factor behind the decision to have training rolled out in SourceCode.

In addition, changes happened on the market more quickly than inside the official education system. The supply of business training was on the rise while companies found more and more training options. Gradually, SourceCode was able to select courses deemed appropriate for its staff. At the same time, the company was able to attract capable trainers to cooperate on a long-term basis. The growth of training services and the availability of plenty of training courses invited SourceCode to open up to opportunities.

In summary, the decision for soft skills and management training in SourceCode was primarily the result of business growth and its consequences. Contributing to the decision were the self-reasoning perception of the benefits of training from the shrewd top managers, and the reality of skilled labour shortages facilitated by

movement from the training supply side. The training decision is summarised in the following diagram.

Figure 5-2: Training decision in SourceCode



5.3.3.2 Training activities

SourceCode developed step by step a strong system to support its training activities. A recent important achievement in terms of corporate training in SourceCode was the introduction of the company's official training process. Alongside the training department, the process was introduced to ensure quality training for the business and 'keep us a step ahead of competitors' as the training manager stated. The process, though not revealed in full detail, was described to be comprehensive including steps in both pre- and post-training phases. Before the launch of the process, although training had been in a very supportive environment, it was exercised in a rather spontaneous manner. The following can be highlighted about the way training was implemented.

First is the existence of a compulsory course covering topics like time management, problem solving, and delegation for every new engineer no matter what experience that person had had. It was thought to provide the trainees with basic skills 'to work the SourceCode's way.' Staff of management levels received more sophisticated topics like leadership for team leaders, or people management for project managers. Besides the purpose of giving practical techniques, the course also served as an occasion for initial colleague bonding. All were said to be really impressed and more confident after these introductory courses.

Second, in-house training was an important component of training policies in SourceCode. Besides the standard course for beginners, in-house training was regularly carried out to keep the staff updated with technical developments and relevant management skills, essentially of project management aspects. In-house speakers and trainees therefore bonded further through this activity. During the in-house sessions in which a learner-centred style was adopted, the idea of a modern workplace was reinforced. Unlike technical training for which the company could always rely on their own in-house experts, the soft skills domestic trainers had to be complemented by guest speakers on special topics, which were more on the 'soft' side. The company had recognised this and from time to time had professional speakers in for talks on management. So, the intensive training ensured that the company obtained necessary skills and had its culture reinforced.

Third, training needs, however, were not surveyed by people having the right expertise. It was otherwise conducted in an unorganised and cursory fashion. Although the company had its separate training department, individual training needs were collected as part of performance-assessment administered by the HR department every six months. This information was usually vague and did not help in training people to shape their training plans for the incoming periods. Furthermore, to submit training requests to the training department was the monopoly of project managers, who had limited experience in training matters, based on their own judgement about staff performance and skills shortages. The engineers had to rely on the available courses the training department offered or what their projects manager suggested.

Fourth, similar to the case of training needs analysis, the post-training evaluation activities, which required sophisticated expertise, had not been an integrated part in training activities. Training in-house had its own questionnaires for trainees after courses, but the head of the training department considered those 'happy sheets' only. Virtually nothing was done for the public courses that SourceCode sent its people to. The follow-up by managers after staff had received training was very cursory. The author of the new training process admitted that evaluation was one of his headaches in redesigning the training process. The problem was not likely to be solved so long as he was the only person having some skills of evaluation but he had decided to leave for another company. Benchmarks for evaluation, such as a

‘corporate competency model’ which detailed the corresponding sets of skills needed for specific positions, have not been developed. Therefore, evaluation has not yet seriously brought about useful information for the management.

Finally, although the company has provided a broad range of training already, a large number of young managers did not find those enough. A few interviewees were seriously looking for long-term advanced courses and considered such training crucial for their career advancement. For other individual plans, a prestigious MBA or an international certificate in management was highly suitable. Becoming a professional manager was believed to be associated highly with prestigious training, and the belief was widespread even among the young ambitious engineers.

In summary, mass in-house training was continuously provided, all staff received soft skills training but personal training needs were not addressed adequately. A new training process was developed, and training evaluation, which just received interest and was acted upon recently, was still a challenge for the training department.

5.3.3.3. Outcomes of the Extensive Training

In general, training created very positive reactions among SourceCode’s staff. The engineers found themselves overwhelmed by the new training organisation and content. On the other hand they were not able to describe in detail the outcomes management and soft skills training had brought to the company. Opinions about the impacts of training were more reserved, no internal evaluation had been conducted to highlight the results.

Commendation was popular for internal and external training in general. The courses were praised for the knowledge they had delivered to the participants, showing them the new areas that they had not been exposed to or had just partially visited. As one project manager said, the training was an ‘opportunity... to systemise one’s knowledge.’ Usually, people claimed that training had facilitated progress, improvement, or better product quality, but there was no more specific indicator about changes after training. Moreover, the skills obtained from the courses were ‘soft’ and ‘deep’ so the informants maintained that the effects were not so explicit but latent, as opposed to the learning transfer of technical knowledge. The training manager commented:

We cannot observe them in their work. I just feel that they were all interested in the courses, they wanted to apply, to change something in their project...

In spite of that fuzziness, appreciation about the positive outcomes of training prevailed. At a rough estimate, the training manager maintained that fifty percent was the rate of transfer of learning, provided that training also met personal needs. Fewer specific outcomes of the training were mentioned during the interviews. The table below summarises training outcomes categorised following Kirkpatrick’s classification at different levels in SourceCode.

Table 5-1: Training outcomes in SourceCode

Level	Outcomes
<i>Learning/Attitudes</i>	Basic ‘work-together’ and management skills Importance of social/‘soft skills’ recognised Staff and managers became more motivated in their work Confidence in managerial roles
<i>Behaviour</i>	Selective attempts at and applications of new skills Improvement in communication and people management Effective negotiation with customers conducted by managers More skilful in project management In-house courses to staff and other colleagues volunteered by trained managers Actively looked out for further management knowledge and professional certificates Sending more staff to soft skills courses
<i>Results</i>	Management had better control of the business process Much less staff overtime, project targets met more easily Quality of products improved Productive and collaborative project work environment Corporate culture of shared language, knowledge sharing and value of knowledge, personal values reinforced

Among the skills of most attempted or actual applications after training were negotiation, communication and problem solving. Especially the small tips obtained from public courses such as “Effective Management Skills” were praised for their practicality and put into practice successfully.

By using the new skills, the project managers managed to agree more realistic targets with customers, and therefore reduced staff overtime, at the same time maintaining a healthy working atmosphere among the project staff. The use of negotiation skills became a sustained practice afterwards. Such successful initiatives gave the young managers more confidence so that they desired to spread the knowledge further to their staff: they sent their people to training, or provided in-house training when possible. Through those achievements and other techniques that opened up staff involvement, as a director acknowledged, his subordinates had improved substantially in people management. These personal improvements also motivated the new managers to keep training in SourceCode moving on. The training manager noted:

In my capacity, I usually attended meetings, such as project manager development programme, team leader development programme... I attended and the managers gave me feedback... So we know that it is OK, we had such a feeling...

Changes at the corporate level have not been catalogued because training evaluation has not been an official practice. However, all managers and staff were upbeat about training as they thought it contributed to the effects of enhanced work flow and the overall working atmosphere. This type of training was a perfect complement to the values the company promoted, therefore corporate culture benefited as an important outcome. The shared management jargons, the developed team-spirit, the image of a training-focused company were the outcomes at the corporate level. Even though the top managers of the company noted that the results from training were ‘unclear,’ or could only be roughly sketched, there was no sign of disappointment.

Byproducts of training included benefits to the management side as providing staff with training opportunities showed their attention to staff’s development. In their view, training was also regarded as ‘a means of motivation.’ In the training manager’s own words, organising ‘soft’ skills training demonstrated that the

management ‘did not just simply put people in managerial positions with more responsibilities.’ Training was an opportunity to win over the staff.

The skills were *soft*, the applications largely based on personal initiatives, and the changes could not be attributed to training only. However, the positive changes were recognised at both personal and organisational levels, the company training investment seemed to repay quickly.

5.3.3.4. Facilitators and Inhibitors of Learning Transfer

SourceCode’s determination in business strategy to stay with the software outsourcing business had a profound implication on its training strategy. They had to focus on the delivery of outsourcing orders with punctuality and functionality, rather than trying to market their home-grown products with technological breakthrough. Therefore, they had to focus on improving the staff’s teamwork and project management skills for process efficiency rather than on R&D for product innovation. Teams and groups were to be put ahead of talent. The ‘soft’ skills were actually necessary for the job, so the staff received them positively. The compatibility between business strategy and training strategy was key to the ensuing outcomes of training.

The aspect of management which supported training activities was also a facilitating factor, that enabled staff and the company to reap the most from training courses. As described in 5.3.1 and discussed in 5.3.2.2, a separate training department, the development of an official training process, and programmes for junior management levels were established to facilitate training in an organised fashion. Under control from the department, specific knowledge and skills were planned and provided, for the right staff at the right time. This official planning and implementation also made the staff recognise the importance of the activity and then perform accordingly. These facilitations have gathered momentum as SourceCode was successful in creating and maintaining positive attitudes of the staff towards the supporting skills to assist their software engineering jobs. Worth mentioning is also the moral support from the higher levels of the organisation. In spite of the immature process and the lack of relevant expertise (5.3.2.2), the top managers’ public attention and backing, in terms of trust, ‘promote from within’ policy, resource allocation and leadership with regard to ‘soft’ skills training gave the training staff and others more determination and confidence.

Besides advanced public courses for the managerial staff, in-house training was sensibly attended to so that all staff had appropriate preparation for managing and collaboration. It also facilitated internal communication and provided further bonding among the trainees. The combination of mass in-house training for the engineers and advanced public courses for their supervisors prepared the necessary ground for their relationship in the workplace. This point was reported by the training manager as the premises of managers' confidence, and staff's 'understanding and empathy with their boss's pressure,' and therefore streamlined the work of both sides. SourceCode was successful in using in-house training as a facilitator for the smooth operation of their outsourcing projects.

The majority of SourceCode staff can be characterised as young, capable, fresh from universities, of solid technical background, but having limited work experience. They were ready for a challenge, unfamiliar with the *soft* skill subjects, and having ambition. Besides, the traditional view about the power of knowledge regardless of its practicality attracted them to any training opportunity. These qualities helped in explaining why the young staff supported strongly the training programmes and their unanimous positive reactions.

In the context of being unfamiliar with people management but ambitious enough to prove their managerial ability, the young managers could find the motivation to test their new skills. Being an enthusiastic new wave of management, they had the need to justify themselves among others and eagerly did so, as one project manager summarised, 'I had desire, so I attended the course, and certainly after that I had the motive to apply it.' Moreover, the coveted image of young professionals or 'pros' has also influenced the new generation of managers. Being dynamic, possessing internationally recognised certificates, capable of problem solving, and tactful in personal relationships were the qualities the young managers in SourceCode wished to develop. In fact, the cultural characteristics of being concerned about one's own image in others' eyes, can be another factor that coincidentally furthered training and the application of 'soft' skills.

Initial outcomes of training were under heavy influence of SourceCode's corporate culture (5.3.2.3). In the context that 'professional working style' was seen as a collective value for individuals to contribute and develop, then changes in behaviour accordingly would come naturally. Sources inside the company reaffirmed the

importance of culture when maintaining that the 'promote from within' preference was also to preserve their own culture. Those in managerial positions after mastering 'soft' skills have led the preservation of the corporate culture values. Training has become another norm in SourceCode. Cultural values in terms of image of a modern workplace, language and behaviour of the 'pros' contributed to create more followers of the 'soft' skills training and application.

On the other hand, the company did not manage to make the most from training due to some substantial inhibitors: inadequate explicit facilitating system and activities, insufficient feedback about training, and imperfect evaluation. Uniform training for managers was implemented in top-down mode, personal training needs were not discussed and attended to. Weaknesses of the staff in teamwork, leadership, interpersonal skills and training needs of the managers were taken for granted. Though it has not yet created serious problems, such 'central-planning' resulted in a lack of initiative to address one's own individual problems, like the following example of one manager.

I am not concerned about looking out for another training course... if I didn't take this course, the company would have to seek another similar course for me... from somewhere else – Project manager.

Additionally, few people in the higher positions appreciated the necessity of post training facilitation and evaluation. The chairman of the company simply insisted that because his staff 'definitely' needed the skills, they would definitely apply them upon returning from class. Concerning the post-training phase, the staff usually reported 'no barrier' for knowledge transfer, but they could not point out specific facilitation either. Arrangement for coaching and mentoring was desired and acknowledged by some managers, however it was rarely exercised. Monitoring of progress from the immediate managers of the trained staff was cursory, due to their limited awareness or capacity, and also a problem of the immature training process. Therefore, necessary further orientation or training was not provided appropriately.

Facilitation was not appropriately implemented, and it was the same with evaluation. Before the new training process was introduced, feedback about training had not been mandatorily gathered. The confidence in positive training outcomes may have blocked out the intention to improve it. In reality, the idea of conducting training evaluation has not been taken seriously. The people in charge understood that it

would be time consuming and complicated, on the other hand, they did not possess the human resources of adequate capability to conduct a full evaluation. Hence, back at the workplace, everything depended on staff’s personal initiatives; without evaluation the chance to fine-tune training efforts as well as learning transfer was forfeited. The complacency over the mass training conducted throughout the company has further deferred the necessary actions to enhance the training outcomes.

Table 5-2 summarises the facilitators and inhibitors of the process of learning transfer in SourceCode.

Table 5-2: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer at SourceCode

Inhibitor	Learning Transfer			Facilitator
	→	Learning	←	Training strategy Corporate culture Management structure In-house training Staff profile
Management Absence of evaluation	→	Behaviour	←	In-house training Corporate culture Staff profile
Management Absence of evaluation Complacency and ignorance of training management	→	Results	←	In-house training Corporate culture

In summary, in SourceCode, learning transfer was facilitated by the established corporate culture, appropriate training strategy, official training management structure, advantages in the characteristics of the young engineers, and intensive complementary in-house training. The process was hindered by immature skills in the management of training, lack of evaluation expertise coupled with complacency about the early benefits of extensive ‘soft’ skills training.

5.4. Summary of Case One

Taking advantage of the expansion of the software outsourcing opportunities, SourceCode has developed quickly to be a leading business in the industry. Winning larger and more complex orders required a large number of and more efficient project staff. To meet requirements, the company has introduced massive training for managers and project engineers. Public courses on management for managers were complemented by compulsory in-house 'soft' skills training for the staff. A dedicated training department and other organisational actions have greatly assisted the campaign.

Training have given SourceCode considerable results such as streamlined communication, improved problem solving skills, managers' confidence, motivation and better people management. In particular 'soft' skills training has contributed to developing capable middle managers as well as reinforcing a united workforce and a strong corporate culture. Training became an integrated component of the company's operations when a new standardised process was introduced covering all phases before and after training. Essentially, it was also underpinned by extensive in-house training and a corporate culture which promoted practicality and professionalism.

SourceCode has become big enough to run its whole new training process, but focus was put on training activities only and the post-training phase was rather ignored. Awareness about the importance of facilitation for behaviour change was weak as training evaluation was not performed due to a lack of appropriate expertise. SourceCode manifests an example of a successful business where management training has assisted performance tremendously, but not yet to its full potential.

6. CASE TWO: CLOTHPRINT CO.

6.1. Introduction

This is a case study of business and management training in a company in Ho Chi Minh City specialising in printing on clothing materials and garment products for children.

Starting from a micro handicraft production unit during the height of *doi moi*, ClothPrint in 2005 became a joint stock company of around 100 employees with products exported to various foreign markets as well as retailed in major supermarkets in the city. Since it had been introduced to ClothPrint, however, management training has been strictly dedicated to family members who have been directly running the company. The ordinary staff were just allowed to receive training in technical skills related to their functional responsibilities. The training programme provided by the Chamber of Commerce was adapted from the successful worldwide package of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for very small and small business starters. In the owner's view, management training was not primarily considered as an opportunity to sharpen ability in managing the business, but as a check for the management to reflect on the way they ran their business. Limited learning transfer was observed, largely due to the incompatibility between training content and the scope and mature development stage of the business. Some measures to improve the application of knowledge after training did not produce significant results.

The following description and analysis provide an overview of training activities in ClothPrint under the influences of the company and industrial context. Essentially, based on the recollections of the company management, outcomes of training on its staff and the company are described. Discussion about what facilitated or hindered the process of learning transfer is also provided.

6.2. Company and Business Profile

6.2.1. Company History and Business Development

After the market-oriented economic policy had been officially accepted as the solution for poverty-stricken Vietnam in the late 1980s, the private sector quickly started to blossom. During this period, in 1990, a small silkscreen printing business

was established by separating itself from a State manufacturing company. SilkPrint, as it was called at that time, was a very small package printing shop operated by the husband and wife owners at their own house with several employees. The business developed quickly and by 1996 they had a bigger production facility, entered the garment industry and changed the business name to ClothPrint. In 2000 and 2003 respectively, the business was registered as a limited company and then transformed to a joint-stock company.

After fifteen years of development, the workforce of ClothPrint in 2005 amounted to over 100 employees, half of them were in the original business of cloth printing, and the rest was producing garment products. The production facility received substantial investment resulting in two large manufacturing sites furnished with specialised multi-colour printing machines.

The company's original business of cloth printing was however still its main activity. ClothPrint was processing orders from other garment companies by receiving plain textile and returning image or pattern printed fabric ready for cutting and sewing. Having invested heavily in modern printing machines, they were confident that they were leading the market in that specific segment of garment product manufacturing. A number of local garment manufacturing and export companies were requested by their foreign partners to have their materials processed by ClothPrint.

Besides cloth printing, ClothPrint has already entered garment manufacturing. They have just focused on fashion clothes for children, for which products they had an advantage with their colour-printing technology. At the time of the field visit, the company was working on a plan to expand their garment making capacity, aiming at doubling its staff for the export markets. Turnover seemed to be relatively balanced between the two main businesses of fabric printing and garment manufacturing.

ClothPrint had decided to penetrate the local market by presenting its products in major supermarkets in the city. There, its colourful children's clothes based on suitable cotton and elastic materials featuring the contemporary comic heroes or sports event mascots were said to win the kids' favour. The neighbouring provincial market was also served, and the only marketing channel there was also the supermarkets. In addition, ClothPrint had a substantial foreign market. Its products have been exported to top quality-demanding countries like Japan and the EU, and to some new markets such as South Africa.

In fact, the company has successfully created a name in the kid's apparel marketplace. It was awarded the title of a Favoured Vietnamese Brand in a cross-industry poll organised by a local business newspaper. For many years, the company has been recognised by the local authority as a law-abiding business for its due fulfilment of tax responsibilities and care for the employees and society. In order to amass business information and expand business connections, ClothPrint was a member of various associations, from popular ones such as the Vietnamese Intellectual Properties Association and the Chamber of Commerce to the less significant District Business Club.

6.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus

Textiles and garments have been a key industry that contributed immensely to the country's wealth and created many jobs for the people. It was the second biggest contributor (behind oil and gas exploration) to Vietnam's GDP, bringing in about USD 5 billion export revenue in 2005 and aiming at USD 8 billion in 2010 (Vinatex Report, 2006). From 2000, the industry has grown steadily at a rate of over 20 percent annually (IER, 2006). The domestic market is also important, estimated at about one third of the size of export revenue. The industry has employed nearly 2 million workers, more than a fifth of industrial labour in the country (VNEconomy, 2005). However, being a labour intensive industry, competition has always been very intense among the local manufacturers. There were an estimated 250 private manufacturers alongside 90 state-owned enterprises producing garments in Vietnam (GTZ, 2005). The industry's output by ownership in 1995 and 2001 is given in the following table.

Table 6-1: Distribution of Garment and Textile Output in Vietnam by Ownership (%)

Sector/Year	<i>Garments</i>		<i>Textiles</i>	
	1995	2001	1995	2001
State sector	34.8	31.7	56.8	48.5
Non-state domestic sector	47.1	43.2	25.9	23.3
Foreign invested sector	18.2	25.1	17.3	28.2

Source: Nadvi and Thoburn (2004)

The table shows the substantial contribution of the non-state domestic sector, especially in garment manufacturing. However, especially for small private firms,

challenges were increasing with the prospect of economic integration into regional and international business arenas.

In different media such as newspapers, the Chamber of Commerce business forums, the company homepage as well as via personal communication with the researcher, the company's owner repeatedly referred to the imminent challenges and opportunities his company was exposed to when Vietnam became a member of AFTA and WTO. Besides, the competition in terms of labour cost from the neighbouring giant China was considered very threatening, particularly in 2008 when export quotas are relaxed. Meanwhile at home though there were much delay, the country's biggest state garment corporation, Vinatex, was preparing for full equitisation. In all, pressures of competition were closing in on ClothPrint.

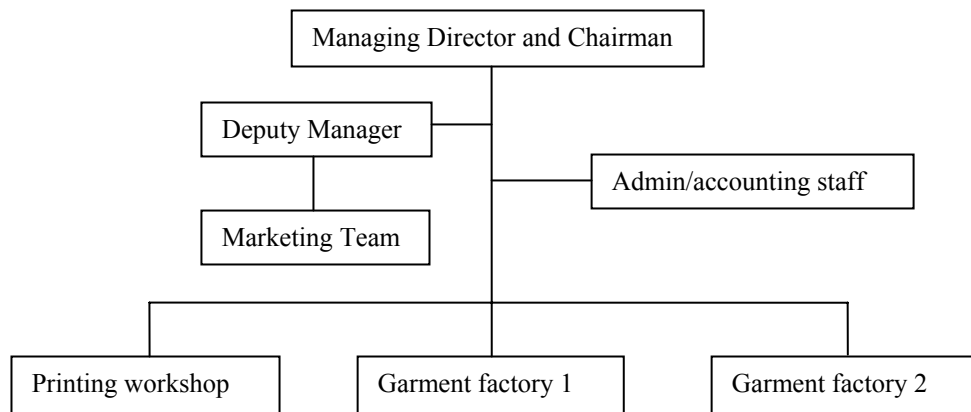
The owner manager of the company revealed that competition has pushed the garment industry to the threshold where an absolutely level playground was attained. Labour and processing costs were driven to the minimum so that buyers had massive advantages in bargaining for orders. To confront the local competition and prepare for the vision of Vietnam as more integrated with world trade, the company has since 2002 invested significantly in technology, acquiring robust automated machines to deliver the best products and maintain its position in the printing area. Expertise obtained after many years in the industry made it confident that it could still offer very competitive prices after such heavy investment. It also worked hard on winning recognised quality management standards and finally achieved ISO 9000 certification in June 2006. It was hoped this would help the company to have a better image in potential business partners' views. Besides, the company has been active in participating in activities promoting its name in the local market and business community via trade fairs, national sports events, and Internet brand development websites. In recent years, it appeared that the company has been preparing for a shift of focus from its traditional strength of cloth printing to manufacturing garment products for export. With regard to products, ClothPrint continued to focus on its advantage in apparels made from elastic cotton materials for children.

In summary, ClothPrint aimed at maintaining its competitive edge in manufacturing quality printing products by investing in modern equipment, adding more value by expanding children's apparel manufacturing, and trying to increase its market outside the country.

6.2.3. ClothPrint's Human Resources

By its very nature and since inception, ClothPrint has been a family-owned business. Until now, the business has been directly run by the husband and wife team. It has been converted to a joint stock company to 'follow the popular movement,' as the owner noted, also to be able to preserve the human resources by giving shares to the employees in the future as he had planned. So far, holdings of the business were totally in the family members' possession. Together with their son, the team formed the management board. The structure of the company was very flat. The husband was the chairman, while his wife took the position of managing director. The son was considered 'succeeding staff,' and in charge of a manufacturing site. All decisions concerning manufacturing operations and business strategies were made by the chairman. His wife, though formally being the managing director, only looked after workforce affairs, like an internal agony aunt, and also took care of social and charitable activities to maintain a good corporate image. In business, their roles per se were somewhat compliant with the oriental tradition: the man plays the role of the only breadwinner while his wife is the home-maker. Their strong relationship over many years was reckoned as a substantial strength leading to the company's strength nowadays. Without any family business heritage nor formal business training, just by diligent efforts and experience accumulated alongside their business development, the pair has succeeded in establishing a competitive company.

Under the family management board, a deputy director oversaw the sales team as well as transactions with the distribution network. Ten site supervisors, marketing, sales, and accounting employees completed the company's managerial and support staff. All vital decisions about human resources matters were made by the two primary owners of the company.

Figure 6-1: ClothPrint organisation chart

The ClothPrint workforce had not been expanding at the rate of business growth. The number of employees was maintained at around 100 in recent years. The majority of them were from the provinces and disadvantaged districts of the city. Because of the nature of the competitive low-paid garment industry easily leading to staff defection to businesses offering marginally better salary, the owners of the business had been emphasising the importance of staff loyalty. There were shop floor workers who had been committed to ClothPrint for more than ten years. The salary of the manufacturing employees was said to be at the level common on the market, but they were provided with better than average accommodation and some fringe benefits. Formal sub-organisations like trade union and youth union as well as labour agreement and working regulation had also been established, making ClothPrint an exemplary law-abiding private company. There was even an intention of giving ‘shares’ to the workers for their service, which the owner considered as a tendency of businesses in order to keep their staff. Anyway, employee defection was a big concern of the management (also a phenomenon in the industry) as they could not easily find quality replacements on the labour market in a short time. Moreover, the industry has been renowned for its piecework-based low pay, and sweat shops so that it was very difficult to recruit workers who were devoted to the job.

As an industrial manufacturing business, the focus when recruiting staff at ClothPrint was on basic technical expertise and working diligence. Most of the shop-floor staff had limited education and only a small number of them had high school diplomas. On the other hand, the administrative staff were far more capable in terms of

education, especially the deputy manager who was pursuing a master's degree programme after hours.

6.3. Training and Outcomes in ClothPrint

6.3.1. Training Overview

Training has never been considered seriously in ClothPrint. The staff who received moderate training were designers, accountants and the management.

For the shop floor employees, technical training was conducted mainly on the job. Recruitment had already selected technical staff with adequate working skills. Moreover, their jobs simply followed recurring processing lines to mass-produce items of similar designs. Therefore, technical training was not really a priority for them. The staff receiving most technical training were designers who were in charge of creating attractive designs for children. Their work was computer aided so that improving their design techniques by becoming acquainted with professional software received due attention of the management. The staff were allowed to attend several courses on computer graphics applications as they planned to set up a design department at a later date.

The most significant training the management received was the course offered by the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) to its members. Originally, it was the training package developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) intended to equip very basic knowledge and skills to junior entrepreneurs in order to help them start and improve their small businesses. The more people start their businesses, the more other people get help by the jobs created. This philosophy migrated to Vietnam to become a nationwide programme (Starting Business – SB) implemented by VCCI and sponsored by the Swedish government. ClothPrint was among the first companies in the city to have their people attend the course. This has been recorded in many of ClothPrint's documents as an original effort to develop its human resources. Participants from the company in the VCCI training course included all family members in management (the husband and wife owners and their son) and the deputy manager.

Since that introductory course on business start-up and improvement, VCCI became the major training service provider for ClothPrint. The manager started to send his staff to other short courses or workshops organised by VCCI to update them with

information about several practical issues that businesses faced in their daily operation like new tax policies; accounting, export, and customs procedures; or administrative and secretarial skills. These were the frequent workshops organised by VCCI with presenters from the Ministry of Finance, or the city customs department. The small attendance fees involved were covered by the company as was the case with most other training.

Regarding business and management training, it has never been considered a priority in ClothPrint. The deputy manager's pursuit of a higher education degree was his personal project and he did not receive any support from the company. All resources were devoted to production and the way the business was managed has not been changed since the start. As the business developed well, this gave no incentive for the managers of ClothPrint to look for any public training course. To a broader extent, management development was conducted entirely in-house, and the chairman's son has been learning most of the necessary skills from his father's mentoring. Therefore, management training courses from outside the company became totally secondary to the hereditary scheme. To sum up, ClothPrint has been pursuing a very pragmatic training strategy, exploiting existing expertise and experience, updating functional skills rather than following any long-term training programme.

6.3.2. Emerging Training Issues

6.3.2.1. Management Training as a Privilege of the Family

It was a common reality that in small businesses in Vietnam, managerial positions were usually reserved for the owners' family members. Therefore beside business control, they could enjoy significant privileges in working conditions, material benefits and career development including training opportunities. In ClothPrint, management training was considered not only as a privilege, but also a well-guarded monopoly for the family members. The chairman of ClothPrint held a monopoly in decisions regarding the training the staff could attend. In reality, there had never been any request for training from his industrial workers. Though not having been explicit to the staff, 'management and business' training was revealed to be dedicated to family members only. The chairman was very assertive and clear about this point. He said about the policy he had to implement:

The management course about starting and improving business is for the business owners only. This has to be clear... The family members can attend the course. My son... he can... when I choose the people to send to a training course, we have to select family members, or the 'reliable' people, we do not provide training for everyone.

The policy was strictly followed so that it has greatly limited the opportunities of the other staff, in spite of the very basic management skills and minor fees. The deputy manager attended evening classes for an official degree, but he had to pay for his training out of his own resources. Management training in the owner's point of view was a double-edged sword, which might negatively contribute to the competition against his own business. In fact, the company had already suffered from the defection of several experienced workers. So, the chairman proved to be severely practical in developing his staff, which he considered a 'long-term' issue:

If I let them attend the course, they would all open their own businesses, especially during this time of competition. In other words, I ruin myself then. It is true... We have to think for the long term. Because there are people leaving after training courses. We have to think of the right course, for the right person, because we have to think for ourselves.

With this straightforward guiding principle, the ordinary employees could only have training considered technical and functional. The most popular courses the staff could attend besides on-the-job training were in computer graphical design to continue developing new products. Other courses that the functional staff sometimes attended, together with the managers, were crash courses to update them with changing tax rules and customs procedures. However, the justification of the training policy sounded very judicious and practical, 'We have to... send the right person to the right course, right for his strength and his preference, for his own tasks.' In this precise statement, the chairman on the one hand proved to be fully aware of training and its issues, but effectively defended his cautious rule on the other hand.

The point made by the company's owner was shared by a trainer of the programme and another training officer. In their experience sending non-family staff to training was not at all popular in small businesses. Furthermore, 'between owners and middle management staff, there is no trust,' observed the trainer, because '... I can say without fear that at least 50 per cent of the trainees are attending class to look for

another job opportunity. They did not go to class for something that they can apply in their workplace.’ Therefore, training or any capacity building investment was a privilege reserved for the ‘trusted’ people.

6.3.2.2. Ostensibly Inappropriate Training Content and Satisfaction

In general, the management of ClothPrint were satisfied with the training courses they had had over the years. The most significant management training ever for them was the SB programme, which was originally targeted at business self-starters and very small business owners. It did not appear to be appropriate for management with more than 10 years experience in business and managing a grown-up company. However, to the top manager of the company, the course brought precious and encouraging value. He appreciated that his experience made the training not really meaningful in terms of applicable skills:

Nearly as capable as a trainer, I can write down my own working procedure. For example, concerning the 4Ps, you have to have a product, then you decide a price, and then promotion for sales, and place for instance... In fact, if I did not have the theory, we would still have to follow the same steps: products, calculating prices, and promotion, that’s it.

On the contrary, he greatly valued the mental encouragement and the fundamental well-arranged knowledge from the course. His existing practical management expertise was said to be ‘systematised’ and ‘consolidated’ so that he considered himself ‘totally mature’ after training. All in all, the manager felt that all his daily practice of running the company had been justified by a programme ‘originating from ILO,’ and he became ‘more confident’ to proceed with his own management style. The very basic education background of the manager is another factor that made the training programme give him a positive impression. (The deputy manager, who had had a chance to get acquainted with such basic management knowledge during university, did not find the course useful at all.)

Mainly due to the discrepancy between the manager’s rich experience and the simple content of the training course, he could receive little substantial lessons for his business, which he openly confirmed. However, satisfaction with the basic knowledge collected from the training courses at least has provided the management with more confidence in developing the business. And in the extreme, when

knowledge from the management training they received was found coincident with previous experience, no further training was found to be necessary. The SB programme officer described small businesses owners as ‘extremely confident,’ not in a positive sense, but with an implication of their complacency.

6.3.2.3. Short-lived Business Clinics, Business Clubs and Follow-up Activities

One of the national officers of the SB programme admitted that it had been a rare training programme nationwide, having had the intention of continued assistance for the trainees after training, but in reality these efforts had not yielded any sustained results. The two models implemented post-training were ‘business clinic’ and ‘business club.’ A clinic is where trainees resort to when their small businesses have problems, to be served by a panel of experienced consultants. A club is an organisation in which ex-trainees gather to exchange experiences, market information and help each other to solve their own business problems. Neither of the models survived in reality.

Several reasons making business clinics succumb were the unpopularity of quality business services among small companies, the hesitation of business owners to reveal business information, and the preference for easy income among qualified business trainers. One of the national officers of the training programme noted that business consultation only existed in rather large businesses, those that had enough resources to pay for consultancy and could acquire the services of qualified consultants. Small businesses did not have the habit of turning to business consultants when they either had specific business problems, or needed advice for development. Furthermore, business consulting services for small companies were very unpopular. Business clinics were planned to bridge the gap, but as the national training officer disclosed, they were puzzled over the issue of financing the clinics. The small business clients did show interest, but they did not fully trust them and were not ready to surrender substantial money for consultation sessions. Meanwhile, subsidy from the national programme for the activity was limited. Moreover, a ‘master trainer’ cum consultant from the SB programme noted that Vietnamese small businesses were ‘extremely cautious’ about revealing detailed business related information so that the consultants found it very difficult to give specific advice. (It was also observed during the fieldwork that the interviewed people tended to give very ‘soft’ data about different aspects of their companies.) In addition, the same ‘master trainer’ remarked that the

trainers' preference for repeated undemanding basic management training over committed consulting services contributed to the indifference of the trainees toward business consultancy:

This is too ideal, time consuming, and uncertain. If it fails, it would damage our reputation. So no... Just open the old course, we will get a reputation, and get the money as well, we do not care if it is just a modest sum.

The clinic model was once tried, but people quickly forgot it when both supply and demand were not sufficient.

For the other model, the manager of ClothPrint was himself a chairman of the ex-trainee business club. It was an organisation where after training, participants of the courses joined as members to continue discussing, sharing experience and helping each other to overcome difficulties in business. It was also the intention of VCCI to get feedback and continue to assist ex-trainees by giving them consultations during club meetings. The club members met for a few times and the initial number of participants was around 50, but it soon seemed to be inactive. Finally a group of only four members continued to meet and it became an informal form of bonding among congenial friends.

The manager did not mention the reason for the collapse of the model. However, from the view of the trainers, after training the club members did not share common interests. In their views, it had no relationship to the training they had had together before. It was reflected in a poll about the purposes of joining the club, in which the respondents emphasised their objectives of finding business opportunities and exchanging business experience (nearly 75 per cent) over the needs of training related activities. Training seems to be already finished after class. Besides, from a cultural perspective, this arrangement was not in the mindset of the local businesspeople. The national programme training officer put it more clearly, 'It is the form that people discuss among themselves and raise their problems so that they can help each other. But {smile} it sounds too Western!'

The above organised efforts from the trainers' and trainees' sides failed though it was believed that a need for consultancy after training existed. A trainer commented, 'when the business runs, there must be occasions that they require inputs.' The latent needs, however, have not yet made such post-training activities workable when the

barriers of trust, business confidentiality, individual working habits, and suspicion about consultancy capacity were still very high.

6.3.2.4. Competition, Business Development and Management Training

After its peak period during the 1990s, the labour intensive garment industry has become highly competitive. Labour costs have been minimised to a level that as ClothPrint's manager observed, 'no seamster wants to work.' In addition, the globalised world intensified the competition among the local players. As the chairman commented:

Information about the market is available, we know all manufacturers, via websites, via papers, the costs of production are open. They [the foreign buyers] can now have different quotations just after a few clicks... Now they look twice at every cent. They said the Chinese agreed at 1.25, and at the same price, the Chinese product is better. The Japanese can now exert pressure on us with reference to Chinese manufacturers...

The company however was still able to continue developing and expanding due to its investment in better printing equipment so that it could provide more sophisticated designs and enjoy economies of scale. Meanwhile, they had to compete vigorously over labour costs in their garment manufacturing. This strategy has been emphasised by the company's owner as the only way to survive the increasing competition. Development of manufacturing facilities also led to the expansion of the labour force, and management became more complicated.

The services to assist businesses when competition intensified were readily in place. Especially, at the beginning of 2006, a training centre was established by the Association of Garment, Textile, Embroidery and Knitting (AGTEK) with technical assistance from an international finance corporation. It was dedicated to improving the managerial capacity of the areas considered crucial to the sector: production management, marketing and merchandising, human resources management and compliance with international standards of corporate social responsibility. The main target of the training centre was the small and medium sized enterprises in the sector which had been recognised as having disadvantages in HR compared to larger businesses and joint ventures. After six months in operation, however, the vast majority of participants were from foreign invested companies while it was reported

that very few local companies sent their staff to the centre in order to improve management capacity.

Nonetheless, the management still relied on experience of running a very small business, and the family members' direct control of manufacturing was still exercised. It was observed during fieldwork that the management had to oversee directly every aspect of the routine operations as well as development activities. The management were still able to manage the business the way they had exercised during the early days. They had total confidence in the philosophy of working side by side on the shop floor with staff, taking care of every employee personally. That traditional path, which was then still effective, prevented them from capturing professional management skills needed to cope with stronger competition worldwide. Moreover, when management training was considered as a monopoly for people of the 'inner circle,' who were familiar with and confident in small family business operations, basic training could do little to introduce changes to the way ClothPrint's management ran their business.

6.3.3. Training and Outcomes Discussion

6.3.3.1. Training objectives

ClothPrint is a company which has grown from a very small family business, survived and prospered for a relatively long period even though competition became more and more intensive. When starting the training endeavour, the company was already known in the local market. Those who received training were all family members and 'trusted' staff. They possessed rich managing and operations experience from work. The management system however was not adjusted to the expansion of the business, and the company managers continued to monitor closely daily shop floor operations.

In this context, ClothPrint's decision to enter training with VCCI was more opportunistic than strategic as eligible participants were restricted to family members. The business was on the rise. Therefore training was not resorted to in order to resolve any immediate problem. It was the Chamber of Commerce that invited its members to attend the training course. With a very basic educational background, the company's owner wanted to have a knowledge framework in order to run the business with confidence. Business opportunities allowed the company to

grow quickly and the owner was concerned that his knowledge base was not on a par with this development. Besides, the rapid changes on the market and the escalating competition also agitated the boss of ClothPrint. The fast moving competitive environment was recalled by the chairman:

Now that your product must have competitive characteristics, you have to study the market carefully. You could test, building samples and launch them to test in the market in the past, but now, if you are not careful enough... you have to be able to calculate the costs before making a test model. You have to be able to decide whether or not to try...

So, it was not from a specific problem of management, but it was to limit the risks that the manager of ClothPrint found his very motive of training, as he revealed: 'in general, competition is now different, so that the trainers are expected to give concrete guides for business to avoid failure.'

The training market was expanding quickly, available business courses advertised daily had gradually caught his awareness. The owner's wife and son also had training in the hope that they would share the burden of management and continue to control the family business. He admitted that there was no problem with management at that time besides the more challenging business environment, and the business was totally under control. The interviewed trainer observed that the majority of trainees 'know everything but they know nothing.' What they learned was not really original in their experience. Their training decision was therefore really opportunistic.

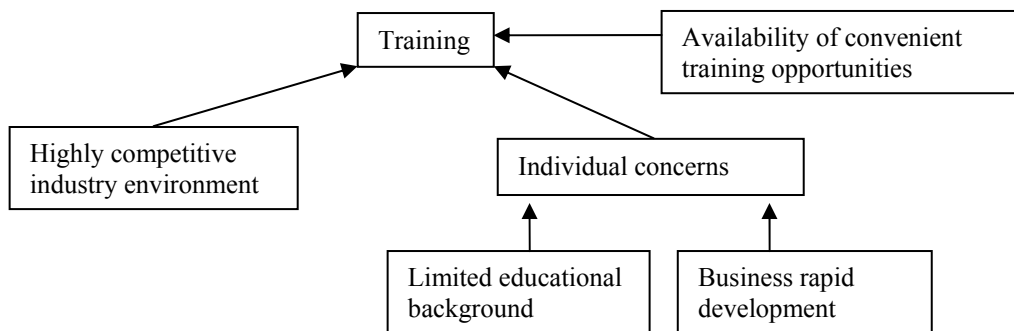
Attending the SB training programme was widely enunciated on the company homepage, public commercial websites as well as other documents and media. Participating in an international training programme was then used to contribute to raise the credibility of the company and can be seen as another motive for training. Training was not intended for long-term management building but it was for a one-off and short-term objective. An SB programme training officer noted that 'they do not have that long-term view... They only have current needs...'

In reality, that short training course was not a financial burden for the company. But after the course, there was no further management training that added more substance. The first course did not act as a stimulant or eye-opener for the management to have more profound training. Instead, the chairman turned to

collecting articles on fundamental business lessons and examples that were concise and easier to grasp and utilise. ‘Learning for confidence’ or ‘learning for expected experience’ is therefore likely to be the primary reason for training. As the same training office from the SB programme noted, ‘they are happy that they know something in this life, by themselves or from others, not just the theory...’ It was not a really urgent need, but an opportunity came when the SB course was available, so that it was conveniently satisfied.

In short, the question why ClothPrint people attended the management training course can be answered considering the following factors: individual concern because of the disparity between modest educational background and quick business growth, the fast changes and competition on the market, and the belief in the positive effects of training.

Figure 6-2: ClothPrint – Training decision



6.3.3.2. Training in Practice

Like many other small businesses, ClothPrint was totally controlled by a family and its members were in all the key positions. Training related activities were therefore at their disposal. Training was only attended to after the business had been substantially developed. In ClothPrint, the decision of trainers and training courses was the manager’s sole responsibility, and only his next of kin were allowed to receive ‘management training.’

The mode of training selection was based on convenience. The company was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, it then simply used their training. The opportunistic perception of training has simplified the screening process while management training was only for ‘trusted’ people, regardless of their capacity and the appropriateness to their work responsibilities.

The rich experience from running business in reality has helped ClothPrint's manager to contribute enormously in the classroom. The very basic concepts of business were transferred to people of overabundant experience. On the one hand, the first experience with systematic content yielded positive appreciation but, on the other hand, the trainees had to complement theories with their own working experience and found the course not as practical as desired.

There was no further attempt to undertake business and management training after the initial course with VCCI, as the need for confidence had been satisfied. For two years after the programme, ClothPrint did not enter any other management course. The company managers instead returned to being interested in things that appeared to be useful like 'Five steps to building a strong brand,' or 'the art of leadership in ancient China,' which were popular in national weekly magazines. Needs in this stage were the opportunities to visit and visualise the practices exercised by successful companies and businessmen. Besides, the short workshops updating on changes in policies and business skills were sought after. Staff were allowed to participate in these technical skill classes with the chairman, so that he also gained the ideas and therefore could monitor his people.

For the owner and manager of the business, facilitation to have the best results from training was not a concern. His philosophy about this issue was traditional: staff would work well for a boss who does his best to take care of their lives. He was reassured by his understanding of human resources, like treating staff as family, or directly working with the shop floor workers when orders flocked in. His perception of motivating staff was very simple. Therefore, consideration of measures to enable the staff to give the best from their trained capacity has never been considered.

On the contrary, the perception of staff attending outside courses was, 'they [the staff] have to show the effects... The staff have to show that they can do something interesting, then we can support them with the costs involved [of experiments].' The active role of guiding employees to get what the company needed was not carried out, and the first move was passed on to the staff. The deputy manager observed that transfer of learning has never been considered among ClothPrint SB programme participants. There was no connection between the intended outcomes of the course and the company's business.

Having a broader view, the trainer of the SB programme acknowledged that the issue of learning transfer had not been mentioned during the course of any training, leaving the participants with the impression of knowledge as the ultimate objective of training courses. Moreover, he maintained that the issue of facilitation was not deemed crucial even among trainers, so that trainees were not aware of it back at their workplace after training.

In conclusion, training in ClothPrint came about naturally. The top manager's concerns about managing a growing business were alleviated by a single training course. When the management had obtained the necessary confidence, the company then followed the old route: equipping staff with simple office skills, getting updated with the new business regulations and further expanding the business.

6.3.3.3. Training Outcomes

In ClothPrint, training seemed not to be taken seriously in terms of purpose and training content. Nevertheless there were considerable results. First and foremost, it was some basic textbook knowledge and confidence for the chairman. Even though the knowledge was very basic and he found nothing that was different from his experience, he said:

In fact, the process learned in training is very similar to what I had practised. We have to measure effectiveness, approaching the customer, etc... but the trainer had systemised [the steps] to make it easier to understand.

The lack of 'schooling wisdom' was filled, so his satisfaction from that training was very high. It was fortunate that the course was at the elementary level, fitting the learner's experience and it was easy to meet his objective for training. For other trainees, his family members, training was not considered important. Particularly for the deputy manager, the training was of little value and he was attending a master's programme after hours. Moreover, he observed that the trainers had a very limited practical touch, so that neither knowledge nor hands-on skills were transferred.

What was received was very familiar, so it did not create a revolution in the behaviour of the trainees. However, the ensuing confidence brought about significant results at the company level. The manager's better skills in negotiating with the company's upstream suppliers can be counted as the direct result of training. The

management also decided to approach a foreign assisted fund for a loan to invest heavily in manufacturing infrastructure to surpass other small private competitors. Training was the opportunity for the boss to review his own business and it was more than satisfactory: ‘The course is an opportunity for me to consolidate and confirm my own way of management of my business.’

He confided that from the course, because of confidence in his running of the company, he decided to expand the business and put the business in a more competitive position on the market. The chairman’s most beautiful words were reserved for the SB programme.

The course did not give me more capital, but it helped me to streamline, made me confident to invest. I felt that I got assistance, I got the skills, so I invested more, for example, in manufacturing facilities. I consider myself totally mature after the course. Frankly speaking, it was due to the course that I felt stronger and spent money on production.

Manufacturing capacity at the company has been improved substantially after the investment and ClothPrint’s products became familiar in several new markets and distribution channels. In addition, a few operations practices were identified as needing to change. For instance, purchasing, one of six modules covered in the training programme, was compared by the chairman before and after training:

Before, we worked very simply. Now it is more regulated. It is from the basics. We require price offers, or quotations, and we require certification from foreign partners. We need the certification that the products comply with the regulations of European or American markets, the two big markets.

It shows that training has had its impact in turning a practice from ‘spontaneous’ to conforming to the ‘industrial standard.’

Besides, training left its effect of ‘orientation’, furnishing the boss with the habit of gathering further information and lessons from reality and the media. He then went on business visits to exchange information and experience, at the same time keeping a folder of articles from newspapers and magazines, which he considered interesting, useful and very realistic.

Modesty and openness can be found in the leader of ClothPrint, and concurrently the satisfaction and contentment with the knowledge he obtained from training. From

another perspective, textiles, garments and printing on cloth were still a labour intensive industry with a simple manufacturing organisation, and required undemanding management skills from the managers. While the programme had not been designed to target those like the managers of ClothPrint, in any case the training objective was met, and outcomes of training were considerable. Outputs from the course were considered to be very positive even though the owner of the company attributed these results to the mixture of knowledge, development, and experience, as he concluded: ‘What I had practised, after the course I did it in a more systematic way.’ Training did not really produce changes, but it helped the manager to understand clearly the impact of what he did. When there was a fit between management jargon and practice, confidence was developed.

6.3.3.4. Outcomes Facilitators and Inhibitors

ClothPrint was a typical private family business (6.2.1). The powerful positions of the owner family members in the company ensured that they did not have to overcome some ordinary barriers to learning transfer as staff did, such as the peer pressure when trying to apply a new skill. Neither was there any barrier of authorisation to implement the changes they found necessary since they had full power of running the business the way they saw fit. They had all the authority to influence the internal business environment to use the new skills and knowledge if they wanted to. Power is therefore a natural facilitator.

In 2003, ClothPrint was re-registered from a limited company to a joint-stock one; titles of the company’s managers were changed including ‘managing director’ and ‘chairman of the board.’ In reality, their commanding roles in daily business operations remained unchanged (6.3.1). The very flat structure of the company is another facilitating factor for the managers to incorporate changes in their individual behaviours. Changes happened following direct command and simple communications to staff fortified their confidence. It was the case of the ‘chairman’ still directly managing the inventory of materials, semiproducts and finished merchandise. The warehouse was monitored closely by dedicated staff, who were in charge of monitoring numbers of goods in and out, but it was the chairman who directly calculated and made decisions to replenish or not (6.3.2.4). The knowledge from inventory management modules was reported to be directly applied, leading to better analysis and purchasing of materials and manufacturing plans in general.

Likewise, the owner's son was put totally in charge of a manufacturing site, so that he was able to test any theory of management he would like to. Again, natural power from ownership of the business is a facilitator.

The highly competitive industry environment was observed as an additional encouraging factor to learning transfer for the managers of the company. From 2000, the industry became more and more competitive and production unit costs were driven down to a minimum level (see 6.2.2). The pressure of survival and development made management strive to identify every opportunity to market their products. Along with their experience and efforts, some lessons learnt from the SB programme, such as ideas of business seasonal changes or international quality standard management have been integrated into operations and helped them to obtain better results. The competitive environment in this case facilitated the managers' attempts to try out measures to make the business more efficient. In the view of the business owner, positive business outcomes were attributed to the mixture of experience and acquired knowledge, while the driving force of the competitive industry environment was highlighted.

On the other hand, several factors including individual educational background of the trainees, training content and uncontrolled quality of trainers, and post-training support mechanisms were identified as potential deterrents to transfer of learning in ClothPrint. These factors contributed to introducing the narrow extent of implementation of knowledge in reality.

The business of ClothPrint was started from scratch when the boss left a state company after his military service. Not having had any management training or higher education experience (though university level education was also severely academic rather than practical), his capacity to build a systematic management knowledge framework was limited (see 6.3.2.2). Meanwhile he acted upon intuition and market opportunities. This was the reason why he praised highly the value of experience and at the same time very much appreciated the very simple modules from the training programme. Contrasting the SB training content and the accumulated rich experience, nothing was found to be new and therefore basic as well as delicate changes were not considered necessary. Manufacturing was continued as it had been managed over the previous ten years. The alternative of empowerment or enlargement of the management system was never thought of

because of the fear of losing business control. Management training was taken strictly as a privilege of the business owner's family members. Limited background knowledge made basic management training a satisfactory experience, a confirmation of existing all-round working expertise, and at the same time a Pandora's box which must not be opened to the other staff. In addition, it can be argued that the team has been running a manufacturing business, which can be considered unsophisticated and did not require very sophisticated adjustments in their management through training.

Concerning what was obtained from the SB programme, the training content was originally designed to be very practical. Though being trained by several experienced trainers, the ClothPrint trainees still maintained that it should have been integrated with more lessons from particular industries and fewer theories. Meanwhile, the programme has been expanding considerably and admitted many under par trainers. One trainer noted, 'in the West, they teach the trainees to act by themselves. Here, the trainees want the hands-on method.' So, one could not expect the trainees to change much back in the workplace after lectures by trainers without hands-on skills.

The failure of the 'business clinic' and 'business club' models showed that an effective measure to continue supporting businesses after training has not been found yet. On the other hand, ClothPrint did not seem to have the need for post-training assistance from these organisations despite the fact that they had actively participated in a business club initially (6.3.2.3). But the fact in this case was that the search for practical solutions for immediate problems in ClothPrint, like complicated tax schedules or expansion of manufacturing sites, was continued within the network of friends in business rather than discussed openly in a club. Therefore, the need for business consultation related to very basic training issues, like investment decisions or instituting a bookkeeping system, existed. From the trainer side, because of a lack of expertise and some financing reasons, the lack of effective support after training held the business owner back from attempting what they had learned in the classroom. Table 6-2 summaries the inhibitors and facilitators discussed above.

Table 6-2: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer in ClothPrint

Inhibitor	Learning Transfer			Facilitator
Limited educational background	→	Learning	←	Competitive industrial environment
Complacency due to past success Educational background Weaknesses of post-training assistance models	→	Behaviour	←	Managerial power from business ownership
Momentum of family business management Complacency due to past success Educational background Weaknesses of post-training assistance models	→	Results	←	Managerial power from business ownership

In summary, learning transfer in ClothPrint could have been in a very favourable condition as the trainees were exclusively in top management positions and possessed managerial authority due to business ownership. The owner of the business was motivated to training under pressure of a competitive industry environment. However, the modest background and knowledge, the momentum of family business management style and lack of external post-training support have limited the impacts of training.

6.4. Summary of Case Two

Developing a solid competence in the cloth printing business, ClothPrint survived the tough competition in the textile and garment industry and continued to grow strongly

for more than a decade. Its products won markets not only in its home city but also in foreign countries partly due to the strict leadership of the family owner-managers.

Case Two presents a manufacturing company in development where training had not been intended as a means of addressing a specific management problem but a manager's concerns due to intensified competition.

During the course of development, the concern of lacking fundamental knowledge on management urged the managers of the company to a wide-ranging training course reserved solely for the family members. When the need for obtaining the fundamentals of essential business management was satisfied, no further training was pursued while the quest for hands-on experience and practical skills for the survival of the business continued.

Confidence in management capacity, as personal business experience was confirmed by training content, was the primary outcome perceived by ClothPrint's managers. It was followed by bold investment and positive business results, which gave the business owner full satisfaction. Confidence aside, the training course left little particular impact on the organisation and operation of the company. The limited transfer of learning could be attributed to the modest educational background of the trainees and inadequate and inappropriate support from the trainers. The uncomplicated nature of manufacturing industry which did not require a sophisticated management system might be another reason for the partial impact of training in ClothPrint. When manufacturing expands further, it would be difficult to continue with a one-man band or family-managed approach, particularly while managerial power is exclusively kept among the owner's family members.

7. CASE THREE: STREAM CO.

7.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the training and evaluation issues at Stream Co., a private company which had an established position in delivering and servicing uninterruptible power supply (UPS) in the domestic IT hardware market, and has invested heavily in business and management training.

Besides enjoying strong business development, the company has been very devoted to upgrading its human resources by substantial training. In reality, the initially appreciated training efforts have become a burden for a large number of its staff. A number of staff started to complain about attending time-wasting and boring courses. Some were even very frustrated with training. Meanwhile, Stream's managing director kept promoting business training in his company and sending many staff to business and management training courses. At the same time, Stream's business performance was on the rise, but there was an undercurrent of discontent about training. Some training supporters nevertheless claimed that training provided the staff with knowledge and some positive results for the company. In spite of some positive training results, those in opposition asserted that although training was not harmful generally, resources were misspent, and mass training negatively affected the working spirit of the workforce. Meanwhile, evaluation about the impacts of business training was almost totally overlooked.

The coming text will describe the training activities in relation to the human resources and business context to uncover the outcomes of training for individuals as well as for the whole organisation. Specifically, the chapter will provide a detailed description of the business and company context with emphasis on the company's human resources, the development of training issues observed from the field visits, and the consolidated analysis of the research matters in view of business context and training issues.

7.2. Company and Business Profile

7.2.1. Company History and Business Development

Stream Trading Company Limited was at the outset a shop launched in 1996 providing computer hardware and services. This type of small businesses was very popular at that time and served business customers and private clients alike. In the beginning, Stream started with very small capital and just twelve employees. Two years later, it transformed itself into a limited company in order to better serve business customers, who required transparent and legitimate bookkeeping records from their business partners. After ten years of development, the company by the end of 2005 had 65 employees who were primarily aged between 27 and 32. They worked in five offices in the big cities and provinces of Hanoi, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Can Tho and the Ho Chi Minh City headquarters.

Stream's business so far relied on the only product the company distributed and provided warranty services for: the UPS, 'solutions of uninterruptible power supply and power management software,' as the company defined it. Commonly used for keeping computers working and preserving data in case of sudden main power supply failure, this peripheral device was popular in business offices, especially those of the ICT, defence, and health sectors. Stream was the sole national distributor of UPS which was manufactured by Taiwanese Star International, one of the five leading manufacturers of small capacity UPS in the world.

The business cooperation between Stream and Star International started in 1999 when the UPS manufacturer selected Stream as its strategic partner in the Indochina region. Stream was the sole importer of Star International products, and all local wholesale and retail agents received supplies from the company. Products from customers that needed repair could be sent directly to one of five Stream warranty centres or via the agents. The agents of Stream were selected from the most well-known local IT hardware trading companies. Besides the business customers, the Star International products were very popular in the local State administrative agencies like people's committees of different levels. To target customers from the State sector who usually procured for large scale IT projects, the selection of the agents was also strategic so as to take advantage of the relationships they had with state agencies. This was essential where procurement regulations and procedures

were quite complicated and tender information was not always transparent. In 2001, the strategic agent network was comprehensively established with the potential to reach customers from finance, tax, defence and other ministries. The strategic agents and regional distributors were authorised to provide Star products to the customers and State projects at their own prices and margins. Stream supported the agent network in their competition by supplying technical and promotional assistance.

The company has been developing its own warranty centres to ensure countrywide geographical coverage and the two strongest centres were positioned in Hanoi, the State project area, and Ho Chi Minh City, the business area. The company was part of the 'strategic non-equity alliance' of Star International. It also planned to accumulate know-how and technology to enable Star International UPS to be manufactured in Vietnam in the future.

From 2002 to 2005, the company business grew at a steady rate of over 20 per cent annually. Business revenue in 2004 amounted to USD 4.5 million.

7.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus

A big UPS manufacturer estimated the domestic market value at USD 25 million per year (ENP Report, 2007). The favourable economic growth rates during the first decade of the century were projected to continue in the years to come. Strong economic development has nevertheless put heavy pressure on to the national power supply infrastructure. Power outage and instability were frequently experienced, especially during the dry season, when there was shortage of supply from hydroelectric stations. This can be seen as opportunities for the businesses of UPS distribution and service. All the most renowned UPS brands have already entered the market mostly through distributors which were computer hardware trading companies. The market was said to be considerably more competitive and even saturated, as companies also had to endure the emerging popularity of laptop computers, which had batteries to operate away from mains supply.

Star International UPS distributed by Stream was well known and dominated the market for popular products: inexpensive, low-capacity, used in ordinary home standalone computers or office noncritical workstations. The company estimated that it dominated over 80 percent of market share of UPS for ordinary PCs, and less than 20 percent of specialised models, which were used for critical network servers.

Stream was strong in the sector of inexpensive products, while quality, reliable, and specialised products such as long established brands like APC or Powerware were distributed by its competitors.

When Stream's products emerged to dominate the UPS market, it began to have an increasing focus on quality service and customer satisfaction in order to preserve its position. In a resolute action, Stream issued in early 2005 the 'Letter of Warranty Service Commitment' to the customers nationwide to emphasise its customer service policy. In the letter, the company detailed its specific quality policy to project customers, specified the standard timing of warranty goods, privileges of large customers, on-site services, periodical technical assistance tours, and dispatching fee reimbursement for warranty products. Every Star International product was entitled to a 3-year warranty policy, considered very generous for electronics products. The company committed to extend the service to give additional benefits to the customers, especially the big projects. Service processing time was set to between 30 minutes and eight hours for different UPS models, and on-site service was provided for customers with appointments in advance.

In a business where there were many similar substitutes available on the market, Stream was absolutely determined to compete on service and achieve customer satisfaction. This was reflected in the set of commitments the company promoted to attain the goal of customer satisfaction: product quality, business speed, and continuous operations improvement. The commitment to customer satisfaction was also consistent throughout other measures taken so far to secure the promised quality service. Early on in its business, the company applied a quality management system and managed to achieve the recognised certificate ISO 9001:2000. The company took the proactive step of organising teams of service engineers to visit large customers or projects in their appointed areas to conduct pre-emptive equipment maintenance and provide technical assistance every three months. Telephone hot lines were open in every service centre for customers' requests and information inquiries. Symbolically, in each of its staff business cards, under the company logo was the block insignia 'Service Express.'

These moves to implement the quality service policy of the company have reinforced its position on the market. Stream has enjoyed a commanding city market share and

was ready to step up to win further customers in the provinces and also in neighbouring Laos and Cambodia.

7.2.3. Human Resources

To deliver the above promised quality service, Stream needed to build a capable human resource. Because the nature of the company's business was electronics product distribution, technical assistance and technical service, about half of the company staff were technical engineers. On the other hand, UPS is not a very sophisticated electronics equipment requiring top-class engineering knowledge. Therefore, it was not really difficult to recruit service staff of enough technical expertise for a company like Stream. Recruiting documents showed that the company could attract qualified applications three to four times more than the number of vacant positions every time it advertised. Applicants had to complete a test on paper, which consisted of technical questions and cases of warranty service situations, and attend interviews with the company management. In the past, the managing director of the company interviewed the applicants himself. Recently, other service centre managers were authorised to conduct the job interviews. It was revealed from the field interviews that the company did not incline to first-rate technical and experienced applicants, but to fresh, honest and decent people, whose technical expertise was not substandard. After recruitment, the newcomers received the necessary training on what they were supposed to do. Usually, this semi-formal initial training task was performed by the heads of the departments, and most training the junior staff received was on the job.

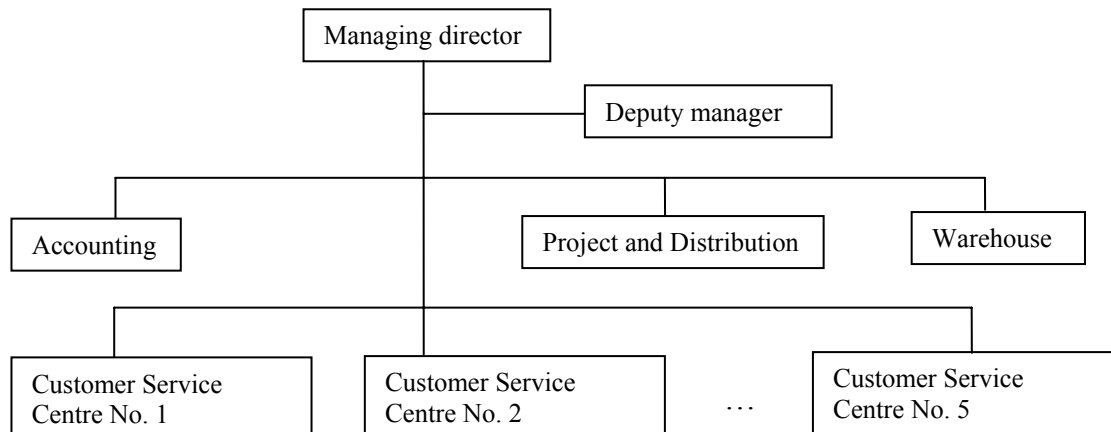
The rest of the company staff, except key employees in project and accounting departments, were just of high school or lower education background. About half of the staff, working in inventory, receiving and dispatching were secondary or high school graduates. In reality, they were considered to have limited knowledge and perform odd-jobs only.

Salaries of workers in local limited companies were known to be rather low, and Stream was not an exception in this aspect. In view of Stream's business performance, and compared to the common level in Ho Chi Minh City, the payment received by the staff of the company can be said to be rather poor. At the beginning of 2005, Stream's service engineers received the same salary as the 2003 national

average level for normal labour, specified in the Business Research 2002-2004 by the General Statistical Office. This reality was acknowledged by the staff and it was the main reason why the attrition of the workforce was quite high. (At the time of the field research, the majority of service engineers and staff in the accounting department were rather new to the company. Most of them had been working for the company for less than 24 months.) Conversely, the fringe benefits that the company provided were substantial. Labour was all legally registered and contracted, and the company dutifully covered health and social insurance fees for the staff. Transportation maintenance expenses, annual quality uniform, life insurance at the highest 24-hour-a-day policy were also given to all employees.

A remarkable aspect of the human resource of the company was the family ties among staff and the managing director. It was disclosed that about one third of the company staff had a close or distant family relationship with the managing director of the company. They held either important positions or moderate ones in the company structure, but their jobs were very secure. This situation was rather common in private companies. Anyway, the company managers emphasised that they tried to provide stable jobs for the company staff, and it was particularly true to these next of kin.

Previously, the business development of Stream was handled solely by the managing director. Approaches to customers were once his monopoly, and his subordinates were not allowed to discuss with potential customers without permission. Recently, this restriction was relaxed as the expanding business could not be effectively managed and developed by the manager alone. The Project and Distribution Department was created to elicit potential customers, facilitate equipment tenders in which the agents participated, and import and deliver products for the winning projects. However, transactions with the foreign partner were still the exclusive business of the managing director. The only deputy manager of the company was mainly in charge of internal staff matters, administration and liaison with state agencies. Stream had a flat organisational structure (see Figure 7-1), consisting of accounting, warehouse, project and distribution, and the regional customer service centres. Ownership of the company was shared among several shareholders and the managing director was one of them.

Figure 7-1: Stream's organisational chart

The human resources structure inside customer service centres was also straightforward. The managers of the centres were senior staff, who had close relationships with the boss or their loyalty had been proven. The remaining staff consisted of 6-10 service engineers and administrative staff. Large business transactions were essentially conducted in Ho Chi Minh City and all departments, warehouse and key staff of the company were located there.

7.3. Training and Outcomes in Stream

7.3.1. Training Overview

In the three years to mid-2005, the company has made tremendous efforts in sending its staff to various kinds of training. The ordinary and managerial staff were facilitated to attend numerous technical and management training courses where tuition fees were covered by the company. The total budget for training annually amounted to USD 10,000, an unusually great amount for a private company of this size since it would equal the three-month salary fund of Stream's service engineers in all service centres.

Three main categories were observed in training courses the company acquired. First, the courses in electronics and IT-related areas were mainly for the service engineers to help them update practical skills: electronics essentials and advances, computer hardware and networking. The second category was the business short courses for functional staff in specialised fields, like marketing, accounting, or sales and customer service. These courses provided the professional skills for non-engineers and they were sometimes a prerequisite for professional qualification, e.g. chief

accountant certificate. Third, the business facilitating skills courses for all staff, especially for managers, provided them with the ability to work individually and together more efficiently. The major short courses that a large number of staff attended included those on management and leadership skills like empowerment and delegation, motivation and communication, cost control, business planning, team work and action plan development and implementation. Courses in this category were taken by the largest number of Stream staff, and created the most controversy among staff and management regarding their appropriateness and learning transfer effects.

Besides, there was a small number of staff attending long-term courses leading to higher education degrees. In particular, the managing director, after having completed his MBA, was pursuing a doctoral degree in management.

Stream acquired courses from very diverse sources: state agencies like Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industries or Ministry of Finance, university training centres, foreign assisted training programmes, and private training companies. The company usually sent large batches of staff to the short courses. The ordinary staff of the company attended at least a training course every year, while the managerial staff usually had far more.

Business and management training opportunities were generously open to every employee of Stream. Besides the courses the company acquired and offered, people could ask for those considered interesting and useful in their view, and they were usually allowed to attend with company advances for tuition fees. The focus in training subjects of the company was facilitation and management skills, but the courses the staff reportedly asked for were mainly foreign languages and computer skills. Anyway, the open training policy and financial aid have brought opportunities for many staff who would not have attended the business courses as they had not ever considered such personal investments.

The managing director of the company was recognised to be the driving force of business training in Stream. He was famous in his company for having started the business from scratch in the mid 1990s and developed it to success. A transportation engineer himself, he has been working and gathering management skills to lead his business to an established position on the market. In his company, concerning training matters, he was the sole decision maker on who to be trained, on what

subjects and with which trainers. Nonetheless, his decision to send many people to an array of public courses did not receive support but complaints from the employees. The senior staff even got somewhat embarrassed as they were constantly encouraged to get more and more training, not just for skills relevant to their positions, but also for broad general knowledge. Meanwhile, the purposes, development or utilisation of training as a means of improving human resources were not discussed among management.

After a long period sending staff to training courses with no strings attached, the managing director recognised that the company should review this heavy but unfruitful investment. From June 2005, a new policy was in force stipulating that staff have to stay with Stream for a specific duration according to the tuition fee payment the company made for them. Early departure involved compensation corresponding to the credit balance in the individual training account. Obviously, the staff reactions were negative, some left the company, while others turned to business trips to avoid taking courses.

In fact, the staff were put in a dilemma when they were asked if they wanted to attend a certain training course. They did not feel comfortable about job security and career development with the company if they declined the opportunity. Furthermore, turning down an offer might be easily interpreted as disrespect to superiors in this oriental society. But if they accepted to do more training, they found themselves locked in the company. In an anonymous internal canvass administered by the deputy manager, only four out of sixty-two people across departments and service centres presumed to disagree with the policy. However, it also revealed the staff's great concerns about the appropriateness of training they had received and the unrecognised contribution they made to the company after training. After the introduction of the new policy, the staff were more reluctant to undertake training, and Stream suffered a major setback in this activity as well as the staff working spirit.

In summary, Stream's managing director considered business training a key measure to improve the quality of his staff. He was very committed to this activity so that training was once furthered to the greatest extent in terms of courses acquired and staff participation. However, the excessive pressure for more and more training gradually made many annoyed rather than motivated to seize the open opportunities

and the latest policy on training has created controversy over the ultimate benefits for individuals and the company.

7.3.2. Emerging Training Issues

On the whole, training in Stream has passed its prime. The views about training diverged very much, from frustration (head of inventory), doubt (deputy manager, chief accountant) to support (managers of customer service centres). It indicated that training had not been implemented properly and there were serious lingering problems.

7.3.2.1. Knowledge Mania, Training Mania and HR policy

In the old oriental societies, knowledge had an important value since it was believed and was in fact, a means to a stable and privileged career. In a broad way, a management trainer described the mentality, which is still valid nowadays, that ‘we Vietnamese are very keen on studying.’ She also maintained that people attended evening classes mainly ‘to update knowledge.’ In modern Vietnamese society, where material values have been irresistibly endorsed, the traditional value of knowledge is still strong. It might be exceptional to witness a managing director trying to complete his doctoral degree and running his business at the same time. But an example like the manager of the northern customer service centre who was about to gain his second university degree, is ubiquitous.

The value of any kind of knowledge was heavily advocated by Stream’s managing director. All staff whether or not opposing the way business training was exercised, believed that knowledge would be a plus in their current job or in any distant future. At least, showing a complimentary attitude to knowledge, one could enjoy favour from the managing director. As the manager of the Saigon customer service centre put it, ‘he likes to study and he also likes people who study,’ or

He would like everyone to have training, he wants his staff to improve their knowledge. He repeated over and over... My boss is very interested in management training. We are not very enthusiastic about it, but the boss promotes it all the time...

With a leader favouring knowledge, training therefore has been promoted to a great extent. Training was pushed so far that the deputy manager and chief accountant openly complained about ‘mass training,’ as they saw some negative side effects of

this practice. However, it was ignored by the top manager. He strongly believed that the company would profit from the foundation of staff's broad knowledge. His view on the benefit of general knowledge was reflected in a service centre manager's assertion:

We have to learn from many aspects to be able to see clearly. If, say, we do not have the presentation skills, so in negotiation, the result might be limited. So, if I have an overview, I am likely to apply it better. Otherwise, the application won't be successful...

The principal idea on knowledge for perfect services from the managing director in this case has been effectively communicated to his staff, even though it was not totally realistic. The centre managers have followed this direction in a serious manner, engrossedly gathering knowledge and skills from the classroom. Benefits from their efforts were not clear, as in their stories performance improvements were not particularly evident. What is clear is that any person who was interested in spending time in evening classes had a better chance of promotion. The Hanoi service centre manager stated explicitly:

... these people [who showed an interest in training] will enjoy advantages, and we have plans or consideration [of promotion]... and continuous investment, it is for sure. Almost all of those who are keen on studying will be put on the list for investment, and the company then tries to keep them for the long run.

An immediate consequence of training was realised for Stream's staff in the form of preference in development and promotion. This has intensified the obsession for knowledge and training further. In Stream, knowledge turned out to be the primary goal of massive training, which the staff acknowledged and experienced through the HR policy preferring staff who ground away following the example of the managing director. In fact, brushing up staff by training matches the managing director's perspective about HR when he figuratively stated, 'Our new office building is four-star, but our staff are just two-star, and we have to upgrade them.'

7.3.2.2. Training Objectives - Confusion, Miscommunication and Mismatch

As mentioned in the human resources overview, generally the recruitment policy of Stream Co favoured applicants with a technical background, and having a modest

manner rather than experienced ones with a strong personality. Besides, a large number of staff had just a basic education background. Concerning how training was conducted, the efforts to build up staff capacity in business and management were however not distinctly targeted.

Looking back at business, the company has constantly put 'customer satisfaction' as its objective, which is really appropriate for a service business. That philosophy was reproduced by one service centre manager, 'we have to ensure that customer needs are met at all costs.' There was in fact a linkage between that business objective and various training courses Stream was taking: planning, communication, presentation, and customer care. These were all supposed to contribute to making the business more efficient and customers satisfied. However, it was not enough as the objective of building skills by training to satisfy customers was not well defined and communicated to the staff, and so created unnecessary confusion. The staff were confused on the reasons they had to know something 'irrelevant.' Take the following example from the head of inventory.

I am not sure if I would use it, but the boss wants every managerial post to understand professional accounting, to do their jobs, to manage the value of the products. It is his view... - Head of inventory.

Again, it was the managing director who initiated training, which he supposed to be critical for his business. The management education he received alongside running his business might have made him privilege the subject excessively. Yet the reason for emphasising the necessity of this specific subject was not fully explained to individual staff, so people were left perplexed and frustrated. They neither saw the fit between their positions and work responsibilities and the training they received, nor obtained explanation about the necessity of the courses. Another example of confusing training activity was sending seven staff to a special course for marketing managers, which lasted for six months. The trainees included the deputy manager and the head of project and distribution, the justifiable choices, plus the head of inventory, and four service technicians. There was a big controversy over this secondment, because the technical staff were worn out by the course. In sum, there might have been strategic meaning in these moves, but this was not adequately communicated to and digested by the staff. And one training course organiser simply generalised that 'the trainees do not understand why they have to attend training.'

Meanwhile, one of the trainers observed that training on the company side did not aim at problem-solving, and it was not a perfect HR investment either. Their speculation was based on observation of various courses and participants, unfortunately it was particularly true for Stream. On the one hand, business performance was relatively good and they did not face any particular challenge, so it is not to say they were desperate for business solutions from training. On the other hand, a serious plan of HR development was not found among such massive training. Training was forced from top management without communication about a broader plan to get the most from the trained employees. So the way training was used in Stream seems to be opportunistic at best, as a trainer noted: 'If during the course, they found something useful to solve their problems, it was fantastic. Otherwise, they were still relaxed, satisfied.'

At the same time, what the staff really needed was not taken into account. The head of inventory revealed that she had a specific need, but for something else:

I am sure that I do not know everything. I am sure that I still need more training... For example, warehouse management... But I do not have the guts to ask [for assistance from the director].

Apart from this latent need, for staff who were active enough, the explicit requirement was for foreign language and technical training, not the service and management courses the boss encouraged. So the mismatch between the views of the manager and his staff remained unsolved leading to problems with the pre- and post-training phases. More importantly, the staff were misguided about knowledge as the ultimate goal of business training.

7.3.2.3. Imperious Pre-training Decisions and the Lack of Post-training Facilitation

Besides the confused training objectives detailed above, the way training was acquired and employed in the company was problematic, too.

First is the issue of coordination of training activities. The managing director was the impassioned initiator and promoter of training, but his role just ended there. One training course organiser commented, 'we wish they had an HR manager, training manager or functional manager of the trainees to play the role that the bosses have to.' There was no such person available, partly due to the concentration of power

usually witnessed in small and medium private businesses, partly because of the overwhelming commanding style of the manager. Maintaining his monopoly of decision making in virtually every aspect of the business which had led the company to top of the market, he certainly was very confident. The deputy manager gave an example of how a training course was started:

He was on a business trip to Hanoi and ran across an advertisement for a course on marketing. He immediately phoned me and listed names of staff we had to send to this course right away.

Limited positive results can be expected with this decision making style and, in fact, one trainee, a service technician, was not able to finish the course. He reported to his service centre manager that the other participants were all experienced marketing managers, and he found the course unsuitable for him. The example shows the power of the boss on training, and also how people were unprepared for their own development. His deputy might be a proper candidate for taking more responsibility in the activity. However, he did not show that he was ready to confront the boss in this disorganised matter.

The imposing communication style jeopardised the good intent of the manager. Quite a number of examples were available to illustrate this one-way communication in training:

Even when we stated that we did not like training, he still encouraged us that knowledge is for our benefit. – Service centre manager.

He repeated over and over... He repeated so that sometimes I felt ashamed... Say, when he said that I had to arrange my time to study, he repeated it three times so that I was so embarrassed... So that I thought that I would attend for the sake of peace and quiet. The accountants told me that I did not have time, why did I have to go? No, I had to go as the boss repeated over and over... – Head of inventory.

The majority of the staff did not appreciate this point of view of just helping staff 'learn something,' and sending them whenever possible. Some staff did not feel comfortable about going to training courses. They played truant, because training was 'sheer torture' as observed by the chief accountant.

At the other end of the process in Stream, facilitation after training was non-existent. Therefore, it was fair for the interviewed staff to claim that applications were mainly dependent on their individual efforts. In the meantime, what the management did was not encouraging and even threatening. The head of inventory recalled:

We have to apply our new knowledge, but no one started just by himself... One day, [the deputy manager] said that if I hadn't had a plan, he [the managing director] would have sacked me... but I hadn't made one. And nothing happened.

Looking at the staff, a third of them had family connections with the managing director. When these favoured people made no efforts after training and received no significant pressure or retribution from the director, the rest had no reason to try. The staff in fact did not take initiative, and looked at each other's actions. To make the matter worse, leading by example was not exercised. Overflexibility, typical of running small private business, still existed so that consistency in management was not maintained. The chief accountant described her frustration in establishing new work procedures:

[The managing director] decided to follow, but he broke the rule, and no one dared to complain... For instance, following the process, there must be paperwork through department, accountant, cashier to make an advance. But when he needs money for some personal payment, he must be satisfied, we have to make payment first, then the cashier completes all the procedure... the process was broken. So the boss broke the rule, how can you ask people to observe it?

The example exposed unawareness of how to benefit from training by consistently integrating an improvement into routine work as well as the problem of overflexibility in managing a private business. Accidentally, it compromised the good collective initiatives resulting from the very sophisticated training the company and its staff had worked hard to get. This naïve absentmindedness also evidences the lack of perception about the assistance needed for learning transfer and the poor communication on issues related to training. Totally unaware of post-training facilitation, the director was reported as once telling his staff "I have sent you to training, now it's your turn to use it!"

A point that received common agreement among staff, whether or not they were for or against training, was on material motivation. Inconsistent mental encouragement aside, the staff pointed out that the uncompetitive payment system in the company badly affected the working attitude and prevented people from attempting changes. The seniority-based system created a certain limit in their wages, and in this context, staff felt unmotivated to work, let alone experiment with new knowledge. This was also the main reason for significant HR defections in recent years. The working attitude of more than half of the staff was 'from bad to really bad' as the deputy manager admitted, it was therefore hard to expect initiatives for learning transfer. To reverse the situation, Stream management introduced a new measure indeed, but to no effect. Stream established its own scheme for rewarding staff efforts in 'learning' and 'researching for improvement.' However, some members of staff maintained that the reward inside the payment system for the efforts of 'learning' and 'researching' was totally subjective and superficial, a tool for the director to reward his favoured people. Instead of being an encouragement to studying among staff, it became a source of discontent. Therefore it created virtually no motivation for attempting changes and improvement after training.

Because there is no focal point for initiating and orchestrating applications after training, the occasional moves of the trained staff were not nurtured and extended. As they did not feel appreciated, trained staff did not feel responsible for turning their new skills and knowledge into specific actions. Following is a story of such a failure where follow-up actions were not provided by top and immediate managers and as a result the initiative faded out:

After my two staff finished [studying], I asked them if it was of any use, there must be some implementation, a concrete document suggested a new procedure. Something was produced... They have produced something for the boss, the boss passed it to [his deputy], and he then returned it to the trained staff. But the staff didn't do anything. It seemed like the project had sunk. It was gradually silenced... – Customer service centre manager

So, alongside the waste of paying for training without return, the morale towards the post-training period deteriorated, as observed in the staff's growing indifference to the lack of facilitation.

In summary, during the pre-training phase, courses and appointed participants were not selected carefully, individual needs were neglected, and there was no appropriate preparation but purely top-down command. In the post-training phase, staff did not receive appropriate support due to management's unawareness of training facilitation and the chaos of the internal business environment.

7.3.2.4. The False Values of Knowledge

An observation, not necessarily true only to businesses in Vietnam, was once provided by a trainer. She described the contrast between successful companies and those in trouble from the training perspective. Most companies in difficulty did not have time and resources to plan for any training as they had to focus on how to survive. The rising and successful enterprises had time and resources for training, but as they faced no imminent business problem, they seem to be disoriented about training. A trainer commented:

For those trainees, they would like to have broad lectures, for example, what people are doing in the United States, what problems they are facing there, and how they solve them... Maybe the problem is irrelevant to them, but they still like to listen to the story because those are contemporary issues... People usually think that way. They do not need to go to class. Going to class is to listen to important speakers from abroad giving keynotes, talking about new issues, such as what effects WTO brings about...

It was not entirely the case for Stream, because they were more selective in the training subjects they acquired, but to some extent, something similar existed in the over-promotion of knowledge, in the director's pursuit of prestigious degrees, in some of his staff's diligent attendance at evening classes.

When it comes to learning transfer, there was a mental barrier for the better off companies. 'If a company is successful, they think that there is no need to change. "We are performing well, it is someone else who has to change, not us,"' explained the same trainer, on the reason for rare breakthroughs in the workplace after training. So besides the reasons of poor coordination, motivation or facilitation... complacency leading to resistance to change also accounted for the limited training

outcomes. This as well reinforced the point that companies did not have action-oriented training objectives.

Intrinsically, the cultural values on status, on 'face,' and title were still a motive for staff to attend an inappropriate training course. 'If we tell him to study... say, to be an effective manager for instance, he will not go. But if we tell him to attend the course for CEO, he will,' noted a trainer. The attitude giving high credit to degrees and illusory titles remained popular so that ostentatious courses could attract many participants. Such characteristics appeared not only in the managing director, but also in his management team. Concerns about the issue of pursuing 'false' values were serious. Stream's deputy manager had finished a course titled 'Skills for senior managers.' He recalled that the content was nothing special, but it was a component of the set of sections for participants to be awarded the certificate of completing a mini-MBA. Participants in this course largely commented that after finishing, 'your knowledge departs, the degree remains.'

Culture may also play its part in the trainees' poor ability to link lectures to reality, and the poor capability of learning from each other. The predominant mentality of 'learning to know, not learning to do' prevented the trainees from practical applications. In addition, traditionally the trainers were considered masters with broad knowledge, head and shoulders above their trainees. Training was organised in the trainer-centred fashion, so that trainees inclined to learn from them rather than their class fellows. The trainees expected to pick up rules of thumb, tips they can use easily, something that does not require significant development or modification to practise as an interviewed trainer noted. The trainees from Stream were no different. It was observed that they would be confused immediately if trainers deviated from the routine lecturing, and they did not find the trainer's role as facilitator or debating with them comfortable. Aggravated by poor facilitation and limited background, the majority of trainees from Stream found the knowledge not very suitable, but at the same time, the false values of knowledge were still able to get more of them to the classroom.

7.3.3. Discussions on Training and Training Outcomes

Above were the most significant training issues which Stream's management and staff have been experiencing. The issues confirmed by concerns and narratives from

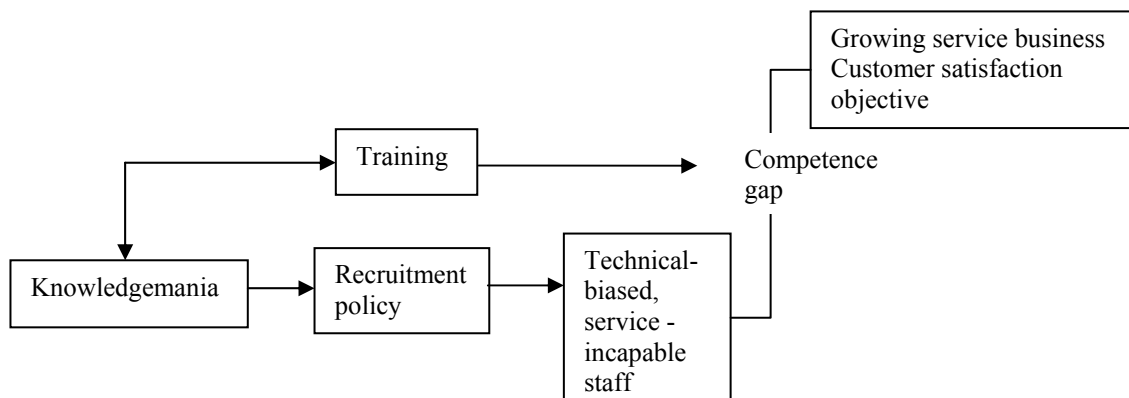
the company insiders and service providers showed that training was far from a proven added value to the company’s business. The part following reviews the research issues in light of this information.

7.3.3.1. Training Objective

On the face of it, Stream was enjoying very good business and dominating a large market share, so training was not aimed at tackling any critical imminent problem. The company’s managing director played a very important role in its training decision. His training philosophy kept the whole staff running for the purpose of aligning Stream’s human resource with the expanding business and the objective of customer satisfaction of the growing company. He strongly believed that massive business training could turn his average staff into service professionals. The fact that the managing director himself was an admirer of knowledge was the major premise for company training activities. ‘Knowledge Mania’ (7.3.2.1) initiated by the director with some followers in the management under the belief that training was the panacea for all personnel shortcomings has led to ‘Training Mania.’ For some of Stream’s staff, it seems that training reinforced their belief in the superior power of knowledge and therefore their pursuit of knowledge continued indefinitely.

The recruitment policy favoured family relationship and average technical applicants who were not yet qualified as professionals for service business, but were oversupplied on the labour market (7.2.3). Meanwhile, its business was expanding, its distributed products became very popular, and the number of customers to be taken care of accelerated. Therefore, training was used to fill the wide gap between the prime service ambition for an increasing number of customers and the quality deficits of the human resources. The situation is illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 7-2: Stream – Training Objective



The above figure in fact represents a seemingly strategic intention of using business training to develop human resources to match the requirement of the business expansion. However, examining the reality of chaos and the unplanned approach in which training was taken and utilised in Stream, 'a strategic move' is not a really suitable designation. It would be more appropriate to view training as an opportunistic short-term investment for the improvement of business operations under a strong belief in the power of training. This investment was short-term because it aimed at providing service know-how to offset the staff's lack of service capacity and adjusting the working attitude while no total development plan was involved.

On the other hand, Stream's trainees were completely driven by their director's training determination. They attended the courses as per the decision from above and hardly appreciated the ultimate objective or what they were supposed to do upon returning. So they were jumping from one course to another without any major improvement in working reality. Under powerful pressure from the managing director, and the influence of the traditional mentality of revering the value of knowledge, there was not much confrontation with the management on the appropriateness of training.

In short, training was the result of a one-man decision under the belief of training's potential to develop staff's capacity to cope with the growing service business. It assumed the strategic meaning of HR development, but in reality has just appeared to be a serendipitous measure to solve the problem of service capacity shortage in their staff.

7.3.3.2. Training in Practice

Stream is the case of an established organisation in which training was implemented in an unorganised fashion. Training courses of varied subjects were provided to staff generously. The top manager of the company, who firmly believed in the ultimate benefits of staff's better knowledge, led the campaign himself. But excessive training without orientation and communication gradually depleted the staff's interest. The company relied on public courses, without virtually any in-house actions of fortify the training results. Activities carried out during the pre- and post-training phases can be described as arbitrary in many ways, from decision, communication, coordination

to facilitation and evaluation. Many respondents voiced their concerns about how disorganised training was.

Table 7-1: Distinguishing features of training in Stream

Pre-training issues	Post-training issues
Training generously provided	Poor coordination / poor communication
Top manager’s leadership and support	Inconsistent facilitation
Opportunistic/unclear objectives	Review and evaluation non-existent
Knowledge oriented	Follow-ups superficial
Imposed/ individual needs not addressed	Personal initiative dependent/ change
Unselective/ inappropriate trainee selection	aversion
Trainee position v. training subject mismatch	
Meretricious and degree-bound	

In general, training in Stream was less successful than desired because of several weaknesses in training management. First, there has not been effective communication between the manager and his staff on the purpose of training, how training would help individuals and the organisation, and what was expected after training. Matters were more confused as the selection of training subjects and suitable trainees was made totally at the director’s discretion. In many cases, there was a mismatch between training subject and trainee positions, so that the person was not able to perform what had been learned. Personal training needs were not identified and addressed. Over promotion of training without connection to the trainee’s particular work responsibility led to a knowledge focus and staff indifference to training.

In contrast to imposing courses on the staff, no pressure or formal facilitation was made to encourage post-training application. The post-training mode dependent on personal initiative was consistent with the knowledge-oriented opportunistic approach to training. The post training period, where the company can profit from training investment, was otherwise almost neglected. Ignorance of the necessity of facilitation left the trained staff in inertia or subject to spontaneous behaviour changes. Coordination for learning transfer was absent, and upward communication was not streamlined, so that instead of the natural effects of morale strengthening

among staff, a spirit which was adversary to training emerged. The positive effects were not well looked after and assisted, leading to unwanted counter-effects such as an adversarial attitude towards training. Working morale was negatively hampered instead of strengthened although the managing director did not seem to realise or ignored this.

Finally, the belief in definite positive outcomes from training made training evaluation unnecessary so that opportunities to receive trainees' feedback to identify more appropriate training courses and fine-tune learning transfer were forgone. The deputy manager therefore reckoned that professional consultation with an overall evaluation of human resources before deciding for whom, what, and when management training is appropriate could save Stream from training failure.

The dominating relationship between the managing director and his staff was key to the development of training matters in the company as the staff remained submissive for the sake of serenity. The director's management team was not able to help him to have a more practical view about training. At the same time, the complacency of successful business management prevented the managing director from recognising dissatisfaction and taking into account the feeble negative reactions of the employees. The commanding style might have been successful in business leadership, but it backfired on him in the capacity of the training leader. Training in Stream meant obedience, not commitment, participation or empowerment, therefore, changes were not usually obtained.

To sum up, in Stream, essential steps of pre-training preparation and post-training facilitation were missed out or mismanaged from a standard training process. Hence, the potential of training was limited to contributing more and more knowledge to the staff, who were more and more puzzled about its utility.

7.3.3.3. Training Outcomes

Anyway, business and management training has brought more than just dissatisfaction to the staff and management of the company. In terms of training outcomes, the big concern was that the investment was tremendous in monetary terms, but return from training was limited.

The foremost appreciation of training was the wanted or unwanted knowledge training brought about. To the staff, broadened knowledge was the primary benefit of

training. All considered improved knowledge as the major outcome of the business training they enjoyed from the company funded courses. Beside knowledge, the mentality of learning for knowledge was established so that several appreciated the knowledge and theories as more important than the practical experience of fellow participants. Therefore, in addition to the poor facilitation they received, such mentality was detrimental to learning transfer.

Then, more practically, the common commendation for training was the improved clarity in explanation, presentation and documents circulated inside the company. The management recognised the greater confidence in staff performing their service jobs and better communication with customers. Among the new skills, planning, negotiation, and delegation were the most improved among the managerial positions. The managers attributed better customer satisfaction to the more detailed plans and preparation they had made before business trips, an approach which they had learned from different training courses. A few agreed that in general service quality after training was improved with enhanced company and customer relationships. For instance, one service centre manager recalled that some customers had even phoned in to show that they really longed for the routine service trips.

More changes happened at the individual behaviour level, where mostly the skills were reported to be most helpful. Some behaviour changes were recognised, such as the case of the chief accountant. She gradually delegated the responsibilities she had firmly held previously, building trust among her staff, and she suddenly found herself 'more free time.' She proceeded to develop her own departmental working procedures in which she was really the supervisor, and her work became less stressful.

Unexpected and unwanted effects of training were also experienced. The head of inventory was the most frustrated with training and hardly mentioned any application in her work, but she admitted using knowledge from a business start-up course to consider opening her own business which she operated after working hours. In another example, a veteran staff member revealed to the deputy manager after he resigned that it was training that made him aware of his ability, which he could better use elsewhere.

Besides the significant desired effects of better services and company image reportedly from the customer's view, ultimate organisational results appeared to be

limited. A few working processes in the warehouse, accounting and services were established thanks to staff initiatives. But they were vulnerable since they did not receive encouragement and consistent support from the management. Some staff feared and witnessed no official decision of reinforcement restore the status quo of the newly established procedures.

There were no concerted big changes that needed cooperation in and between departments. Therefore, the influence of some staff's attempts was not broad, and changes could not reach the company level. It was noted that spontaneous applications were not sustainable, and things tended to return to the previous status and occasionally to an unwanted extreme. Gradually, training aversion appeared while the working attitude of staff deteriorated.

All in all, the outcomes from training in Stream were rather latent, concentrating on the lower levels of Kirkpatrick's model. Training to some extent has contributed a little to staff improvement in working capability and company image. Limited outcomes from training were very consistent with why and how training has been practised.

7.3.3.4. Facilitators and Inhibitors of Training Outcomes

A rough quantitative estimate on the rate of application was given by a service manager, who thought that his staff put into practice about 30 per cent of what they had learned, though he admitted that a scheme for training evaluation was totally non-existent. Yet fieldwork data and discussions in the previous sections help identify some factors moderating such modest learning transfer.

The evidence and discussion so far confirm in particular the decisive role of the powerful managing director in all training matters (7.3.2.3). His leading by example in his passion for knowledge generated some followers in managerial positions, who strictly showed the same mentality of admiration and desire for knowledge, and considered knowledge as the primary benefit of business training. The leadership which favoured knowledge was comfortably supported by the oriental culture which accords knowledge unquestioned high value. Therefore, the level of 'learning' was basically facilitated by leadership and cultural values.

The managing director's passion for knowledge (7.3.2.1) from his leading position facilitated the accumulation of knowledge, and certificates or degrees (7.3.2.4), but

his satisfaction with knowledge discouraged the momentum of learning transfer. To move further to turn knowledge to practical skills, beside his leadership, changes in management systems must be enabled, as his staff in different, less powerful positions could not follow his example. The management structure of Stream did not facilitate learning transfer well enough as power was so concentrated in the managing director.

In particular, an inhibitor was found in training management, as the screening of appropriate courses and potential trainees was not conducted well, which led to mismatches between what trainees needed and what the management offered. The staff did not have the necessary empowerment and suitable leaders, training processes were not set up and closely monitored, communication was mainly top down. The role of training management was not specifically assigned to authorised people while the managing director was not able to cover every aspect of training. Stream lacked established procedures and positions, not necessarily dedicated, to review, start, and follow up training initiatives (7.3.2.3). Staff was scattered in several centres, therefore the role would be more complicated and so learning transfer was not monitored and gradually dropped. A flat structure might expedite decision making, but in this case it did not facilitate the changes needed for better training results.

The corporate culture of Stream was greatly influenced by family preference, which was widely observed in small Vietnamese businesses. Training was open, in order to broaden staff knowledge, but in the workplace when it came to action, the reference to the idle family staff, who enjoyed more privileges and no pressure for learning transfer, discouraged the others from taking any initiative. The tendency of over-dependence on the managing director in every aspect of business was also a hurdle for certain innovative grassroots schemes to take place. In addition, the characteristic of small business management was still strongly present. The director automatically assumed the role of a big brother taking care of all income, benefits, privileges, concerns, even family matters of his staff. Such context easily predicted their submissive behaviours in every business issue, let alone training. They therefore were prone to accepting with gratitude the courses the director suggested, while after training their actions were largely dependent on their superior's move. Meanwhile,

the director was busy enough with all daily business matters to introduce and oversee changes. Transfer of learning then suffered from such a negative business context.

Contrary to the appearance of a simple organisation structure in this case particularly, the complicated relationships inside small businesses had its significant effect. ‘You can’t do anything alone, the working environment in small businesses is a nuisance...’ one trainer noted. With regard to culture, the spirit of harmony, mutual assistance and lack of working professionalism were also a hindrance to application.

For the company as a whole, the popular mentality of mutual benefits, respect for senior people or harmony (e.g. all together remained inactive after training) among staff blocked the efforts of recognising weaknesses, and opportunities for using new skills for improvement. Even if transfer of learning were well facilitated with other favourable conditions like better coordination, management empowerment, or more appropriate training topics, these popular cultural characteristics would still be great challenges. The positive aspect in the culture of unity and harmony was not leveraged, by recognition and appreciation of change pioneers, to concretise learning transfer in a collective manner and expand the application results.

Observation of the remarkable knowledge preference among some staff corresponds to the notion of Vietnamese people as generally treasuring knowledge, whether or not the knowledge is of practical value (7.3.2.1). This cultural aspect itself was a facilitator of the learning spirit, but on the other hand it acted as an inhibitor to a focused attempt to identify practices which were actually useful for the company. Furthermore, ignorance, complacency and the lack of training evaluation allowed transfer inhibitors to outweigh facilitators.

The factors discussed above are summarised in Figure 7-3.

Figure 7-3: Facilitators and inhibitors of learning transfer in Stream

Inhibitor	Transfer of Learning			Facilitator
Management Communication	→	Learning	←	Leadership Culture
Culture Management Communication Small business context Corporate culture	→	Behaviour	←	Culture
Small business context Management Leadership	→	Results	←	

In summary, information from the fieldwork suggested that such a moderate level of learning transfer was influenced by a number of factors including leadership, management system, communication, corporate culture, individual and working context, and traditional culture. Unfortunately, with different magnitudes, there seems to have been more inhibitors than facilitators.

7.4. Summary of Case Three

The case presents the contrast of generous investment and limited return in the company of a zealous training leader and compliant staff. One can observe that in the past few years, having had a successful business development, the company has spent tremendously on training, but not in a selective and purposeful manner. The staff were offered numerous opportunities to study and broaden their knowledge, but training discontent existed. Supposedly key in building top-class human resources, training has fallen short of expectation, and leadership played an important part in the disappointment. All staff of Stream appreciated highly the ability of their managing director in business development and management. However they had diverse opinions on his manipulation of training, and more broadly, on his style of human resource management. Mismatches between personal preferences and

imposed dogma were intensified by the unfavourable post-training environment which left the training beneficiaries in doubt and the training objective half accomplished.

After training, most staff recognised the absence of any significant follow-up action to help learning transfer materialise, let alone any qualified evaluation activity. Though many employees still maintained a very positive idea about business training and the value of the promotion of knowledge, they seem to be confused about how to best acquire and exploit the necessary training.

The analysis reveals a typical small business environment embedded with traditional culture values, which promoted knowledge broadening and demoted knowledge deployment. The outcomes therefore essentially remained with individual trainees in terms of added knowledge, certificates and degrees while business improvements were superficial and insecure in the long term. Complete training management expertise cannot be demanded from such a small business, which relied too much on its leader, but the case illustrates that shortcomings in management and leadership prevented the trained labour force from contributing to their full potential.

8. CASE FOUR: WOODFURN CO.

8.1. Introduction

Management training was recently introduced to WoodFurn Co., a manufacturer of bespoke wooden office furniture, after its owner manager had joined the city's Youth Entrepreneurs Association (YEA) and been invited to participate in some courses offered by the association's membership support division. Besides the benefits of being more secure and business networking from being an association member, the basic training, essentially enjoyed by the company's owner, has provided him with significant encouragement and novel skills. Soon after training, several initiatives were started.

Training in WoodFurn was strongly advocated by the owner of the company. His influence created extended awareness among the staff. The owner's training perspective was shared by the young and hardworking people. Learning transfer was in general promoted because the owner of the business himself started and supported it. The staff were encouraged to take initiative to perform what they had learnt from the short courses, and the company had already experienced the payback. The initial results, though very specific, were not communicated well enough to the staff to create further necessary impetus, and the manager was the only person who really appreciated training and the outcomes. Training in WoodFurn was at its peak following the practical dissemination mode, but any substantial effect was yet to appear.

The coming text will summarise the first steps of training in WoodFurn, detail the training satisfaction of the business owner and the moves to disseminate training effects. It will in addition describe the challenges that the context of a small private business presents for training to really deliver. The text also examines the factors associated with the trainees to have an overview of learning transfer in this business.

8.2. WoodFurn Business Profile

8.2.1. Business History and Development

During the first years of the 21st century, businesses in the city continued to expand quickly. The need of having modern and comfortable offices and working spaces to alleviate working conditions for the white collar workers has been increasing.

Interior design and decoration businesses like developing new offices, meeting rooms, kitchens, and lavatories therefore prospered along with the demands for building renovation when business premises relocated or expanded. This was where WoodFurn targeted its business: serving the needs of establishing working stations in large offices. WoodFurn was in fact a young private company. The company was founded in 2001, but its founder had been in the business for more than ten years. After having worked for an interior decoration company originating from Hanoi, the owner of WoodFurn obtained the necessary know-how as well as understanding of local customers, and then started his own WoodFurn. After five years in business, WoodFurn was still small in staff size, having around 30 employees, and had a minimal management structure.

Along with the development of new offices built in the country's largest city and economic hub, the company has accumulated a substantial clientele, mostly from domestic businesses and a number of foreign companies in the areas of hospitality, education, health care, and research institutions. The geographical market of focus was Ho Chi Minh City, and lately the company has undertaken initial steps to penetrate the neighbouring provinces with industrial zones. The commercial brand of WoodFurn was finally recognised and the company managed to win a couple of trophies in recent industrial fairs like 'Viet Build' or 'Top Build.'

There are three areas of company operations including design, office partition and interior decoration, and constructing wooden furniture. The three areas were in fact inter-related. WoodFurn did not have mass production of any wooden furniture but they made to order, having bespoke designs that fitted into the specific spaces of the customers. The main products of the company include office and conference hall partitions, tables and chairs, wooden cupboards and reception counters. There were no natural materials but processed ones like plywood, veneer, plastic, glass, and stainless steel which were imported from countries in the region. With the infrastructure amassed in the previous years, WoodFurn has survived in business and entered the growth stage, enjoying more and larger orders.

8.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus

Ho Chi Minh City in recent years was listed among the cities with most expensive rent for office spaces. It was reported that office occupancy costs in the city have been increasing by 20-30 per cent annually in the last 4 years, and the trend would continue until at least 2009. Even so, as demand consistently outstripped supply, the occupancy rate of office buildings there have always been over 95 per cent (Fullbrook, 2004). New offices in the centres of the city have consistently been sought after as the economy continued its strong growth and businesses kept arriving. Therefore, companies like WoodFurn found growing opportunities in helping other businesses to organise working spaces effectively. In addition, the need to have a professional appearance for offices was also on the rise after the rent rates had reached the top among the regional countries. So, the ability of providing solutions that had both convenience and aesthetic appeals to the customers would be critical to this type of business.

WoodFurn's motto was 'We have dividers for all dividers.' As the company's manager-owner observed, competition has always been fierce in the industry of plywood partitions and it would be too expensive to miss any opportunity. Hence, the company's business option was to accept all customisation requirements from the customers, no matter how hard it was. In addition, it put focus on the added value to customers by quality design, as it was believed that design was a critical factor for the customers in deciding whether or not to award contracts to WoodFurn.

Besides the sales staff, the manager himself was still spending substantial time with customers in initial site assessment and first draft design. The sales people were responsible for researching and establishing connections with construction companies to get subcontracts on interior decoration and furnishing. Furthermore, to best serve the customers and effectively compete against the larger competitors, which had advantages in materials, WoodFurn had joined an alliance of building and design companies to obtain its materials at better prices. To curb expenses was another priority for the company. The quotations of the company usually emphasised the design which was reasonably priced. WoodFurn promised to provide the customers with committed after sales service, which covered the finished projects from one to five years. The policies of the company showed that during its first

years, it tried to cut costs at the same time as meeting all the demands of the small local customers.

WoodFurn has started approaching larger customers, by already building its name among the smaller ones. In reality, it has won a few significant contracts from this group. During this growth, when the company was striving to expand its markets and customer base, the expansion of manufacturing capacity and human resources was considered. There were a few occasions when the company tried to advertise and promote its name professionally and, though the results were very limited, the manager insisted that it had to continue with this activity.

In short, WoodFurn determined to provide its usual small clients with modern customised solutions at reasonable prices in order to transform to a level suitable for more prominent customers. The characteristic of extreme flexibility in business with various focuses on service, product, and price to win customers highlighted the nature of a small private company that still had to struggle somewhat to survive.

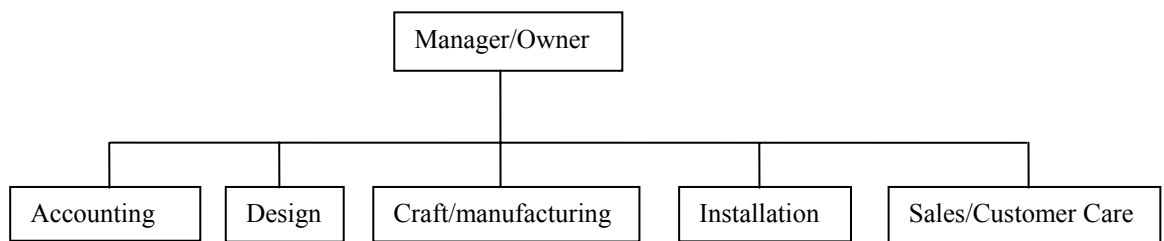
8.2.3. Human Resources

The young WoodFurn was started by a young entrepreneur after having obtained experience from another business. Having a university degree in foreign languages, the owner of WoodFurn enjoyed his first time in a management position in his own business. In reality, WoodFurn was a typical start-up utilising family members and hiring employees from remote provinces to save operating expenses. After five years, the number of employees was still limited, and the management was determined to expand its staff and at the same time minimise attrition. The majority of employees were young (average 25-26 years old), having just basic education, and remuneration was revealed as at a 'market competitive' level. Small fringe benefits such as materials for motorcycle maintenance, or luncheon allowance, were emphasised as means to help retain and motivate the staff. Other measures to support the workers' morale were also implemented through sports and recreation activities.

It was a small business so that the management scheme was also simplified so that the manager kept a close supervision of all steps of the business operations. Decision making and management power were totally concentrated in the owner-manager. Nonetheless, in exercising his power, the manager, considering himself a diligent and hard-working boss, worked side by side with his workers on the shop floor so as to

provide staff with prompt motivation as well as having close supervision. The other positions were accounting-inventory, sales/customer care team, design, manufacturing and site installation. The existing structure was very flat, flexible and neat. Figure 8-1 illustrates the current organisation of labour, essentially reflecting the phases in processing customers' orders and contracts. However, the manager intended to proceed with departmentalisation for better 'professionalism.'

Figure 8-1: WoodFurn organisation structure



In a private business where the largest part of the staff were migrated labour, young and inexperienced, there was little sense of initiative so that the owner had faced many difficulties during the early years to cover all aspects of the daily process. Little by little professional expertise transfer conducted on the job was the main solution to develop the human resource. Being the only person having all-round expertise, the manager was the sole in-house trainer with his informal staff training approach. Up until the time of the field visit, the company managed to build a good body of skilled staff, which was capable of most standard orders in this industry.

Human resource defection since the commencement of the company was a substantial problem. The entry barrier to this industry was not too insurmountable so that some capable employees have quitted to establish new businesses after a time in WoodFurn accumulating experience, know-how and customer contacts. The manager himself was a case in point so that the loss of defectors was understood. Preventing the departure of skilled staff in the face of such examples was an important task for WoodFurn management.

8.3. Training and Outcomes in WoodFurn

8.3.1 Training Overview

The owner-manager's justification for training was based on his concerns about the rapid development of technology and the competitive business environment: 'In my view, along with the current progress of information technology, industries will develop quickly; the company must have improvement in human resources to survive and grow. So improvement in technical expertise like computer skills and in business management is a must. Managers have to develop skilled, professional, and well-trained staff.' The comment really reflects the changed spirit popular on Vietnamese mass media recently, that business should focus more on the 'human factor,' but as yet investment in training was dedicated mainly to the manager's own study.

For quite a number of years since its establishment, business and management training was not a matter of attention in WoodFurn. In fact, the head of the business was more concerned to expand his own expertise on technical subjects like construction and structural design. It was not until the company became a member of YEA that business training in WoodFurn started to take off. Attracted by the information from the YEA membership support division, the head of the business started to attend YEA courses. Conveniently, members of the association were allowed to enjoy the courses at slightly discounted tuition fees. He gradually became known as a training devotee. At the time of the fieldwork review, he had completed seven short courses and intended to explore all the training content offered by YEA. In addition, because of his positive impression, he sent some of his close staff to the training too.

In WoodFurn, business training has become from a spin-off the main benefit of joining YEA. The courses WoodFurn people have attended include: effective work delegation, development of business budgets, business project planning, becoming an effective manager, using power in management, cost control, and public relations skills development. These were very short and practical courses, training duration was usually a couple of days. In fact, the number of staff eligible for business training was limited because their education level was just basic and they did not really have managerial responsibilities per se. Even if the owner had wanted to have more staff trained in management, he would not have found additional appropriate

trainees among the existing employees. Furthermore, the company was in the growth phase so that time available for training was very scarce. However, a few employees had already implemented their own plan for improving knowledge with their own resources.

The company manager had not had a clear view of training purposes, but he came increasingly to amass business knowledge through training. The initial outcomes of training have encouraged him enough so that there was a plan to identify appropriate and very basic courses organised in-house for more people to enjoy. So far, YEA was WoodFurn's only training partner.

In general, the manager was the only person who showed an earnest interest in training. His staff did not put serious thoughts to it even though staff training expenses were totally covered by the company. Training did not use up substantial resources anyway because the company has been sparing of resources in all of its operations. On the other hand, the powerful voice of the manager gradually gave training a considerable position in the company. The ways he promoted his passion about training and its benefits to trainees were pretty informal: everywhere from meeting room to shop floor.

In summary, WoodFurn's owner was the primary beneficiary of business training since the selective training policy was implemented. Besides sending a small number of close staff to a few training courses, the owner of the business was active in informal diffusion of knowledge to his employees.

8.3.2. The Training Issues

8.3.2.1. Ardent Training Leader and Lukewarm Staff Responses

Membership of YEA introduced the training movement to WoodFurn where the manager emerged as an enthusiast of innovation. Knowledge and experience gained from training allowed the manager to have better control of his business and get more insights into its operations from systematic and methodical perspectives. With these encouraging outcomes, he further appreciated training, searched for further opportunities to enrich his knowledge, promoted his experience about the courses with his staff and looked to turning lessons into quick applications in his workplace. He shared more of his time with evening classes and had an objective to finish all the courses YEA offered. He was occupied with a variety of novel ideas like market

segmentation, brand development, PR, and customer satisfaction survey. He hoped his enthusiasm and actions would receive positive feedback and collaboration in improving performance from his colleagues. The staff were also able to benefit somehow from the fresh training though they were only sent to some introductory short-courses. However, the staff were not pushed very hard, but were very much expected to follow voluntarily the example of their manager in learning and performing.

Meanwhile, the staff did not seem to be impressed by their manager's excitement about training and were not really ready to follow suit. They were grateful to the facilitation the company provided for them to approach new knowledge and thinking, to set them free from working for some time to enjoy new experiences. Feedback after they had returned from classrooms with the experienced trainers was as usual all positive, for instance, emphasising the attractive interactive training method. Back at work, the exuberance diminished quickly. On the one hand, they acknowledged the manager's passion for training, that he has provided sufficient motivation, led by example and generously passed on the practical lessons he had learned from YEA courses. But on the other hand, the efforts of the boss did not result considerably in staff actions. They appreciated that they had to follow management instruction and showed respect to their superior. An interviewed salesman put it straightforwardly that training should lead to implementation for the company's better performance, yet he did not want to act in an overzealous manner. According to him,

There is something I would like to say, but I couldn't because it is... difficult... Just internal problems only, I don't want to go into detail... because I am an employee working for monthly salary, I don't want to be seen as... too enthusiastic, to be seen as hiding a secret motive, or having some devious conspiracies. My contribution was not enormous, but not too little because when they were treating me well, I have to pay back with my work. However, if I put in too much... there would be no problem with the person receiving my comments [about training application], but for the other people... so just enough contribution is fine.

One may find in the example that problems were not with training content or ability for learning and application, but with invisible pressures presented by colleagues. However, such thoughts and reactions do not seem to be recognised or appreciated

by the manager. He kept on studying, imparting skills and techniques and planning for more public and in-house training for the staff. Still, he appreciated that changes had not happened as desired, and attributed the limitation to insufficient training, the staff's limited educational background, but not the staff's latent concerns about being more active. Meanwhile, the employees were participating in moderation, and were not really influenced by his efforts. The popular mentality was, as an accounting staff member said, 'we for sure listened to his recommendations [about training], there is no point in challenging [his goodwill]... but we are just employees...' or 'we join which training we feel necessary, we are just staff...' Responsibility for training matters was not at all shared by the employees. It was a lack of heart-felt devotion, at least in the training area. (At the same time, considerable staff turnover was a fact that the staff were well aware of and the manager was actually concerned about and acted upon.)

In brief, during the early time after YEA short courses had been introduced to WoodFurn, it was the apex of business training in the company, yet it was only the top manager who took training seriously, while the staff were rather indifferent and inactive.

8.3.2.2. Searching for Practical Tips and Training as an Improvement

Precondition

Whether or not the individuals at WoodFurn treasured training, they all reckoned and confirmed the 'soft benefits' it had brought about: the more methodical working ability. It was also acknowledged within the hierarchy of the organisation. Among the supporting opinions, a point made by the salesman can be taken as a typical example:

[Before training] we had our own thinking, but we didn't follow an orderly, logical route. Training helped us know how to put things in order. It would be a mess without training. We have a better sense of planning in our work.

- Salesman

This observation is universal anyway, the trainers from YEA also identified it as one of the basic benefits of their short training courses. The trainers insisted that they help the trainees to have methods, the outputs in reality rely on the ability of linkage, imagination and application of the trainees.

In effect, the significant long-term impacts from training investment have not been actualised yet. But very early, the practical skills and tips learned from classrooms on the other hand helped to bring effects right away. Further training courses were then consecutively utilised for acquiring new tools and tips for application. In reflecting this opportunistic approach, the manager articulated that one of the main objectives of training was to get real lessons from other participants of managerial levels. He reckoned that

One can read a lot of books, but he does not have the environment. My objective is to exchange with the experienced managers, those who have been working in big companies so that I can get their precious experience. In addition, I can learn from other participants from other companies... More participants gave me more 'cases.' Twenty participants I study with give me twenty 'cases.' I want to avoid the mistakes that others have already made.

His staff shared his view in reckoning that the tips, the experience from reality others shared in or outside classrooms were all important. But no one ever reflected on these stories in terms of the theories, frameworks or principles provided by trainers. The tips were in fact practical enough that the WoodFurn manager was very encouraged with the initial applications and improvement inside his business. However, the habit of hunting for tools and tips has limited the ability of generalisation of the trainees. For instance, some methods of forecasting demand for materials were firmly rejected as inappropriate to WoodFurn by the manager as he insisted that made-to-order businesses cannot use the tools of mass production companies. Maybe the philosophy of just-in-time coupled with the mass saving viewpoint prevented him from accepting the necessity of a body of knowledge that needs long-term data collection and processing in order to be exploited. Anyway, the short-term view of replicating tools and tips in house for express outcomes has prevailed and the company proceeded with the mission of collecting the instruments that could be put into practice immediately without major customisation. This is reflected in the broad variety of courses that the manager of the company was after: public relations, techniques of an effective manager, budget control, and customer care (for his sales staff).

The role of the trainers is worth mentioning in this matter. Understanding the needs of such trainees, the training topics were planned to be attractive and to the point. The theoretical content was heavily abridged so that only tools and tips were highlighted. These courses were highly appreciated by WoodFurn participants. (Regarding the needs for practical skills and techniques, there were consecutive peaks for different subjects. After a time of quality management, then courses on how to get ISO certificates, the recent years witnessed the increase of training on brand management and soft skills.)

Then, what was readily processed in class usually became the initiatives when the trainees returned. WoodFurn was during the comfortably busy days so that immense changes were not usually planned for but the practical small ideas such as applying quotas for telephone communication fees were readily implemented. Lack of time was alleged as an explanation for the lack of significant applications, yet WoodFurn's owner was totally content with his approach to training as a precondition of improvement, as well as tools and tips deployment. In the case of WoodFurn, learning transfer would come to an end once the quest for tools and tips stopped because of constraints in the leader's training approach and his laid-back staff.

8.3.2.3. The Idolisation of Managerial Celebrities and Results

The more practical trainee-centred training methods which focus on examination and discussion of case studies have become popular in Vietnam. The trainees at WoodFurn have experienced such an 'innovatory' method and felt rather impressed by it. They expressed their enjoyment of knowing about the business stories drawn from successful local companies or international giants like Coca Cola or PepsiCo. It seems that in many public training courses, the moves of about a dozen famous local companies were usually taken as examples for the trainees to discuss to develop their own understanding. Discussion in class about the success of the popular local companies which appeared frequently in the media made the manager in particular really excited. They were to him the ideal models for his business to learn from and to imitate their practices. His view, for instance, about branding which was a fashionable business matter, was typical:

Though my business is small, and the conglomerates like Unilever, or P&G, Coca Cola, or Pepsi are big, we can learn the big thing and we can put them

into practice on our small scale. They are interesting... Our direction in the future is to differentiate and to build our brand, so training is very important, like Pepsi, Coca, or Unilever, they are fighting for their brands at all costs, and so are we. We are small, but we want to try to see where it goes. I think we can apply this [strategy]. - Manager

The business philosophy of the very successful companies has been taken as a golden rule. The well-known local businessmen or international capitalists like Rockefeller or Buffet became his idols. Encouraged by these figures, the owner-manager strongly believed that success would come following the examples of the top companies.

The manager of the company could not be in a better position to leverage the lessons in reality. He has already enjoyed some immediate results from his continuous quest for tools and tips. Other results of training were the impending effects of the idealised anecdotal examples which were planned to be used in the company. First, the manager planned to innovate and develop a new corporate culture, in which openness, respect, democracy and shared interests would be the main values. Then, the ideas of mass media advertisement and building a strong brand were considered. He also contemplated conducting a survey on 'customer satisfaction' as well as calculating the market share of the company's businesses. Reference to the actions and strategies of successful large companies even in distant sectors (e.g. fast moving consumer goods) was always present in his plans. The ambitious plans have been further reinforced since the business had survived strong competition, training was not used as the last resort but for collecting competitive edges (8.3.2.2 above), so that more and more ideas were inspired from the training examples.

Meanwhile, clearly it was challenging to align the available resources of the company in terms of time, money as well as expertise in house and the ambitious plans. The owner, despite being the powerful patron of training, as his employees observed, could not focus only on training. His plans could only be realised if there was an addition of quality staff and his existing people were encouraged and enabled to participate significantly.

The staff in spite of appearances did not share the feeling of excitement with their employer. They focused more on the nuts and bolts of the specific techniques. So they complained about the short time in class ('cursory visit' as the accountant said) for them to master the techniques. Therefore, among themselves, the outputs were

ambiguously the 'better views of business issues.' The classroom stories of the success somewhere could not be transferred at their work place, they were considered too far flung. 'I can discuss with other staff what I learned when working in the field, not things from the courses,' the salesman admitted. In fact, the training courses they had participated in were believed appropriate by their manager, but in application they did not feel comfortable as they possessed less power than necessary. In short, they found themselves not at the level to think of and use the new knowledge in their work. With such a conclusion, they did not take training as seriously as their employer and this had undesired effects on the potential of the contribution to WoodFurn after training.

In short, early results encouraged the manager, however they were not the result of a change programme. On the other hand, the success stories of the outstanding businesses provided him with confidence and optimism about migrating all the modelled practices into his company.

8.3.3. Training and Outcomes Discussion

WoodFurn encountered training inadvertently and there was a contrast in enjoying it among the trainees. They were having distances in viewing the objectives, approaches and benefits of training. The coming part of the chapter discusses the research issues based on these different perspectives about training described above.

8.3.3.1. Training Objectives

In WoodFurn, training objectives were not clearly defined and agreed upon in the first place among the trainees. A mixed bag of business security, competitive environment, confidence in the power of knowledge, and personal development needs was identified as contributors of training objectives in this company.

Initially, the owner of the company wanted to be affiliated with a business association to better secure his business which had proved able to survive on the market and became his significant property. He has undergone the hard time of business start-up, his business grew to considerable value, so the need to protect it appeared and replaced the urge of taking risks. YEA was first considered as 'a block, which has a voice to protect us if things happen.'

There was a coincidence in the purpose of joining the business association and acquiring the short courses. Available offers from the association came at the right

time when there was emerging anxiety about the road ahead for business development, and training was therefore accepted as a mental backup. Youthful dynamism plus years of reality in the industry urged him to find the ways to cope effectively with the threats of the changing competitive environment. The argument that in class, for instance, twenty participants provided twenty 'cases' to avoid mistakes others had made showed that training was meaningful in giving the navigational aids for WoodFurn to sail on more securely. Training did not furnish any problem-solving assistance in this case, since the manager himself rifled through a wide variety of subjects rather than had a selected area of focus. However, these needs for orientation and security were not extremely urgent as the company has been able to survive and grow in recent years.

Training, in the case of WoodFurn's manager, 'to improve myself,' also served the purpose of levelling out with other businessmen in general, at least knowledge-wise. He has firmly achieved the respect from his staff as a competent business leader. With training, his image would be elevated to that of a knowledgeable leader, having 'methods' in running a business. The training objective was not explicit, but indirectly revealed through his admiration of fellow businesspeople who were able to describe clearly problems and solutions in their management as well as generalise those into useful lessons.

In the meantime, the WoodFurn staff did not seem to have their own ideas about the purpose of training besides being the benign followers of the manager's policies. They could not give specific reasons why training or what training seemed appropriate. The employee in charge of sales claimed, 'If the boss asked, I would be happy to attend any course he suggests... Study? I wish I could study all my life.' Their reasoning for attending any training was more to do with feelings than rational:

I would like to study foreign languages. Foreigners have many good qualities to learn, mastering a foreign language helps me communicate with them... Sooner or later, I will study to get a master degree, my friends are studying [for the degree]. Degrees are nothing, but I want to have knowledge so that when I talk to people... I feel more confident. - Salesman

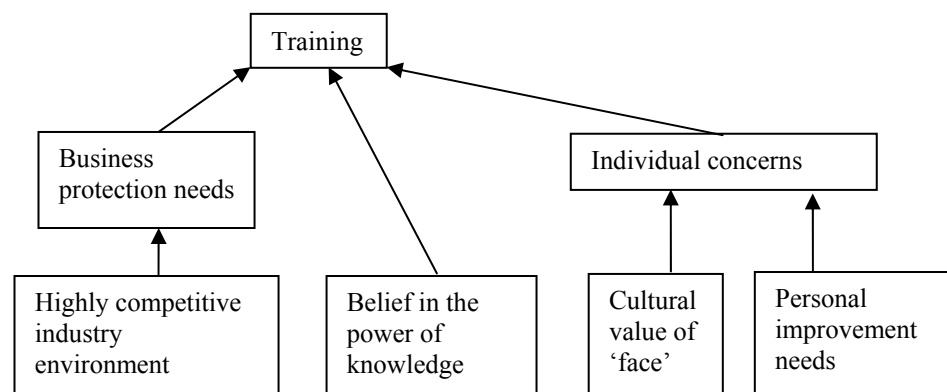
Another member of staff was also unspecific in responding to what studying was for: 'we have to study what we found deficient.' Obviously, there was no urgent need personally and company-wise but training opportunities were never refused.

Learning has never been considered redundant under the traditional effects of Confucian cultural values. The manager proudly praised the efforts of himself and his people in closing the knowledge gap, ‘We follow the spirit of our old saying “No matter how poor we are, we must send our children to school” (*nghèo đến mấy cũng phải cho con đi học*).’

This evidence showed the hole in defining training objectives in WoodFurn. The opportunistic nature of training motives manifested in the acquiring of every topic offered plus the ambiguous training direction of the staff did not promise significant impacts on the company business. Training was not in proactive mode to support specific business development goals, but it can be considered as the pre-emptive action to protect the business in the dynamic environment moving towards fair and more intensive competition. The needs (mostly personal) have been underdeveloped for some time and incidentally satisfied when the company became a member of the local business association.

All in all, training in WoodFurn was induced by: business security, an opportunistic desire to improve the business, individual urge for ‘face’ and improvement, and traditional values of knowledge.

Figure 8-2: WoodFurn – Training decision



8.3.3.2. Training Related Activities in WoodFurn

The management and business training partnership with YEA can be seen as WoodFurn’s fortune. Training was an unintentional activity first discovered by the owner of the company. He was during the period of importing all the basic courses the association offered. With his dominant power as owner cum manager, training

related matters had already been arranged for the staff and they just had to follow. Concerning the staff, so far the number of people sent to YEA courses was very limited though it was believed that anyone active enough would be allowed to be trained provided that he showed a willingness to study. Training is synonymous to knowledge addition, which is in harmony with the common values and therefore no resistance from staff was ever experienced. However, harmony does not mean taking initiative. No resistance went along with acceptance and no further suggestion or opinions about training. It was a popular reality in small private businesses, not just in the area of training.

Doubts about training effects however existed when the staff remarked that training was not all that the company should concentrate on. The owner observed that though he wished to receive every comment about training from his staff, he was never satisfied with his achievement in business training. Furthermore, he even planned to bring training in house for more people to enjoy the opportunities. On the other hand, though being rather indifferent to attend training courses that the manager designated, the staff themselves had their own plans and ideas of what they should have for themselves (mainly technical skills or an official higher degree). This highlights the situation of training being carried on without specific business-related goals. This point is also partly reflected by the fact that the company limited itself to a sole training service provider: YEA was chosen out of convenience. So it appears that in the pre-training phase, there was no serious awareness of training needs, training content consideration, and training partner selection.

From the supply side, information from the training service provider was not sufficient for the trainees to make a decision. Leaflets on course aims, prerequisites as well as intended participants and outputs were usually not specific enough. Therefore, a trainer comments, '[a course] is like a traditional medicinal herb, which was advertised as absolutely effective. It is up to your belief whether to use it or not.' Courses for YEA's member at WoodFurn were quickly accepted with the enthusiasm of the manager during the early stage of training. This is conveniently justified by the manager's comment, 'I found myself lacking knowledge in all areas... Training is never enough for me.'

Besides basic management knowledge as well as practical tools, desire to learn from the shared experience of other business trainees was generally satisfied in YEA's

courses. Moreover, it was greatly satisfying for the manager to receive the comments from other participants about his own company issues and his every idea of improvement for the business. In fact, the pretraining phase was rather well facilitated, having a committed leader, available resources and a responsive training provider.

The post-training phase was also headed by the manager, however with more contribution from his staff. Activities in this phase bear two characteristics: they were based on personal as well as informal initiatives. WoodFurn's trainees picked out the tips that had been provided in class and put them into practice. Mainly it was the classroom stimulation plus the lab-work analogy that the trainees identified to be immediately transferred into action. It was revealed that the returning trainees leaped from one application to another without repeated practice, reinforcement or institutionalisation in any area. Examples can be taken from the manager who wanted to try all soft and hard techniques in his work. In his perfect position, things were to be tried, from 'soft' like corporate culture philosophy, staff motivation or the art of public relations, to 'hard' as project budget development or cost controlling. The tools and tips screened from lessons were not held back to be his own experiment. They were applied, promoted to the staff and in turn became the stimulants for continued training. He was seen to have a very positive attitude towards the efforts for application. However, from the view of his staff, the changes were rather superficial because their manager could not put enough time into the job. Conversely, from the perspective of the manager, the post-training phase was exciting when he witnessed the improved working spirit of the staff and the specific results from his own initiatives. However, there were incidents, such as the proposals from the trained staff on enlarging the market or on better material control, which did not receive serious considerations from either the staff or the manager. It was decided they should remain in 'standby' mode. This shows that efforts were focused on initiatives using the tools and tips that delivered instant results rather than plans which required time, coordination and leadership.

It also appears that necessary facilitation has not yet overcome the owner's desire to maintain total control of the business. The following example highlights the point. The accountant after training put up the idea of improving the cost controlling process. It was tried, and cooperation from inventory was found necessary to avoid

‘garbage in, garbage out.’ It was voluntarily stopped by the accountant as no agreement was made with the inventory side. She consoled herself by saying that ‘a new accountant will not necessarily follow my system.’ It reflected the typical image of an organisation too dependent on its leader and the powerlessness of the majority.

As discussed in the section about WoodFurn’s exploration of practical tips (8.3.2.2), applications were more of breadth than depth. Therefore they were not well rooted and their sustainability can be doubted. Moreover, the mechanism of implementation and facilitation was informal and unofficial. In the view of the manager, the informality in facilitation, such as recognition, suggestion or encouragement was accepted more easily. The boss described his in-house discussion and sharing what he had learnt with his staff as ‘friendly chatting’ rather than ‘giving a lecture.’ But in fact, the topic of training did not make a substantial impression on the staff in office meetings. It led to the situation the accountant described: ‘In office meetings, the boss sometimes talks about his experience from training. He wants us to open our eyes for new ideas. Well, we think it’s fine, no one gives a comment or opposing ideas. But we are just employees...’ As recognised in the section about training issues, the keenness of the leader just resulted in lukewarm responses (8.3.2.1). The staff were not communicated with and motivated properly to take action as the post-training phase was not properly managed.

In conclusion, the experience of training in WoodFurn has just started. The policy of harvesting quickly the new tools without overall consideration of personal and business needs jeopardised the long-term effects of training. The trainees were just able to revisit the topics right after classes and, usually, their efforts were not appropriately encouraged by a well-thought-through action plan. So gradually, the owner-manager stayed alone in the field while the employees became even more indifferent. Training had not been planned ahead and informality back in the workplace left the business with piecemeal outcomes.

8.3.3.3. Outcomes of Training

Training was taken intensively (mainly by the WoodFurn owner, however), put in practice rashly and there was evidence of several early outcomes. Early on, the manager has already given very positive feedback about the impacts of training to the service provider, and these very supportive words were even used as a ‘testimonial’ in the provider’s website. Outcomes to him were very evident. For instance, in

reviewing the overhead expenses, he managed to cut monthly telephone costs by 40 percent. Other expenses followed suit with established ceilings and were closely monitored. The interviewed salesman claimed that due to the course on plan development, he was able to increase his turnover by 15 percent.

In the manager's eyes, everything improved following his training. Moreover, the staff interviewed agreed in stating that the basic benefits of training could be found in personal working methods. Training was said to provide them with critical, analytical and methodical views. Though one person maintained that a very short course was just a 'cursory visit,' she appreciated that she gained an overview of the important concepts, such as 'cost controlling,' and she could at least perform some basic analysis.

Confidence is another outcome considered important to all people. The boss revealed that he made an important achievement in communication:

Previously, I did not completely trust my people when giving them assignments, now I am more confident. I am more confident to assign work to the younger employees and appreciate their contribution. I changed in my 'communication' with the older staff after I had taken the training on using power in management. - Manager

The comment was echoed by the salesman, 'I am now confident in things I was not before.' For a young manager, gaining and expressing confidence can be considered as a success. Some other outcomes of the staff were then recognised after the manager had improved his confidence, 'They worked more independently, following plans. Their style became more professional, and they use my skills of communicating over the telephone with customers.' However, these changes were not really shared by the staff, who otherwise primarily appreciated the knowledge they obtained, for free, from training.

Concerning Kirkpatrick's model, changes at the level of '*behaviour*' have been introduced by training, especially in the owner-manager. He himself acknowledged that training helped in 'personal perfection.' Effective communication with all staff and customers was a recognisable effect following YEA courses. For the staff, they benefited from training more at the level of 'knowledge,' while behaviour changes

were not really evident. Knowledge improved the staff's potential. However, they have not yet turned it into reality:

Our own thinking... before it was natural, we did not have logic. Training helped us to arrange our work, to put things in order. Things are confusing without training. Our work is now better planned. - Salesman

Contrary to the case of the manager, these impacts were not greatly appreciated and treasured by the staff. Essentially, the staff themselves played down the importance of such achievement as they were not educated by their manager on the long-term effects of training. Furthermore, in the short run, their own progress was not as visible as that of the manager either.

Changes at the *organisational level* did not seem to have materialised. The short time since training was introduced may limit the chance for changes at this level to arrive. Nevertheless the approach of skimming tools and tips relying on individual initiatives could not facilitate the changes happening on the larger scale. They might come when the overall programmes on 'renovating the corporate environment' or 'redeveloping corporate culture' which the manager planned have been implemented. Moreover, the greater part of training was concentrated on the manager, the accumulation of knowledge has not yet been diffused to the large number of staff. Therefore organisation changes still have to wait.

8.3.3.4. Facilitators and Inhibitors of Training Outcomes

Five years since its founding, WoodFurn was still a small business. The management structure was totally simplified as reviewed in 8.2.3; the owner has been directly running the business and overseeing all daily activities. So, decision making was centralised, quick and flexible. The company could enjoy the great advantage of support from the top in training. In fact, some quick outcomes described in 8.3.3.3 show the benefit of this flat management structure as the staff could discuss their ideas directly with the decision maker, get the plans refined and approved so as to receive necessary support.

When the company started, WoodFurn was a tiny 3-staff business separating from a bigger company. The origins still had an impact on the current WoodFurn, though the owner maintained that family member preference was not a problem in his company. Anyway, his deep involvement in technical operations rather than

management itself was still present in the way the company was controlled. The manager himself was proud of his working hard in terms of time spent on the floor. Business and management training has enlightened him; he has empowered his staff more, perceived things differently and was more confident. The staff had the same manager yet with more patience, who did not hastily get involved but gave space for the people. Nevertheless, in essence, the trace of total control still lingered, and was not easy to be separated from. The manager found the business stable when sticking to his style of managing by ‘affection.’ His expertise and experience, improved by the classroom interaction, were shared with the staff on the shop floor informally: ‘I made my people see myself as helping them on the basis of fraternity rather than a boss giving them commands, as we are just a small business.’

In Vietnam, ‘affection’ (*tin h cam*) is an important cultural factor, and many may identify with the viewpoint of management by winning staff affection. Yet in WoodFurn, besides the manager’s leading by example, it was somewhat overutilised to facilitate learning transfer. Facilitation of leaning transfer needed more than bonding. A member of staff mentioned the requirements for application to happen:

The courses were useful, but they would really benefit [the trainee] if he received the support from people inside the company, that means the boss... We have to have a ‘sponsor’ to turn our knowledge into applications. There must be resources and some other objective factors to make knowledge work. - Salesman

In reality, substantial business plans proposed by the staff were not usually given the necessary resources, and then were frozen. The events as a result discouraged the staff from continuing with basic changes and turned them to follow their manager to try something with quick results and safety. The example in 8.3.3.2 of failed cooperation to improve cost controlling also showed that facilitation by ‘affection’ was not enough, when in that case the accountant needed power and order for cooperation from above.

Facilitation existed after training, the staff of WoodFurn confirmed. The manager promised to provide them with flexible time to realise their ideas. Nonetheless, trust and effective communication seemed not yet established. The staff reckoned that communication was still one-way top-down. ‘He told us what to learn and what to do... well, we are just employees...’ commented a staff member. The cultural value

of respecting hierarchy was intensified because of the position of the owner-manager. In a small private business, the powerless staff comments against the owner's ideas were not usually expected. The total imbalance of power led to the relationship of master and supporters in training as well as in other business matters. Besides, when the manager was getting too much into detail, the staff did not have the inclination to take the initiative.

The cultural values of knowledge focus, risk avoidance and harmony are partly responsible for the situation of piecemeal learning transfer. 'To learn about things we don't know, things we lack' was considered the common reason why one attended training courses, rather than a more practical goal, 'learn to perform more efficiently.' That is why the desire for, for instance, learning to get a master degree in the case of the salesman, was always present besides appreciation for the business-focused training his employer suggested. So actions after training were not a priority as their needs for knowledge addition have been satisfied.

After some training, the manager has put his efforts into promoting a corporate culture that was in his words, 'dynamic, with shared interests, respect for employees, to encourage them to act on their own free will.' It was hoped that the imported corporate culture would facilitate the staff to be more active in their work after training. Nonetheless, based on the reality of 'lukewarm responses' discussed in 8.3.2.1, reactions to the anxiety of justifying oneself in front of others, a threat of losing 'face', the cultural barrier might be still too high to overcome.

Another issue having influence on outcomes of training is the ability of managing from the start to the end of the training process in the business environment. Training in WoodFurn was naturally and traditionally received, considered as a means to gain personal confidence, to pocket business tools and tips and to satisfy one's hunger for knowledge, and to be aware of lapses others had made. These are not action-oriented. In acquiring training for tools and tips, outputs were more superficial than of substance. After training, besides the manager's 'affective' support, things were up to the spontaneity of the returned trainees. In fact, the leader of the business had lots of training, but still lacked the knowledge of training deployment.

The factors of training inhibition and facilitation are summed up in the following figure.

Figure 8-3: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer in WoodFurn

Inhibitor	Transfer of Learning			Facilitator
	→	Learning	←	Manager involvement Culture of studying and knowledge cult
Cultural values Superficial assistance from management Communication	→	Behaviour	←	Manager participation and pioneering
Management of training not yet understood and developed	→	Results	←	Manager commitment to changes Early outcomes

In summary, the quick results directly related to training were facilitated by strong commitment to changes and participation of the business owner. The results however were not recognised by the staff and supported by their actions largely because of the tradition respecting hierarchical values, as well as the manager’s actions that overlooked the importance of coordinating post-training efforts.

8.4. Summary

WoodFurn chanced upon business training when it became a member of a local young businesspeople association. Until that time the business had survived as a small interior design and office partition construction company and began to expand.

Training was found to satisfy quickly the needs of the business owner to enrich knowledge and techniques to lead and protect the business through tougher competition. Training has proved to provide the business with early positive results due to the practical tools and tips which were quickly employed. While the manager of the company was really attracted by and maintained high hopes from the short courses, the staff were not fully devoted to this means of performance improvement. Seeking knowledge in general, without orientation, so having no specific work

related training objective, the employees maintained a lukewarm response to the manager's efforts after training.

In most of the cases, early results in cutting costs and consolidating business procedures derived from the personal initiatives of the manager, trying the simple tools and practical tips in his management work. Training has not yet introduced profound changes as desired, but the confidence it gave the business owner was considerable. These were the foundation for the company to decide for more open training for the staff. In order to improve from further training in WoodFurn, the issues of developing management skills like planning, facilitation and review have to be addressed along with analysis and understanding of the impact of several cultural issues such as respecting community and hierarchy, harmony and face saving, which appeared to have prevented learning transfer.

9. CASE FIVE: EYEHEALTH CO.

9.1. Introduction

EyeHealth Co. is the first private ophthalmological hospital in Vietnam, providing services to patients mainly from Ho Chi Minh City and the neighbouring provinces. The hospital has established a name in the city's health care sector for its hi-tech facilities and treatment. In spite of appearances, it has been struggling to develop an effective management system. One of the measures to improve the system was management and business training provided to all staff of the hospital.

Guided by a general manager who had lived and worked for a long time in developed countries, the staff in the early days had opportunities to attend numerous training courses. Besides the updated technical training and workshops overseas for the doctors, the whole staff have been sent to a series of renowned training courses in order to develop a foundation of management and service skills. Improvements as the result of management training were perceived differently among the trainees. Reactions about training itself have always been positive, but while the administrative staff seemed to be more appreciative and rather active toward application of the acquired knowledge, the medical doctors' views on management training appeared to be a mixture of enjoying the novel knowledge, cautiousness, and limited application. Eventually, the general manager of the hospital had his own account for the limited outcomes of management training – cultural barriers. Management training was then planned to be shifted from showering public courses to nurturing selective in-house teamwork practice as a measure to improve the effectiveness of training investment.

This chapter will review the individual and overall outcomes of intensive management training in EyeHealth. It will also discuss the main training-related issues the company was facing and analyse the connection of training investment and outcomes in view of the specific hospital management and health sector environment.

9.2. The Hospital and Business Profile

9.2.1. Business History and Development

EyeHealth Co. claimed to be the first private ophthalmological hospital in Vietnam. The hospital was opened early in 2001 in the centre of the populous area of Ho Chi Minh City. The investor of the hospital was an overseas Vietnamese who had worked in various multinationals and private companies in Europe for most of his mid-life. He returned to Vietnam in the late 1990s and decided to open the hospital as he had insights into the health care business due to his working experience in the West and his family had an established tradition in medicine. Besides, at that time, the opportunities in the health care market had started to expand. There were already a few private hospitals in the city and the bureaucratic procedure to open hospitals was gradually streamlined. EyeHealth was first established as a limited company with medical equipment trading as its primary registered business. It was then transformed into a joint-stock company in 2002 with a major increase in registered capital and functioned fully as a specialised eye hospital. In 2005, after a boisterous open dispute over an intolerable rent increase, the hospital had to be relocated to new premises, where the business seemed finally to settle down.

Targeting well-off clients from the beginning, the hospital invested millions of US dollars in its technical infrastructure. They offered all specialised operations for the treatment of the eye's faulty refractive ability and glaucoma as well as minor surgery, cosmetic surgery and spectacle services. The leading techniques for glaucoma and impaired vision treatment like Phaco and Lasik have been introduced and promoted extensively. Technical equipment and the patient ward were very well maintained so that the patients were able to really enjoy the high-class services. The reception and examination areas also received attention to detail in design and procedure to create a friendly environment for the clients. Together with the strong physical facilities, the human resources of the hospital have been developed strongly to stable and capable pools of ophthalmologists, nurses and supporting staff.

Since commencement, the hospital has been running well in terms of customer volume. On average, they received 200 customer visits for examination, consultation and treatment per day, or around 40,000 annually. The patients were mainly people living in the cities, although about 20 per cent of the hospital's clients come from the

nearby provinces. To further expand their customer base and tap a fresh segment, the hospital has begun to receive patients covered under the state health insurance scheme. It also participated in charitable activities on several occasions to help disadvantaged people and to promote the name of the hospital to more potential customers. The general manager estimated that growth of EyeHealth was between 20 and 30 per cent per annum, and it would be 40 per cent in the near future.

9.2.2. Industry Context and Business Focus

The health care industry in Vietnam has always been in a situation of demand exceeding supply. A preventive health care system has been thoroughly developed into every grassroots administrative unit and it was recognised to be rather effective in controlling communicable diseases. However, in terms of sophisticated treatment, the patients could only rely on public and private services in big cities and provinces. The health system was therefore attributed as having a ‘bulky top and flimsy bottom’ (*đầu to đít lép.*) All large hospitals with adequate treatment facilities were concentrated in cities and townships. The biggest facilities with specialised equipment and good doctors can be found only in larger cities like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Patients therefore inclined to perceive health care service quality and effectiveness accordingly. Those who suffered from illnesses all desired to be referred to leading city hospitals so that they would enjoy better services and feel more secure. So the hospitals in the cities were always overcrowded.

Confronted by the reality of not having enough capacity to serve the health care needs of the people, the government has officially allowed the private sector to participate in providing services as long as they meet certain professional requirements. In fact, private dentists’ or doctors’ surgeries where doctors practised after hours had existed for a long time, but their capacity was usually very small, in most of the cases operated by a single doctor in his own apartment. The openness was rather reluctant at first (Gross, 1994). However finally, the facilitation for an even greater private sector contribution in health care was further reinforced in 1999 by a government decree (73/1999/NĐ-CP), which detailed specific incentives in taxes, credit and infrastructure investment.

The first private general hospital in Vietnam was opened in 1997 in Ho Chi Minh City. In recent years, a number of private hospitals were also available in other major

cities and provinces. Nonetheless, the majority of health care facilities were still public as it required substantial financial investment and expert staff for a new hospital.

After EyeHealth's founding in 2001, there were several eye hospitals established to tap the potential and underserved market. By the end of 2005, among a total of six main competitors in the city, there was one massive public ophthalmological hospital, a 100 percent foreign-invested hospital, and four private ones. All of them, from state or private resources, were equipped with advanced treatment facilities and the best medical experts of the city. Besides, there were ophthalmic departments of many general hospitals and numerous small clinics of opticians who usually provided services from home. Therefore, competition has escalated and hospitals had to find their own ways to appeal to more clients, which was not very familiar in the health sector previously. Except for the public St. Paul eye hospital, which for many years had enjoyed a monopoly in providing services and established the top position in ophthalmological treatment in the South of Vietnam, the others had to highlight their advantages in terms of technical facilities, peripheral services or the names of a few famous doctors on the staff in order to attract clients.

The focus on quality and convenient service was not peculiar to EyeHealth hospital, but other private ones as well. The public hospitals have been renowned for long queues, crowds of patients, ill-mannered doctors, poor technical facilities, and unnecessarily complicated admission procedures. Corruption in public hospitals also made patients frustrated. People became familiar with the reality that they had to give extra under-the-table money on any occasion for better services in return. With still significant subsidies from the state budget, public hospitals had the advantage of price of services and medical instruments that the private sector could not afford. However, the price edge could not offset the troubles the patients usually experienced there like rude and unprofessional attitudes of administrative and technical staff, the corruption and extra expenses, low quality health care materials and drugs, and prolonged waiting in an unsanitary environment. One of EyeHealth's doctors said, 'In our health care system, the patients rarely complained about professional capacity, but they did about attitudes' [of the people providing services.] This was exactly where the private hospitals entered to skim the rather well-off

patients from the state competitors. They aimed at those who expected friendly and respectful service when snubbing public hospitals for private ones.

EyeHealth management stated that its business was built on the basis of considerate and effective care services. They also maintained the aim to become a quality hospital at the regional level. Following this direction, very early after inauguration, the staff started to work on developing procedures in every step of their operations. Consequently, in April 2003, they received the ISO 9000: 2000 certificate, becoming the first body in the health care sector of Vietnam to achieve such quality management acknowledgement. It was a small advantage in public relations for recruiting more clients and, more importantly, for standardising internal procedures. It helped the staff to shift their views from the traditional doctor and patient relationship to the one of client and service provider. By applying the system, the likelihood of faults committed during admission, examination and treatment was minimised. In addition, there was the opportunity to maintain, review and improve quality of care. Still very few health care services in the city managed to receive recognised quality management certificates.

Also concerning the 'soft' aspects of their services, the hospital has established a human resource structure of core technical staff and a solid supporting block taking care of marketing, promotion, PR, and customer surveys to provide the most convenient services for the patients. Working hours were set to accommodate all customers unable to visit during normal time and extended over weekends when surges of patient visits actually happened. The customers were allowed to select the very doctor from whom they wanted to receive services. Regarding the 'hard' elements, besides the investment in modern surgery equipment, the hospital took great care with the peripheral facilities like reception area, examination rooms, and in-patient wards to secure further customer loyalty through their positive experience.

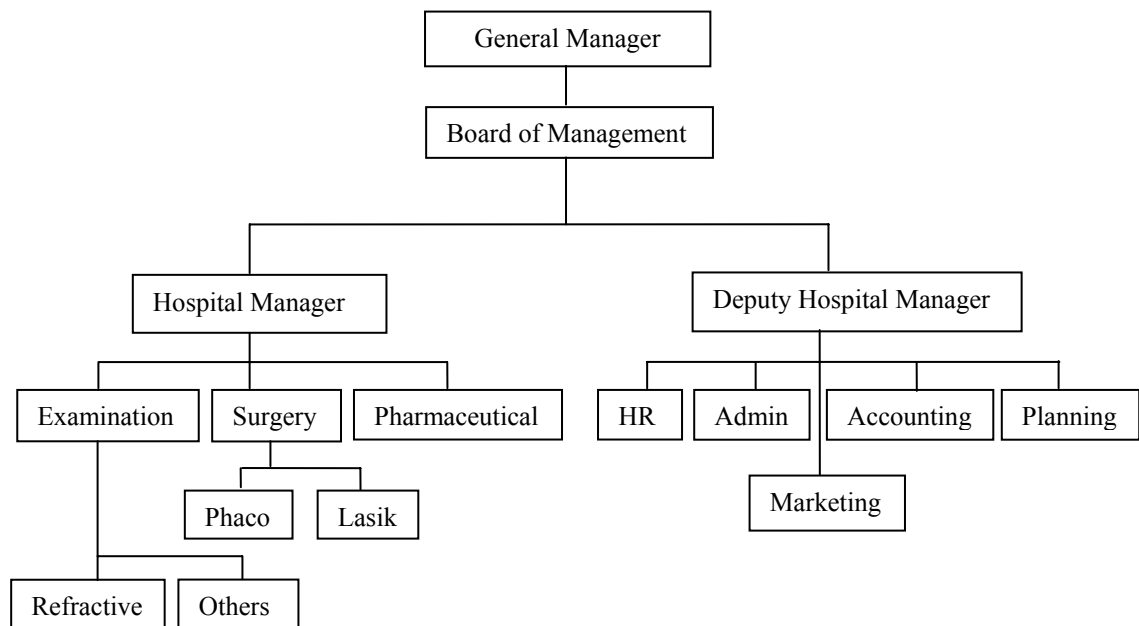
It is debatable to claim that the above measures had enabled the hospital to enjoy any unique advantage since they were not very difficult to imitate. Investment in a medium specialised hospital having two operating theatres, 20 patient beds and 60 staff in total was not prohibitively heavy in reality: since 2001, at least five more eye hospitals opened in the city. The large state hospital has dedicated a specific section and scheme to serve wealthy patients, and using state funds they have invested immensely to obtain the most modern technical facilities to attract these customers.

The quality management certificate was not too high a hurdle either. Marketing staff of EyeHealth through their research observed that there was little variation in service prices among competing private eye hospitals. Therefore, the most basic foundation to gain competitive advantage for EyeHealth was through its human resources. The company has been actually focusing on their human resource development to provide quality services and achieve customer satisfaction.

9.2.3. Human Resources

In total, there were about 60 staff working in EyeHealth hospital, and nearly two thirds of them were medical: doctors, nurses, and orderlies. The rest were management, administrative and supporting staff. All of them were headed by the general manager, who was also the founder and major investor of EyeHealth. The organisation chart of the hospital is depicted below.

Figure 9-1: EyeHealth organisation chart



Ophthalmologists have been the core of the labour force in EyeHealth hospital. For a period of time, they were even central in management. Most of the total of eleven of them were reported to hold permanent posts in EyeHealth and a couple of proficient specialists from other institutions made frequent visits. They all had at least five years of ophthalmology practice, and a few key specialists had very rich experience in the field. In fact, there was a mix of young and experienced doctors within the staff. The more experienced ones were also affiliated with other large hospitals.

Recruitment of ophthalmologists was not particularly hard, evidenced by the unveiling of several eye hospitals since 2001. Medical schools in Ho Chi Minh City with a 6-year programme produced general practitioners only, and the graduates had to spend two to four more years to become specialists. Besides, medical schools in the city were responsible for training doctors for the health care sector of all provinces in the South. However, the majority of capable graduate doctors refused to be allocated to remote areas, and this contributed to the overcrowding in big hospitals in the centre of the city. As the doctors concentrated in the city area, selection of competent doctors was not particularly difficult. A newly opened hospital like EyeHealth had anyway to find a few key figures to attract clients first. This was resolved by contracting the services of some popular doctors from ophthalmic departments of other hospitals. They could also help by attracting their frequent patients to EyeHealth. As a matter of fact, the hospital was also exposed to the risk of losing its doctors and suffered the loss of a few doctors when more eye hospitals opened. A source from the HR department revealed that eye hospitals in the city seemed to recruit stable technical staff, and they did not concern themselves much about good doctors being lured to competitors. The build-up of technical staff continued and to date they had a retired veteran specialist with over 30 years of service in state hospitals as the manager, and a team of doctors capable of dealing with most eye related problems.

The nurses came from various health institutions and there have not been many changes to this group. The nurses' essential responsibilities were in assisting doctors in examination and operation, registering, guiding and providing information for customers, helping patients to exercise and have medication. The hospital actually treasured the team of nurses as they were directly interfacing with the clients before and after they saw the doctors, and carried the good image of EyeHealth. Since inception, it was the most stable group of staff EyeHealth had.

In general, the human resource structure of the hospital was reported to be quite similar to that of the majority of other hospitals in the city. The significant difference of the structure to others was the existence of its marketing department, which they were considering to further divide into external (promotion and recruitment) and internal (customer services, service data collection) functions. The key people of the departments in the administrative block had started early with EyeHealth and were

devoted to their work in the hospital. They were recruited with a background which seemed to be suitable for their positions. They have been active, contributed to developing the quality management system and facilitated the process of obtaining the certificate. By incorporating the assistance of doctors and nurses, the administrative staff also proved to be effective in organising activities of promoting customers' awareness about EyeHealth services through the regular free seminars for potential customers on common problems like glaucoma, sight problems with the elderly, refractive flaws and different treatment techniques. Overall, they supported and maintained the operating infrastructure of the hospital's daily activities.

Remuneration in EyeHealth was a three-tier system where bonuses were available only for the low-ranking staff i.e. nurses. Officers and manager received a fixed salary, while doctors had commission from every operation they performed. Although not explicitly stated, it was believed that the income of the doctors was far higher than that of the nurses and other staff. In general, the hospital manager reported that they had not matched other clinics on the material side. However they had proved that they provided enough care for the staff and all felt satisfied with EyeHealth's working and earning conditions.

9.3. Management Training and Outcomes

9.3.1. Training Overview

Training in EyeHealth hospital has been clearly divided between ophthalmic technique improvement, and hospital operation and management.

That his family had a tradition in the health care profession was one of the reasons for the general manager to open a hospital after having returned to Vietnam. Also, because of this reason and the acquaintances he had developed in his work in the past, the general manager was able to send his doctors to short training courses, or conferences and workshops, in neighbouring countries like Thailand and Singapore to improve their professional skills and update with modern techniques. The field trips also had the purpose of building relationships for assistance so that EyeHealth could send for treatment patients with special care requirements beyond its domestic capacity. Also from personal relationships, the hospital had opportunities to receive experts from France or the US to provide on-site training and technology transfer. Regarding the nurses, inside the hospital, they were facilitated to rotate between roles

in examination room, operation ward and in-patient care to broaden their professional capacity. In fact, there was no official technical training for the medical staff, doctors and nurses, but they learnt from business trips, on-the-job training, and also the opportunities to attend professional workshops in the city and abroad, sponsored by medical equipment and pharmaceutical manufacturers. Through these activities, the hospital also raised its profile and broadened services offered to its customers when the doctors came into contact with modern methods. This area of training has been implemented efficiently without much concern from the management.

During the early days of the hospital, when the staff were all new recruits, the general manager first emphasised training in communication and customer care skills to prepare his staff for impressing the first customers with professional services. With this initiative, he believed they could address what the customers expected from a private health care institution. Since then, it has become standard for any new staff. The head of the planning department described the focus of their training:

Everyone has to attend the training on communication. We equipped all the staff with communication skills... After four years... we were offering many training courses. Most courses were on communication, communication to serve patients, customers... We sent staff to many courses on customer care. Those were essentially for people in the area of 'operations.' - Head of planning department

It was really an emphasis on provision and improvement of interpersonal ability for the staff and, as the head of the planning department said, especially for those directly dealing with patients.

For the rank of officers or heads of department, there were enhanced management training courses like supervisory skills, human resources management, building a professional hospital style and image, and service marketing. In other words, they received more sophisticated training besides those suitable for their work positions. The hospital also seconded a deputy manager to attend a specific course on hospital management, a brand new subject offered for the first time by a local private university.

It appeared that business skill and management training in the first few years of the EyeHealth business were very popular among the hospital staff. Over thirty people, including doctors, nurses, orderlies and administrative staff were once trainees. They were facilitated to attend a great deal of training with a diversity of training suppliers, and all tuition fees were covered by the hospital. Most of the training was on the soft skills that it was hoped would help the management to fit their people together, and for the staff to make customers satisfied. Few staff attended more long-term external training for official degrees in addition to what the hospital offered for free. Concerning decision making, training matters were usually discussed among the general manager and the head of human resources, but the former alone decided what training his staff would receive.

Being a pioneer private hospital in the city and an employer committed to training, EyeHealth has been consistently approached by many training service providers. On the whole, the entire courses that the hospital acquired were obtained from prestigious trainers in the city. A number of courses, aiming to equip the participants with skills to achieve service excellence, were repeated time and again.

Except for the general manager and several administrative staff with a social science background, the rest of the trainees felt that they had encountered a completely new discipline after training on interpersonal skills and management. In general, training of this type was highly appreciated by these participants. However, in reality the management recognised that their training thus far had failed to introduce significant impacts in the organisation. Hence, from the end of 2005, the general manager decided to change the direction of training practice in his hospital.

The new approach included learning-together groups with the content of their self-training based on certain business text books. Nominated leaders of learning groups led and managed group activities and development. In essence, this was aimed at creating an environment that would help participants to have a common vision and attempt what they have obtained from group learning. Sometimes, a keynote speaker would be invited to stir up the learning atmosphere, give an overview of a specific business issue and provide practical suggestions for work application. In parallel, the measures to reinforce the outcomes of the new training approach have been formulated. A system of 'income related to customer satisfaction' has been developed. The planning department has embarked on the collection of data on

customer expectations, and planned to further promote customer satisfaction and its effect on individual earnings. So, training would be placed in a new environment, where there would be more encouragement and support from different parties. The general manager was very confident and expected better results from the new training method. Outcomes from this approach were only available some time after the fieldwork. However, the change of training direction and reactions reflected views of the management on the efforts to improve human resources so far.

9.3.2. Emerging Training Issues

9.3.2.1. The Quasi-open Doctors

No matter whether it is public or private, doctors are the core staff of a hospital. EyeHealth has developed and maintained a team of doctors who were experienced in complicated eye surgery as well as the treatment of minor eye diseases. They also managed to offer expensive leading techniques to the affluent customers due to the continuous updating the hospital provided.

Besides the frequent technical update, they had opportunities to attend serious training courses to acquire a better knowledge of service and management on the business side. They were even offered tailored courses in-house in which trainers came and helped them with building professional images. The initial plan of the general manager was to place his doctors in the major positions in the hospital management, an early effort to integrate autonomy to hospital operation. As a matter of fact, before 2004, the doctors were established as key managers in EyeHealth. They were involved in making decisions on service policies and strategies for hospital development. They were supposed to develop plans, manage staff and look after the daily operation of the front office as well as matters in the backroom. Nonetheless, their performance in the views of others was very limited. After two years, the general manager recognised that the approach was not working. Other staff also confirmed that the experiment of ‘doctors in management’ was a failure. The doctor managers were not able to perform the tasks a manager was supposed to do: planning, leading, reviewing and taking corrective actions, described the head of the planning department.

It was not effective at all. In other words, they did not know how to manage their team, how to manage people, so the tasks assigned [to the staff]

remained unrealised, it didn't work... We did not have control of the service aspect... It was a mistake, an illusion to believe that doctors could [be able to] undertake the [management] job. – Head of planning department.

There may be excuses for the poor performance of the doctors in managing and leading the hospital because of their inexperience, and medical instead of management background. Even so, training could not help them to improve individually either. Technical capacity aside, communication with patients and the professional working style of the doctors were still below the expectations of the current management. They were said to have inconsistent performance, were rather conservative in the face of constructive comments and opposed to changes. They were also claimed to confine themselves to their advantageous technical territory, their status and their arrogance. The head of the planning department and the head of the human resources department provided more detail:

We wanted ten, but they thought that five or seven is fine already. They did not think any further, 'foresee.' Say, we wanted perfect sanitary conditions, the hospital must be completely clean. But by the way they acted in reality, it was not achieved. They might think that because service is intangible so that if they are in a good mood, it would be different from when they are in a bad mood. – Head of planning department.

Say, communication, they thought that it was trivial, they just focused on technical [skills]... They considered their method was good already, their solution was fine and they were very busy. Say, in some operations, on some occasions, we invited specialists from abroad, those were doctors with doctoral degrees, they were famous and have been working in the field for a long time... but our doctors did not make enough effort to study, to take advantage of the information from the experts. We invited specialists and we had to make the most of them, but the specialists seem to have had relaxed trips... – Head of human resources department.

These claims were made by most of the non-doctor interviewees, those who had worked in the hospital long enough to observe the impact of the management and business training on the doctors. In their own explanation, to blame was the doctors' educational history and public sector working experience. There was no complaint

whatsoever about the appropriateness of the training the doctors received, but the contrary. The head of planning said that the doctors were happy when they were sent to training courses on ‘supervision,’ personal management, managing people... however, they did not consider them more than opportunities for ‘stress release.’ The comments also show the gap in communication between administrative staff and the doctors, as the same two officers elaborated:

It is very hard to influence them and move them... they are different [kind of] people! {smile} Since they started their education, the medical university always wanted [to recruit] the best students. And they were bright enough to pursue this profession. They are the ultimate people who said whether you are well or not well. That is something they consider their territory. So when I am not in the same field, it is very hard to exchange with them. And it is difficult to move them. They always said that we had nothing to comment. – Head of human resources department.

They just followed the momentum, traditional way, which they acquired from their long time in the state sector, state hospitals, or because of our education... – Head of planning department.

While their limitations in group work and ability to adapt to a real service business seem to be evident from the above comments, the doctors however maintained that they were very open, accommodating and ready to change. They were provided with completely adequate textbook knowledge on communication, customer care and services. So, they appeared to really appreciate the ultimate benefits of what they received in training, or they seemed to be indoctrinated enough with theories, as expressed sincerely in what follows, when asked about their perception of their health service:

We converse with them [patients] in a way that brings them the most benefits... Most precise, and [this] also brings us benefits... The target is the benefits for the patients... and the information for the patients must be in earnest, there must not be any ambiguity or equivocation for one’s own benefit... How [to make] the customer comes to you the next time.... Or patients, when they received services, they remembered us and they will come the next time, and they refer us to other customers... – A doctor

In addition, having a chance to enjoy a totally new discipline, like most other staff, they maintained very positive reactions about the content and delivery of the training. One of them even admitted that due to the inspiration received in class, he was willing to participate in a specific personal development training course again. Moreover, the doctors repeatedly emphasised the aspects of 'getting information' and 'enjoying a new way of training delivery.' They looked at the soft skills training with curiosity rather than readiness to learn and utilise what they learned for improvement. This view was basically different from that of the rest of the trained staff.

On the one hand, the doctors strongly affirmed that changes were necessary, and one had to adopt personal changes to improve. The interviewed doctors profoundly demonstrated their awareness that one should be open to widen their knowledge and asserted that they were all accommodating. The hospital manager, himself a veteran doctor, said:

People in my generation are prone to conservatism... afraid of failure... very cautious when there is something new, afraid to be pushed back. I don't know if I am too biased, but I do not belong to such a group. I accepted new things openly and without difficulty... - Hospital manager

But on the other hand, they unconsciously revealed that it was easier said than done. The very hospital manager quickly made his stance clear, 'If things can be improved, we should change. But if change does not help things improve, then I don't follow... I am very determined... If change is just for the sake of a trend, then I do not follow... I had my principle, and I did not compromise.' Another doctor expressed how they viewed themselves in the organisation: 'We doctors are the intelligentsia. I am a doctor, whether I can perform well in my profession, is what's important...'. These special egos explained why the administrative staff found communicating and working with the doctors frustrating.

Therefore, limited impacts in providing doctors with business and management training had their explanation somewhere else rather than the training itself. In fact, the doctors were able to point out some small progress as a result of their training. For instance, tools like fishbone diagrams were used for gathering information and identifying problems; or imitating the convincing styles of the trainers to teach the nurses how to organise schedules. But in general, the doctors themselves found more

difficulties in integrating what they learned in their daily work. Basically, they did not believe that this kind of training can bring significant results in a short time, and became more reserved in application. They did not seem to recognise the importance of the 'soft' side of their service, or the role of teams managed professionally. The hospital manager appreciated the 'complicated and abstract' dimensions of learning transfer, which needed time to be realised, yet the doctors overall did not appear to be ready to participate in migrating from having information and knowledge to application.

After two years training and placing doctors in managerial positions, leadership had to be transferred to administrative staff. The management considered that different approaches had to be undertaken in order to obtain better returns from their quasi-open doctors.

9.3.2.2. Culture Gap and Adaptation

The initiative to equip EyeHealth staff with professional business and management skills was the general manager's idea. It aimed at establishing a standard service quality to meet the expectations of the customers in a private hospital. The first few years of EyeHealth saw the medical and administrative staff facilitated to enjoy a great deal of training and some training impacts followed. EyeHealth succeeded in building the image of a pioneer in private health care and managed to maintain a stable clientele as well as business growth. But in the manager's eyes, sending staff on training was not as effective as he had expected and hence the decision to change in training practice significantly.

His recollection of training experience reflected the process of culture gap awareness and adjustment. Having lived and worked in the West for a long time, the general manager pointed out plenty of differences in 'styles, manner and mentality' between his Vietnamese employees and their western counterparts. In his review, the identification of these differences played an important role in the decision to change the direction of training strategy in the hospital. In the first place, he had believed training would be able to create a model business. He had tried to implement his western training philosophy but finally had to switch.

When EyeHealth first opened, training and workplace were set up so that autonomy was embedded and personal initiatives were expected. In that environment, staff

trainees were expected to bring what they had learnt into work naturally. Though they had attended numerous management training courses abroad, the general manager was surprised when he experienced very little change in his staff. The trained staff were not aware that they were expected to use the new knowledge or skills or they were waiting for someone to start and lead the application activities. And if there was no one taking initiative, that did not concern them very much. The manager recalled: 'When I had management training abroad, I never questioned that upon returning, I would have to look for a leader...' In his view, it was a cultural characteristic which prevented his staff from proceeding on their own. The application therefore was limited, sporadic, in contradiction with what the staff felt and the reactions they had about training. Let alone coordinated efforts, the individual staff did not show anything further than continuously going to class and returning somewhat the same. The general manager explained:

Everyone who returned from training praised the courses... they began to have questions in their minds. But after that, with time everything returned to the previous state. Why? Because the Vietnamese do not have the concept and habit of justifying themselves, by themselves. – Hospital general manager

Furthermore, is respecting organisational, social hierarchy the underlying reason for the lack of initiative? The general manager acknowledged that hierarchy existed naturally beyond his initial desire to encourage commitment, equality and initiative. The traditional western philosophy seemed to be inappropriate in the modern oriental environment. Doctors enjoyed high social status as in any other society. They received earnings 'easily twenty times higher than those of office workers,' and had absolute privilege in every activity. Naturally, it created 'segregation,' making them indifferent to any demand for additional managerial responsibility. The manager elaborated on this point:

Returning here [Vietnam], first I also thought [I would develop a hospital with] 'no hierarchy,' but now I think I have to drop this. Because in Vietnam, the demand for hierarchy is strong. If you read... management books, they tell you about, say, 'empowerment.' But here in Vietnam, it doesn't work! – Hospital general manager

The attempt to overcome the staff inertia by appointing doctors, who were on top of the hierarchy, to leading positions did not yield any better result. It turned out that the doctors lacked leadership quality, and though considering themselves superior, they were only so in technical territory. Matters got worse as observed by other managerial staff when the doctors were not open to comments and criticism.

As the shortcomings in leadership the hospital were facing had cultural origins, the problems were very difficult, if not impossible, to solve only by short-term training. On the other hand, they were aggravated when medical schools and working mechanisms in public hospitals continued to make doctors solely technical experts when they moved to a private business environment. This weakness was also raised in other interviews with supporting staff and they suggested that they would have to accept it.

In general, the general manager maintained that the Vietnamese were essentially dependent, building their own illusions and not making enough effort to justify their ideas. Meanwhile, westerners were more practical, prone to risk taking and relied on their own efforts. These qualities also showed during the phase after training. If there were apparent opportunities of application, they would quickly be seized. If not, then few people would persevere in exploring, looking for solutions, challenging themselves and so attracting others to participate. Besides the particular phenomenon of idle doctors, the other employees suffered from the same traits.

With the comparative view of a person who was very interested in training in Vietnam and abroad, the general manager identified another challenge to the trainees. The business training programmes, after being translated into Vietnamese, were not satisfactory in terms of language and communication. Therefore, the trainers could not deliver all the subtlety that only those who mastered the original language could perceive. Moreover, the capacity of trainers was problematic generally. There were many substandard trainers who could provide academic rather than practical knowledge. These concerns combined, the manager considered outright that sending staff to sophisticated training programmes with adapted foreign materials was 'useless.'

Moreover, the general manager strongly emphasised the importance of what he called the 'existing culture and foundation' of the West. Such foundation helped Western trainees to activate learning transfer more easily. It was what the

Vietnamese were really deprived of to understand the imported business and management theories, then use them in reality.

So, after experiencing limited training benefits, instead of abandoning training altogether the active manager decided that changes were necessary. He said, ‘we decided to change our culture and management style... We have to have a “strategy” suitable for Vietnam.’

In essence, the new training strategy did not seek immediate staff change but appreciated their ‘eccentricity’ and integrated change agents in an environment better suited to the culture. He decided not to continue to ‘face problems over and over,’ but accepted customary behaviour in order to improve the outcomes of training investment.

At the top level of the hospital, changes have been fully planned. Specifically, the changes were initiated from the cultural perspective, in which groups would be the core component of training in the future. The general manager explained the rationale of his strategy:

In Vietnam, the way to people’s minds goes through their hearts. Team building in Vietnam is emotional. It is less rational, but it is emotional. Say, in foreign countries, they emphasise the ‘individual’ issue. But in fact, in Vietnam, the issue of ‘group’ is more important than ego... The Vietnamese desire to ‘belong to a group’ and such a desire is very strong, stronger than the desire to justify oneself. – Hospital general manager

It was echoed in one trainer’s observation: ‘The urgent need of Vietnamese is not survival, but the need for relationship, social bonding...’ Because of being more emotional than rational, considering their images in others’ eyes more important than their own judgment, Vietnamese people tend to linger with old routines and feel it difficult to attempt new opportunities. The ‘group’ solution in EyeHealth was to move staff ahead together, taking advantage of the need of belonging to groups to overturn the attitude of risk avoidance and accelerate learning transfer. A group can help the staff to try a new work arrangement together or solve a specific management problem, facilitating them to overcome the fear of being ‘different’ or ‘odd’ in others’ eyes. It was an unfamiliar and challenging move for the Vietnamese, who were not known to collaborate well together in a group. They have never had a

complete appreciation of another group member's ideas, and have never been able to eliminate envy when working together. Examples of poor collaboration existed right inside EyeHealth, such as the sour experience of developing inter-departmental plans, where each department focused only on their own benefits. However, the general manager was confident that once the management made their staff fully understand the objectives of collaboration in groups and results appeared, they could benefit from the outcomes of training together.

The steps taken have been thought out thoroughly, in the manager's words: 'Changing by, first, avoiding concentrating on training for individuals, otherwise we have to provide training for groups. And if we have a plan like following a book, as Vietnamese people considered what is written down more serious, then having meetings... it is for creating a group, and the group then attracts others...' To improve the chance of success, the plan included sessions with eminent speakers to strengthen participants' new perception of group work, attitudes toward customer service, and to address the popular impression 'no one is a hero to his valet' (*but chùa nhà không thiêng.*) The solutions can be seen as a variant of the Japanese 'quality circle.'

EyeHealth has entered a new chapter where in-house training emerged after a rather long period of trial and error with public courses. The new approach of the general manager was special in his unique assessment based on multi-cultural reasoning. The explanation of limited transfer of learning and ensuing solutions were based primarily on the culture dimension. Though group work or teamwork is very popular in Western society, it is a great challenge to management and staff to make it work in EyeHealth.

9.3.2.3. Training Concerns and Unintentional Power Distance

With the positive training policy from the start, all the managers in different departments of EyeHealth were encouraged to seek the training they thought necessary. They were all committed to the hospital and very interested in and concerned about the hospital training activities. They provided more profound and critical views of training compared to the doctors, but were confident that opportunities existed to make training more beneficial. As all managers have been working for the hospital from the beginning, they clearly understood the problems they were facing. Their ideas on why training was in trouble diverged to a certain

extent, nonetheless they had recognised the problems of poor learning transfer, training outcomes and given specific suggestions.

However, were these ideas from the department managers communicated directly and openly to the general manager to enable him to make better decisions? Across the organisation, people felt that the transfer of learning had not been as expected, and these were the immediate concerns of the managers, including the top boss. Yet during the fieldwork, implicit and explicit problems in communication have come out. Most obviously, though usually summoned to confide with the general manager (a very informal, non-Western approach), the doctors were still aloof, did not take training seriously and focused only on their technical issues. Then, there were obstacles in communication among departments and individuals. Revealing his experience in planning development in the hospital, the planning manager indicated that though the organisation size was quite small and the structure was not complex, the lack of collaboration among departments resulted in plans of little value.

However, the critical disruption was found in the channel between the general manager and his immediate subordinates. Even one trainer spotted this when he noted: 'he [the general manager] always looks for new ideas and he always goes in a new direction... His management team just follows him. The directions have always changed. For instance, he says do this, do that, and projects change constantly...' The general manager was at the same time the owner of EyeHealth. The staff were impressed with his career history in the most developed countries, his investment in this local hi-tech service business, and his trusted broad knowledge of management. Therefore his voice was absolute for his staff. In addition, his hands-on management style was evident during the field visit. One noted that all the staff were interested only in the issues which concerned the big boss and this impeded the influence of the intermediary managers. For instance, the deputy hospital manager conceded: 'The boss has not realised that my orders [to staff to make corrections in their work] were not taken into account. But I have to accept...'

It is incontestable that the general manager has formulated an original and determined solution to turn around the post-training situation of poor learning transfer. He appeared to be a competent leader, but his total power had its weaknesses. His leadership monopoly in training led to the point that the designated

content and methodology did not address his staff's actual needs. One trainer recalled his experience in working with EyeHealth staff:

When they came [to the course], they were all very interested [in the subjects] at first, the human resource matters, how to motivate people to work, and second, more importantly, how to satisfy customers. They all recognised the requirements, and I think that they recognised this under the pressure of [the general manager]. But on customer satisfaction, I found they didn't speak from the heart. – Trainer.

Meanwhile, the actual desire, needs, views of appropriateness of training of the low level staff were very simple. The nursing head was a typical case where individual training needs were not satisfied by what was offered. But the discrepancies have never been communicated to the policy maker:

The thing I need is about management of just small, small... I do not want something big. I want to attend courses on customer service or... something more practical, so that I can better serve the patients. How to make more customers come... It should not be too profound and make me think a lot but is inapplicable... - Nursing head.

At the two ends of the training process, the problems seem to be classical. The same nursing head revealed, 'What I studied was not from what we can select. We went to the classroom and received this training content. Here we haven't been allowed to select the courses we need... returning, we don't know where to start...' The new direction the manager developed seemed to be practical as it would start by getting people together, providing them with the looked-for leaders, and trying to address initially their own identified problems. However, under the dominance in communication of the general manager, problems would not be examined and solved from the bottom up as he wished, but from the top following his view. More importantly, the problem of the big gap in power between himself and the rest, and its consequences in communication with the staff seemed to be unrecognised by the general manager.

Hence, the trainer made his conclusion: 'I think that what needs to be addressed in this hospital is "clear communication," but "clear communication" is very difficult because of the position of the general manager.'

9.3.3. Training and Outcomes Discussion

EyeHealth had their every staff member participate in training from its early days in the health care business. The hospital staff had opportunities to attend many courses given by the top training service providers. Back at the hospital, the emerging problems include the doctors' indifference, the hospital owner's change of perception on traditional training and application, and the latent problem of communication. Coupled to these problems, negative impressions about training impacts prevailed so that training would be conducted differently in the future. Based on the emerging problems and from the perspective of different informants, the following sections discuss in turn the research issues.

9.3.3.1. Training Objectives

From the commencement of the hospital, the training objective of EyeHealth was to develop human resources capable of providing its customers with the best health care services.

The managers and the staff understood that they would compete with other public hospitals and private clinics by quality of service besides advanced medical technology. In EyeHealth the modern specialised equipment was already an advantage, but building capacity on the human resources side was crucial for competing in the health care business. It needed to be effective in order to compete with the public sector whose services had been spoilt by bureaucracy and corruption. It would also be the ground on which to vie for well-off clients with private rivals when no one wanted to compete on service prices. Therefore the organisation of business to attain a standard service quality was important.

Moreover, except for a small number of employees with experience in services, the rest, especially the doctors and health workers, were either untrained in this area or working for a long time in the public environment. They had believed that they did favours rather than providing services and they were superior in organisation. Moving to a private hospital, they naturally had to adjust their behaviour as they knew that the hospital and their position relied on good patient services. However it was not easy to get rid of the old habits. The hospital has given them significant training but the doctors still seemed to be conservative and stuck to their patronising attitudes (9.3.2.1). In order to have collaboration to enable service excellence and

customer satisfaction, training was planned to be more profound and directed towards changing perceptions. This was evident in the acquired courses aiming at customer service and professional working style. The staff have completely appreciated these training objectives. The general manager admitted that in the beginning he had expected training would certainly change his staff into service professionals but it was not achieved easily. He had to adjust training from public courses to in-house group work, although the objective remained the same.

The changing modern Vietnamese society is a factor determining the training decision. Comparing Western and Vietnamese societies, the general manager realised that in the less developed Vietnam, learning was more necessary for his staff as some basic knowledge on business was still novel. Changes in economic condition also allowed the people wider choices in health service, and drove customer expectations higher. Besides, rapid changes in legal system, regulations, and standards made training more important as staff felt they needed to be updated constantly. The business opportunities available during the earlier time when the industry had yet not developed became rare and gradually disappeared. EyeHealth was the first ophthalmic hospital skimming many customers, then other hospitals emerged, and competition turned fierce. This is another force requiring the hospital to train its staff in order to survive in the more competitive environment.

Finally, the managerial staff also need to be trained to keep the hospital in good shape and develop it. These were concerns when the doctors had been identified to become the managers, but they fell short of expectations. The new management team was more successful in running the hospital, but the need for a capable managerial team was constant and the managers continued to undergo training.

EyeHealth can be said to take training proactively. They recruited and built their staff and with the vision of offering professional services in view of strong competition and the challenges the new health care sector presented. Training objectives and business objectives were in harmony. The forces which made EyeHealth invest in training are summarised in the following figure.

Figure 9-2: EyeHealth – Training objectives

In essence, the more intense competition introduced into the private health sector, the inexperience of the majority of the staff in serious service business, and the need to have capable management system to run the hospital triggered training in EyeHealth, in order to attain professional service quality.

9.3.3.2. The Training Process in Reality

EyeHealth received international ISO quality management certification shortly after its opening. They were the first in the city health sector to achieve that. ISO in essence involves the development and implementation of management processes. EyeHealth was said to have its training process established as well.

The head of the planning department explained: ‘It started from the bottom up or from top down. Needs assessment for the staff... [helped] sending them to training... or from the bottom, the heads of units promoted up.’ The process looks very active from either direction. Overall personal needs were designed to be identified by ‘needs assessment for the staff’ conducted by the HR department. Departmental needs were also considered once the middle managers made training requests. It was a standard process devised for obtaining the quality management certificate. In reality, as the interviewees said, it was the general manager who ‘decided training at every stage of our development.’ Therefore, the manager continued to have the superior voice even when the process existed.

Under his minute guidance, the staff were equipped with modern knowledge. They were mainly followers as planning and decisions on training had been made by their manager. They managed to collect several useful tools, broadened their views and happened to know many interesting theories. The impression of training in general

was good, so for a long time, sending people to various courses was considered a reliable means of staff development. Unfortunately, the post-training periods in the hospital were usually laissez-faire (partly due to the manager's initial belief in autonomy granted to staff and natural learning transfer), and improvement depended on staff's spontaneity in using the skills obtained from training.

EyeHealth focused greatly on the 'soft' skills training for staff at the lowest level to help them give a good impression to the patients. The middle managers had opportunities to attend various renowned management training courses. In their view, they were lucky to receive the 'interesting' training, which had been adapted rather well for Vietnamese participants.

So far, the training and business needs were well aligned. But the staff were not active without help and push from the management. The doctors, who had been widely authorised to manage the business in their way but showed to be unadaptable to new responsibilities, were dropped from managerial positions and dedicated managers had to fill in. Low level staff changed by themselves on the job or when they had the opportunities during job rotation. Little further organisational assistance was given. Training evaluation was desired, but the existing staff did not possess the right expertise to collect the right data, to make the necessary analysis, and to perform the required corrective actions.

On the whole, the different phases of the training process were not looked after to the same degree. While the hospital had a sound training strategy, quality training partners, and selected participants for the appropriate courses, there was not an effective strategy for the post-training phase. Therefore the knowledge and aspiration from the classroom were not fully leveraged. Though the training process was not completely implemented, the problems to be rectified for better learning transfer at the workplace have been finally identified by the management.

9.3.3.3. Outcomes from Training

Comments about the total contrast between training reactions and practical outcomes were prevalent in EyeHealth. The training participants, doctors, nurses, those who could apply much and those who could not, had the same reactions about business and management training. They had a good experience of training, such as trainers gave them original perspectives, role playing was exciting, thrilling and interesting,

the trainers were dedicated, having wide knowledge and attractive delivery styles. Moreover, the majority said that the knowledge provided them with *positive thinking* about their work and career development. The deputy manager, who had not been in the field of management, even considered he encountered ‘enlightenment.’ He thought training had built a foundation and gave him confidence in the early days of his management career. Those who had had a bad impression of training during college education also had to change their opinions, revealing they were amazed by the more professional training delivery. (The management also observed the general improvement of the training provider side during their training endeavour.) First and foremost, business and management training has given the staff of EyeHealth waves of personal motivation.

There were two groups of training outputs recognised in staff after training. The first group includes skills in communication, creating rapport and trust with patients, skills of presentation and persuasion, and developing professional working styles. Those were the basic skills in a service business and the low-level staff were said to have mastered and be quite confident in utilising them. For instance, there were specific cases showing that nurses have been positively transformed after training. There were examples of some nurses, developing excellent interpersonal skills, being able to provide full consultations for customers, who needed all-round advice on operation, pharmaceutical, and postoperative care. They were entrusted with covering an important group of incoming customers. Therefore, the head of the marketing department, based on his own research data, was confident to state that EyeHealth outperformed its main rivals in terms of service quality. Feedback from customers showed that there were very few complaints about the service and attitudes of the staff. Specifically, in this research, 80 per cent of customers acquired the hospital services because they had been referred by previous customers.

The second group of outputs were the specific know-how that directly enabled staff to conduct their daily work, that is, the knowledge that their previous education did not provide, or just some superficial theories. For instance, negotiation skills were highly appreciated by many participants, both medical and administrative staff. The skills needed to perform the functions of an HR specialist, like developing a job description, recruitment, staff development, internal conflict management were also praised. Comments about the level of application were otherwise rather reserved. The

most optimistic estimate indicated that they managed to apply less than half of what they had learnt.

At the higher levels of Kirkpatrick's taxonomy, complaints started appearing and training effects declined. Besides the clearly improved everyday interpersonal skills found in lower staff, the managers were dissatisfied with the poor application rate in reality. The other benefits of training were usually less specific, for instance, better knowledge has improved self-confidence in newly promoted positions.

It was observed that the individual skills were better applied than the group or team management skills. For instance, the skills of people management or operations management were not seen as successful examples. Moreover, for those who were commended about improved management skills or who were able to assume more responsibilities, learning on-the-job played an important part for the improvement besides the extended knowledge from training.

In EyeHealth, knowledge – the outcomes at the second level in Kirkpatrick's model – was not usually mentioned as an advantage of training, but otherwise the information and practical experience which would be easy to replicate in the workplace were mentioned. This point justified the practical approach in training of EyeHealth's management. There was more evidence about outputs at the third level – behaviour among the staff, especially the skills which were practical and visible in reality. At the fourth level – organisational outcomes – there were few to catalogue, mainly the hospital's improved credibility for its enhanced service quality. It was the very objective the hospital had targeted: to build customer confidence and win their satisfaction, so training could sensibly take some credit for this.

Once the staff with their own efforts had changed their behaviour, all became settled. No more far reaching effect was introduced in the organisation. The hospital management was not satisfied with that one-off status and wanted training to be the real investment with continued long-term benefits. However, at the same time, they recognised further similar training could be ineffective. The next target of creating a learning organisation was also to extend the impacts of training.

9.3.3.4. Facilitators and Inhibitors of Learning Transfer

The factors affecting training effectiveness can be filtered out from the emerging issues described in the previous sections. Among these factors, besides the

recognised and traditional ones like communication, leadership or the superficial and paralysed post-training process, there are some intrinsic factors relating to the trainees which had been identified by the hospital staff.

First were the conservative, quasi-open doctors in defensive positions (9.3.2.1). Being more privileged than the other staff, they had been authorised to lead the hospital, encouraged and sent to training in order to be placed in management. They had also been given a significant period to get used to the roles. However, outputs of their training were trivial, one member of staff even noted that their training were only opportunities for releasing stress. Their response was attributed to the development of their profession. Since their time in medical school, they had already been recognised as having a certain special quality so as to be able to receive such complicated technical training. In the public environment before joining EyeHealth, their invisible power had been strengthened. When demand for health care far exceeded supply, when the patients had to entreat doctors, their voices were powerful. Broadly, in society, their position was very high and in fact, they had an advantageous standard of living. The rapid socio-economic changes cleared the way for private hospitals, the patients became customers and had more options. The doctors working there needed to be of high professional quality and adjust to the new environment. However, they were reluctant to change with training though they were absolutely competent in terms of learning capacity. An interviewed doctor referred to (hospital) 'internal system' as a barrier to learning transfer. But indeed they had been facilitated. They seemed to be uncomfortable as they were not perceived as highly as previously in the public sector. Their positions had changed when they had to work in a new setting, adhere strictly to professional rules that honour the hospital's customers, and specifically had to be responsible to the hospital owner. When working for a private hospital, the doctor's power was more limited than that of those working in public hospitals, and their reactions were to restrict themselves to the role of medical experts.

The technical work of the doctors on the other hand had a distance from management and business theories. It partly explains why they considered business training 'interesting' but hard to utilise in reality. However, it was not enough to introduce changes in doctors' behaviours as they have not yet adapted to the new role in services.

The general manager otherwise had all of his explanation of the limited learning transfer established on the foundation of Vietnamese culture values in contrast to Western norms (9.3.2.2). He asserted that Western training content and the Western delivery approach cannot be applied in Vietnam without adaptation. His argument was endorsed by the failure of his *laissez-faire* post-training policy. Vietnamese education was mentioned as one of the reasons for the lack of initiative and leadership skills in his staff. Likewise, the visible unofficial hierarchy discouraged his staff from trying what they had learnt previously. Once the doctor, considered on top of the unofficial ranking, decided not to move, the nurses and orderlies followed suit. The doctor's perception of management training and application certainly influenced the subordinate staff.

Risk-taking was not easy to find in the Vietnamese. It was a challenge for ordinary staff to suggest *actively* that he/she wanted to attend a specific course. Similarly, individual or group changes after training were even more challenging. The traits of avoiding being a leader, to standing out have been confirmed in the literature (Nguyen, 2002; Napier, 2006). An individual felt inhibited from doing something different to the rest. To avoid showing off 'has been deeply ingrained in our thinking, history has justified this', an informant noted.

Meanwhile, the traditional mentality of revering knowledge persisted at all levels of the management: The managers who financed their training themselves aimed at further graduate degrees as a 'long-term investment.' At the same time, the nursing head reckoned that career advancement was synonymous with gathering more knowledge. At different positions, the adoration of knowledge was universal. The mentality may facilitate the acceptance of training, but it was observed to be not very helpful to learning transfer.

The general manager of the hospital was even more powerful as he was also the owner of the business (9.3.2.3). In an environment where staff still lacked professionalism, the negative impacts were not only against training. Once the hierarchy had been part of the culture, information only went top down. The manager became the sole decision maker in training, and in the hospital his other roles have been overwhelming. His leadership enabled the right staff to receive the right training. He had spent time to collect feedback from his staff and gave corrections. But his position prevented him from obtaining reliable information since his staff felt

that they had to please him first. In the interviews, the staff revealed that the power distance made them unable to discuss with him issues related to the management system and hospital organisation. The power gap was large and communication was not naturally available, so the staff were not confident to try anything significant that required system adjustment. Though the new training strategy has been developed, if communication were not amended, then the staff would still follow their top manager’s plans and it would be still difficult to have a proper environment to improve learning transfer.

The discussed inhibitors and facilitators of training outcomes are summarised in the following figure.

Figure 9-3: Inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer in EyeHealth

Inhibitor	Transfer of Learning			Facilitator
Education and working background	→	Learning	←	Leadership
Education and working background Cultural values	→	Behaviour	←	Appropriate training objectives
Cultural values Management of training Distance in power of management	→	Results	←	Appropriate training objectives

Facilitators to learning transfer in EyeHealth can be found in the strong leadership of the management and the harmony of business focus and training objectives. At the same time, the application of knowledge was confronted by several inhibitors including the absence of service-oriented education and working history of the medical staff, distance of power between the owner-manager and his staff, ill facilitated post-training phase, and traditional cultural values.

9.4. Summary

Having the advantage of being the first mover to the new market and with the staff trained in the best business and management courses, EyeHealth had a name as an outstanding ophthalmological service provider among private eye care hospitals in Ho Chi Minh City. The good service quality was the result of the application of modern medical technology, development of professional service staff, and a hospital managed as a service business.

Business and management training has quickly enabled EyeHealth to have staff of strong service capacity and a professional image. Meanwhile, the efforts to upgrade doctors to managers by management training did not bring about the expected results. Their medically focused education and working experience in the public sector created mental difficulties for the doctors to assume management responsibilities. Favourable reactions after training followed by little transfer of learning made the management decide to change for developing a new training strategy.

While the top manager of the hospital contemplated changes accommodating Vietnamese cultural characteristics, his staff were held back by communication and power distance barriers so that they could not make the most from the knowledge they had acquired in the classroom. Obstructed communication was also the reason preventing ideas from the bottom being integrated in the process of developing and implementing the training strategy. Some improvements were maintained for only a short time after training. The reasons for this, as significant expected changes have not materialised after training, were believed to be found in Vietnamese cultural characteristics.

Case Five presents a successful hospital business which was still rather unproductive in terms of training investment. Benefits from training were not as significant as desired and the hospital was about to make a new start to become a learning organisation. The leader who constantly looked for new improving opportunities has found a new direction based on his appreciation of Vietnamese cultural values.

Training evaluation of the five companies under research was presented in the last five chapters on an individual basis. The next chapter is dedicated to comparisons

and analysis of the findings from the above chapters before conclusions are made in the final chapter.

10. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

10.1. Introduction

So far, the issues emerging during the processes of acquiring and utilising short business and management courses in five private companies in Ho Chi Minh City have been individually described. They have been presented in their own industry, business and organisational contexts. In each of the previous chapters, the aspect of aligning the companies' human resources along their business strategies as well as the levels of success in such effort have been emphasised. In every case, the specific issues related to training, especially learning transfer, were identified and highlighted.

The cases and their issues discussed in the previous chapters present both similarities and divergences. The five companies were private businesses, they all employed moderate to large numbers of labour (over 30 employees at least). The research established that management and business training had been introduced in these companies for a sufficient length of time to enable some evaluation of their impact to be made. From the management down to the staff, all five companies expressed a strong commitment to accumulating business knowledge for organisational and personal advancement. By contrast, the five companies differed to a considerable extent in size, business, organisational structure, leadership or in other words, their 'demographic' profiles. They were diverse in their strategies and approaches in using business and management courses to leverage their employees for better business performance. The focus of training content also varied from one company to another.

Based on the individual case analysis, the cross-case comparisons will aim to deepen understanding of how training has been applied in the city-based private companies. The analysis in this chapter therefore tries to draw out themes arising from the training experienced in the individual cases. A limited number of units of research does not allow for statistical generalisation, but it does enable the researcher to identify certain suppositions for further research. In other words, the chapter will try to arrive at theoretical generalisation (de Vaus, 2001), highlighting the effects of specific local context on learning transfer. The model developed in Chapter 4 will be employed as the central framework for analysis.

This chapter begins by distinguishing the characteristics of the five companies in terms of business, human resources, and summarising the main problems they were facing in training. Second, the proposed model will be revisited, its components and relationships will be recollected. Then, the cross-case discussion will be divided into two sections: the first section will review common organisational dimensions, and the second will focus on country specific cultural values.

10.2. The Five Companies and Their Training Issues

10.2.1. SourceCode

SourceCode is the biggest company under research. It has been in business for nearly ten years, has survived and developed quickly with the growth of the software outsourcing market. Within a complicated management structure, having a dedicated training department and an officially recognised process, training has become an important internal measure for human resources development. Software development project teams, which consisted primarily of young engineers, were at the centre of the company's business.

Maintaining team effectiveness was in effect an important task, so that 'soft skills' and people management training were gaining momentum and blending into the company's life. Public courses for managerial people were complemented by compulsory and voluntary in-house training in teamwork and collaboration for all staff. Soft skills training has been received and put into practice within the outsourcing project teams.

Training in SourceCode can be seen as being initiated, then pushed vigorously from the top. The young staff responded positively, perceiving the knowledge to be of immediate necessity as well as a token of professionalism and useful preparation for career advancement. SourceCode's corporate culture of openness, sharing and teamwork has accommodated that specific soft skills training. In return, the training developed and reinforced the very corporate culture. Therefore, even though the post-training stage did not receive due attention from the management, considerable learning transfer emerged. In essence, the company acquired the training the staff actually needed, or it was successful in securing the training strategy so that its business focus benefited for the most part. SourceCode could have exercised a more complete training process if it had put further efforts into reviewing and refining

training investment. However, training initially addressed the business problem of team effectiveness, so that training was then considered appropriate and became routine. Yet, learning transfer was taken for granted, and this resulted in complacency among the managerial staff.

10.2.2. ClothPrint

ClothPrint is the company where training was strictly reserved for people ‘inside-the-kinship group.’ A typical family business, its managerial structure was simplified to a maximal degree where only the owner’s family members were in decision-making positions. The rich experience the owner gained from the fifteen years of managing the business has given ClothPrint a firm position in the market though more recently it has been facing fierce competition in cloth printing and garment production. Limited textbook knowledge of management while competition was stepping up gave few concerns to the company’s management. They managed satisfactorily by experience in a special traditional approach – paternalism, as well as advantages derived from relationships, networking and investment in manufacturing equipment. Following that stable development path, it was not for some particular immediate or long-term purposes that training was perceived necessary in ClothPrint.

People at ClothPrint received training in a convenient fashion, mainly through courses provided by the Chamber of Commerce, of which it was an active member. The very basic entrepreneurship skill training does not seem to provide the owner and his trusted staff with further expertise to operate the business better but has significantly encouraged and improved the owner’s confidence to expand the company. Without specific training goals, ClothPrint participants were fishing for unexpected tricks from the courses to quickly apply in business, and they were then not disappointed when no innovative lesson was retrieved. Outcomes of training were mainly of positive moral values rather than specific techniques to be implemented on the job. Furthermore, management training was considered the monopoly of the family members so that there were limited opportunities for learning transfer to materialise more generally at different levels within the business. The modest educational background of the trainees, offset largely by experience, might have limited their ability to accumulate knowledge and translate it into applications. Therefore, training for enriching experience to ‘avoid failure’ has

already been considered an important outcome although it did not produce a direct contribution to business performance.

10.2.3. Stream Co.

This can be regarded as the most generous (but not committed) company with regard to training provision. Sponsored by a training fanatical manager, the staff of Stream were sent to many courses in a wide range of disciplines in order to build up human resources and improve service quality. The way in which training was engaged in the company was knowledge-focused rather than action-oriented. After initial enthusiasm and a favourable response to training, the staff began to perceive training as a nuisance. They found themselves being forced to attend training courses irrelevant to their work positions. The manager's determination that had led Stream to success in its trading and service business was not appreciated. His authoritarian approach to training resulted in dissension between those who supported the knowledge accumulation route to win the manager's favour and the people who found training disorienting or a waste of time.

Due to the poor consequences of the open training policy, it was reviewed and consequently became more deliberate in offering training opportunities, accommodating staff preferences, and introducing trainee responsibility in terms of time serving the company in return. However, training has lost its pace. Doubt about the goals and impacts of training persisted at different levels of the organisation power structure. In addition, the lack of training-related communication during the pre-training phase as well as the absence of practical post-training attention from the management have reinforced the belief that training was not a successful investment of resources among many staff members. Furthermore, some incidents of double standards in which the manager himself violated experimental work procedures established after training therefore jeopardised early efforts of learning transfer have divided the manager, the staff related to him, and the other ordinary staff. These incidents have intensified the staff frustration, because of comparison between what they had learned and what happened in their workplace. In general, training outcomes in Stream were vague, although they did result in some changes of staff's customer service skills and a few standardised processes. Yet these hard fought changes following training seemed to be short-lived, owing to disorganised training leadership and management.

10.2.4. WoodFurn

WoodFurn is the smallest company in staff size, distinguished by having a training devoted manager and lacklustre followers. Like ClothPrint, training was also introduced to WoodFurn in a haphazard way because there was an offer of training made available through the courses offered by the Youth Entrepreneurs Association to its members. Training was utilised in an opportunistic manner, a series of subjects were skimmed over, then various leads from the lessons were straightaway trialed to see if they worked. The practical business tips from the short courses however quickly convinced the young manager. Some encouraging results were visually materialised after the manager had put a few small management techniques into practice. No profound impacts at the firm level were noted, but the quick payoff made the manager more determined to look for similar courses for himself and his staff. An opportunistic approach to training brought about improvement, but did not seem to create a foundation to develop a training strategy in the long run.

Meanwhile, the staff were not impressed with their leader's new initiatives. They had the opportunities to enjoy some training too, but application of knowledge has always started with the manager so that they were just moderate followers. It is partly attributed to the powerlessness of the staff in this smaller business, where all of them were subordinates beside the all-powerful business owner. Though he had tried to be a role model to encourage learning transfer, there were few changes noted among the staff. The limited training available to the staff was not enough for them to act upon in their work either, and facilitation was too cursory to help them to translate knowledge into action. In fact, the staff were in absolutely inferior positions while the traditional values of harmony and face kept them from openly expressing their concerns.

10.2.5. EyeHealth

EyeHealth hospital is characterised by unsuccessful efforts to change the working culture of its staff by management training. A high-tech ophthalmological treatment institution, EyeHealth was expected to provide quality professional services for its emerging well-off target customers. The crucial challenge was with the medical personnel who had been working in the state health sector which was very alien to friendly customer service. The Vietnamese overseas owner/manager of the hospital

decided to develop his staff's professionalism, on par with the modern facilities, by sending them to sophisticated business and management training courses. In a further committed move, medical doctors were even promoted to key managerial positions and empowerment was exercised with an expectation that autonomy in the hospital operations was gradually to take shape. However, in contrast to the efforts of the management, changes did not happen as desired, especially among the privileged doctors. The new positions and knowledge on the management side did not materialise naturally in better leadership or actuate any initiative to streamline their services. The doctors kept themselves to their professional territory and treated the training opportunities lightly. Meanwhile, besides some improvement in their interpersonal and secretarial skills, the subordinate staff had to comply with the doctors' frivolous management style.

This proved to be a costly lesson for the general manager when witnessing the crash of his well-intentioned plan after two years nurturing the doctor-led management model. The doctors in managerial positions were replaced by non-medical professionals and a new training strategy was developed. As most of the failures of poor learning transfer were attributed to differences in traditional culture values as well as workplace customs and the (ostensibly) practical Western learning-applying approach, training was planned to move in-house and for larger groups staff. The change in strategy seemed to address the impediments to effective training, but the commanding management style of the hospital general manager and his powerful position as owner seemed to prevent his staff from experimental moves beyond their manager's direction.

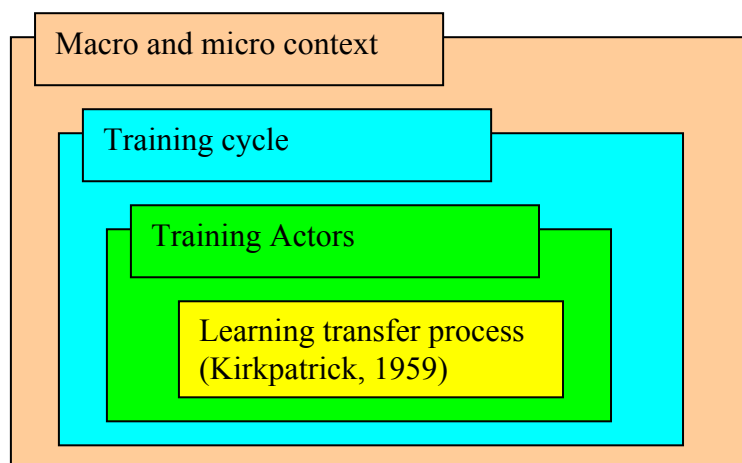
The five cases summarised above evidence that the companies were facing problems with their approaches to and implementation of training. The following cross-case analysis aims to establish the common accounts for that state of affairs.

Before the cross-case comparison, the framework for training evaluation is briefly resummarised. It will be used as the foundation for the analysis. The issues contributing to the process of learning transfer are to be classified based on the model. Its features will also be highlighted and briefly discussed.

10.3. The Proposed Model Revisited and the Strategy of Cross-case Analysis

Chapter 3 overviewed the shortcomings of a variety of training evaluation models. It was pointed out that Kirkpatrick's (1959) and other derived models, better classified as taxonomies, miss out the elements of the micro and macro environment, where the transfer of learning happens after training. These also ignore the phases of preparation before and during training. The proposed model keeps Kirkpatrick's four-stage guide as the core, taking into account the characteristics of the actors involved. It also integrates the complete training cycle, which is embedded in an exhaustive set of environmental factors. The simplified version of the new model is repeated here.

Figure 10-1: Evaluation framework - abridged version



Source: Researcher's compilation

The three training actors in the model are: trainees, trainers and organisations. The training cycle is borrowed from the idea of the 'training wheel' (Bee and Bee, 1994) while the business environment analysis utilises the SLEPT framework (including the elements of Social-culture, Legal, Economic, Political and Technological factors).

The proposed model was not explicitly utilised in the single case studies on purpose. To preserve the overall context of each company, a more natural approach allowing important context-specific issues to surface was used instead. Yet data collection in the field followed the guide (Appendix 4), covering all components of the model. The cases were presented in the previous chapters following Stake's (1995) outline

(See *Part Two: Introduction to the Cases*). The aim was to avoid being check-list bound, the loophole of Kirkpatrick's model, to highlight problems and preserve the integrity of each case. In this way, problems emerged gradually, rather than taxonomies. They were not ascribed to the model, but preserved in the stories and contexts of each company. At the end of each previous chapter, the part discussing the research questions did not refer to the model either, but only listed the factors influencing learning transfer of the company, addressing the research questions. When Stake's outline was followed, the layers of the model were examined (i.e. business environment, industry environment and training cycle), though they were not analysed comprehensively and explicitly.

Nevertheless, cross-case analysis requires a common 'standard' or an exhaustive framework, so that in this chapter the proposed model is retrieved for the most comprehensive possible comparison and explanation (4.1.2). Data from the five cases will be put together using the model as the framework for analysis. Comparison of training and outcomes will be made according to each layer of the model (Figure 10-1) (i.e. characteristics of the training players, phases in the training cycle, internal and external environment the businesses operated in). Specifically, the issues identified in the single case studies and their corresponding dimensions or components in the model (e.g. the issue of the relationship between business owners and subordinate staff leading to poor learning transfer, examined from the dimension of culture) will in this chapter be categorised to construct themes and analysed to arrive at possible explanations for the research questions. The utilisation of the model will also assess the feasibility of the model in this specific location in the future.

Based on the proposed conceptual framework as a tool for analysis, the four research issues will be addressed individually, but not following the previous order of research questions, namely: (i) why training? (ii) how was training conducted? (iii) what were the impacts of training? and (iv) what influenced training impacts? (detail in 4.2). As discussed in the individual company analysis, in most of the cases, strong linkages between business objectives and training did not exist. At the same time, training did not exemplify problem-solving purposes. It was the general expectation of 'improving business' that prevailed, or in other words, training objectives were ambiguous. Therefore, in the coming part, comparison of how the companies conducted training (Research Question 2) will be examined prior to establishing their

common objectives for training (Research Question 1) in light of such analysis. Comparison of training impacts (Research Question 3) and the influencing factors on learning transfer (Research Question 4) will then be presented simultaneously.

10.4. Cross-case Analysis

10.4.1. The Way Training was Adopted and Conducted

Training in general has not been managed painstakingly in all of its phases in any of the five companies under research. Except for the case of SourceCode, no official system of close monitoring and management was in place or ever considered in order to better exploit training. Instead, broadly claimed as an HR investment rather than an immediate problem-solving alternative, training was simply believed to bring about positive consequences rather than being closely monitored with corrections made in time. Using the proposed model, the two layers of *training actors* and *training cycle* are taken as the foundation for analysing: the role of the actors during different phases of the cycle. The characteristics of training activities of the five companies are gathered from sections x.3.3.2 of the respective single case study chapters and compared to highlight the common traits of training in the five private businesses in the city.

The way training was adopted and practised is summarised in the two following tables. Table 10-1 summarises the characteristics of training participation and management while Table 10-2 gives precise assessments of the phases of the training process.

Table 10-1: Characteristics of training conducted in the five companies

Characteristic	Company	SourceCode	ClothPrint	Stream	WoodFurn	EyeHealth
Initiation of training		Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal
<i>Parties involved</i>						
Organisation		Department of training	Business owner	Managing director	Owner-Manager	General manager
Trainees		Corporate officers Project managers Team leaders Programmers	Managers – strictly people within the owner/manager family	Managers, service engineers, and all staff	Managers – mainly the business manager/owner	Managers, team leaders and doctors
Trainers		Top private training services	Trainers of the Chamber of Commerce	Top training services	Member support division of the city Youth Entrepreneurs Association	Top training services
<i>Training content</i>						
Subjects		Personal ‘soft-skills’ Team/project management skills	Business start-up Basic entrepreneurship skills	Management techniques Basic management	Management techniques Basic management	Professional service skills Management techniques
Level		Basic to high	Basic	Basic to high	Basic	Basic to high

Characteristic	Company	SourceCode	ClothPrint	Stream	WoodFurn	EyeHealth
<i>Management of training</i>						
Mode of management		Decentralised	Centralised	Centralised	Centralised	Decentralised
Awareness of training as an internal process		Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Existence of a formal process		Yes	No	No	No	No
Direction of communication		Mainly top-down	N/A	Top-down	Top-down	Top-down
Feedback within organisation		Yes – quasi formal	N/A	Yes – informal	No	No
Complemented by in-house training courses		Yes	No	No	No	No (change later)
Trainee power in training		Moderate	High ¹	Weak	Weak	Weak
Cooperation with training service pre-training		Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Follow-up programme		No	No	No	No	No
<i>Miscellaneous</i>						
Training expenses provided		Mostly	Yes	Yes – under strict condition	Yes	Yes
Staff's individual training initiative		Active	Moderate-Low	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Active
<i>Outcomes</i>						
Level		High	Low	Moderate-Low	Moderate-Low	Moderate

¹ The trainees are also the owners/managers of the company

Table 10-2: Characteristics of the training process

Phase \ Company	SourceCode	ClothPrint	Stream	WoodFurn	EyeHealth
Business needs assessment	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Training needs assessment	Not conducted thoroughly	No	No	No	Not conducted thoroughly
Training course design	Involved moderately	Not involved	Not involved	Not involved	Involved moderately
Training content development	Involved moderately	Not involved	Not involved	Not involved	Not involved
Training delivery	Outsourced, combined with in-house voluntary training	Outsourced	Outsourced	Outsourced plus voluntary in-house talks	Outsourced
Training audit	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Training evaluation	No/Not yet	No	No	No	No

10.4.1.1. Initiation of Training

Concerning the initiation of training, it seems that training was a case more of the companies' demand-pull than training services' supply-push, especially in bigger companies with more complex organisational structures. Training was then introduced because of various reasons, but the top managers or owners of the companies usually were the initiators. Training in general strongly reflected the leaders' own preferences in terms of what their staff would learn. In the cases of Stream and EyeHealth, the owners of the companies were not only pioneering but also handpicking courses for their employees. On the other hand, ClothPrint and WoodFurn demonstrated a phenomenon of companies joining training activities on the basis of what others (the two business associations in these cases) deemed necessary for them. Prior to having become members of the professional associations, they had focused solely on running the businesses. They had not been aware of this special HR development facility, had not had any training or not perceived any training need either. In any case, training was always started by people of power and therefore training was in a favourable condition to develop.

Concerning training providers, while ClothPrint and WoodFurn were tempted by external sources and limited their training within the designated providers, the other companies freely chose their partners among the most prestigious providers in the market. Besides the necessity of training subjects for the staff, the fame of the training institutions was the only criterion that most companies could look at. There was a convergence of the interviewees' opinions in complaining and a desire for more information for selecting training courses. A trainer commented:

The market has not been matured yet... it was still very chaotic. It is like we charged the trainees due to their confidence in our services. Say, it is similar to traditional esoteric medicine, advertised as very effective, if you trust the quack, then take it, no strings attached. There is no justification of quality.

The same applied in the cases of the companies under research. In a market where there are many services and courses without adequate profile, many had to risk selecting from advertisements in daily newspapers. Others, like SourceCode's training manager, who stated he 'believed only 60 percent in training ads,' had to

send a couple of his staff to any new training courses to ‘taste,’ before deciding whether or not to send more trainees. And in fact, a number of interviewees have experienced ‘inappropriate’ or poor quality classes.

Regarding trainees, most of the companies seem to have dedicated training to people in management positions. Subjects like practical personal skills and techniques had a broader scope of trainees. But in general, managers at different levels had more opportunities to attend more intensive training: the manager of WoodFurn alone accounted for 80 percent of the total training budget. Deviation to rather large extents was observed in ClothPrint and Stream. At one extreme, Stream provided an array of training in diverse subjects to everyone from shopfloor level up (though the owner has recognised that provision of training in this fashion brought in very few results, even contempt). At the other extreme, ClothPrint made it clear that training was a privilege dedicated to people inside the family circle. Explanation might be found in the fact that the two companies operated in different industries, requiring different skills in managers and staff. Furthermore, while management was more relaxed in Stream, power was much more concentrated in ClothPrint and the company was managed in a traditional family business fashion. So, even basic training was considered a threat in creating unwanted competing businesses if not provided to the ‘right people,’ as noted by the very practical manager of ClothPrint. The other companies had their training in seemingly balanced distribution where there was concordance between trainees’ managerial levels and training subjects. All in all, besides the chaotic Stream with its illusion that training alone would produce totally reformed staff and additional in-house training of teamwork skills in SourceCode, the trainees seem to be concentrated in middle management levels, generously selected with little concern of defection after training (and in fact, training has not materialised the threat of creating job hoppers).

No matter how the trainees felt about the training the companies provided, the majority of them had their own individual short-term or long-term training plans. In contrast to training seconded (and largely sponsored financially) by the organisations, they were much more training-active though not necessarily more clearly oriented. They did so diversely from ruminating over self-development books to attending evening classes to obtain second undergraduate or graduate degrees. Usually, their plans were completely independent to training plans, if any, at the

companies. Very rarely has any person been sponsored by the company with such plans. In many cases, their two to four-year evening study was totally unrelated to their daily work.

The above review of the initiation of management training of the companies under research presents to some extent the lack of orientation and preparation for staff before entering their training courses. Both policies of staff's totally openhanded training in Stream and totally restricted training in ClothPrint expose their leaders' simplicity in training matters.

10.4.1.2. Management of Training

The primary shortcoming in the management of training is the unawareness of management of training activities. A laissez-faire policy after the trainees returned to their workplace was usually witnessed, even in EyeHealth, whose managers possessed a more active view about training (see 9.3.3.2). Due to the lack of awareness, the manager of Stream did not understand why his staff became negative toward training. So rather than refining the selection and facilitating the post-training phase, he tried to hold back training altogether.

Another phenomenon emerged from most of the cases is that communication about training was rather ambiguous, weak and mainly one-sided from the top of the organisations down to employees. Opportunities to give feedback about how training happened, what the staff really needed, what assistance they wished for were scarce. As described and discussed in previous chapters (see 6.3.2.1 - ClothPrint or 8.3.3.4 - WoodFurn), the imbalance of power inside private companies was enormous so that staff found themselves discouraged, employment insecure or scared about pointing out what they deemed inappropriate but against the view of the employers. Therefore, feedback from the trainees was not direct and clear enough to help the organisations to improve activities related to training, during the phases before and after training. On the other hand, a number of managers of private companies either looked down on the staff, cultivating a paternalistic management approach, or persisted in their own experience (especially in successful businesses like Stream), guarded family privilege (ClothPrint) so that comments from below were restrained or neglected. Ironically, a trainer (on the subject of negotiation) recalled an incident when one manager complained, 'What on earth have you taught them to make them

go against me?’ So, the reality was overall docility of the staff over training matters on the face of it while discontent existed in the grapevine, with it being typically negative in the case of Stream. Nonetheless, whatever they considered practical in training, all trainees regarded attending a specific training course as a privilege given from their employers, so that criticism was neither popular nor direct among the trainees of the companies under research. Therefore, unidirectional communication about training continued to the point that the managers or owners themselves recognised that their investment did not pay back as expected.

One can observe a more optimistic picture in the practice of SourceCode. They had much better communication to every staff about training, through advanced media and allowed flexible ways of feedback. Above all, they had a sub-system, an authorised process, people accountable for the job, and developed a rather open corporate culture (5.3.2.3) that empowered trainees to improve activities. So, there was some evidence of staff taking the initiative in spreading soft skills among colleagues and team members, and staff sharing training expenses with the company.

Anyway, throughout these companies, the power of the trainees concerning training matters was very weak. In fact, it was the consequence of the trainees’ inferior position, taken for granted inside private organisations, the paternalistic management style, and imbalance of power that managers either enjoyed (Stream), guarded (ClothPrint) or could not overcome (EyeHealth). The employees’ weak position also led to the attitudes of passivity and indifference, attending any training the managers assigned then avoiding risks of translating knowledge into actions. At another extreme, some officers of Stream tried to emulate their manager in attending more and more evening courses to win his favour, noticing that he preferred staff who were keen on studying like himself (7.3.2.1). In either situation, such attitudes made the investment into training a benefit for individuals rather than the companies.

Training was considered finished by the majority of companies when the trainees completed their post-training questionnaires. Before training, the more active companies spent a little more time to look over training programmes, considered the credentials of the training services and trainers. But that was all considered as working with the training supply side: the theory of ‘esoteric medicine’ (10.4.1.1) applies. Some top managers were concerned about quality of the trainers, as well as training documents. They acknowledged the shortage of quality trainers and the

unreliable training market, but they had to accept this, hoping that the staff could bring back something useful. Further collaboration with trainers was only considered when SourceCode and EyeHealth planned to bring a certain training course in-house for a larger number of staff to enjoy. Even so, the idea of follow-up action after training to improve learning transfer was not well received by either training services or businesses. A trainer stated that they were not able to persuade companies to have a follow-up or companies did not recognise the potential of this action. One recalled that consultants were once granted access to a company to pilot follow-up research, but later they did not receive cooperation from leaders of the company, as it was considered a waste of time when employees spent time discussing their experience or brainstorming ideas with the consultants. On the broader scope of training in general, a remark from a trainer reads:

Both sides, training service providers and organisations, have short-term views about training... Post-training questionnaires are not used for the benefits of the trainees, they are used by the training services to decide whether or not to continue with the trainers in the next courses.

Having such views, trainees rarely returned to their workplace with realistic plans to put acquired knowledge into practice. None of the five companies, including the most organised SourceCode, had a training follow-up programme to turn training into better business performance. Though better managed EyeHealth and SourceCode had annual review procedures conducted by HR officers, they were not training-specific, but a kind of register of training for the next year.

Among the five companies, only SourceCode had a combination of in-house training and public courses. This proved to help tremendously in leveraging the investment in public training and sustained the positive training impacts since in effect, the people in different positions all received the appropriate training. EyeHealth decided to 'bring training home' totally after many training outsourcing efforts. Internal training, if any, existed in the form of informal conversations between managers and staff. In all cases, in-house on the job training existed though many did not recognise its existence and its effects. In-house training, in formal form, has not yet been a popular exercise in other private companies. Furthermore, the mix of a strong sense of hierarchy preventing people learning from peers, and the mentality of *'bút chũa nhà không thiêng'* or literally 'a prophet is not recognised in his own land' prevented

the company from extending the experience received from formal external training courses.

Size of the company, and therefore structure of management, were other factors influencing the way internal training was exercised alongside formal public training. ClothPrint and WoodFurn had a simple management framework, those in managerial positions found personal exchanges more suitable for spreading knowledge. On the other hand, larger companies like SourceCode and EyeHealth had better facilities, staff, and more trainees to arrange in-house training as more formal courses. In general, awareness about developing knowledge inside organisations was not serious enough to maintain regular in-house activities besides occasionally committing staff to 'useful' courses. Anyway, almost all training for staff was provided with full training fee support from the company side. This is what many, including both top managers and staff sent for training considered as investment or caring for the people's advancement, and were very proud of.

The notes about similarities and differences in training activities above and data from Table 10-2 bring about general conclusions on the steps of a standard training process as follows.

10.4.1.3. How the companies performed the key training activities

On the whole, the five cases analysed show a number of gaps between training practice in reality and a complete training process, which is the core of the proposed conceptual framework. SourceCode with its advantage of size and level of organisational maturity establishes itself to be way ahead of the other four in terms of training management practice. EyeHealth and WoodFurn demonstrate cases of ardent leaders trying to inspire their organisations by training though they were not productive yet. Stream exemplifies a company putting too much into and reaping too little from training while ClothPrint is a typical private business applying a no-nonsense training policy. The five cases already demonstrate a large diversity in practice, in terms of subjects and sophistication of training contents (ClothPrint versus Stream), coordination of training efforts or decentralisation of training (SourceCode versus WoodFurn), organisational preparedness (SourceCode versus Stream), staff eligibility for participation (ClothPrint versus Stream), or power in relation to training providers (EyeHealth versus WoodFurn).

All of them however had some common issues regarding the training process. The most prominent issue that all companies faced is the absence of post-training facilitation. In essence, they did not go further than sending staff to courses which were believed complemented their deficiency of skills. Following are the summaries of the situation of conducting training related activities as observed in the five companies.

Business needs assessment

No company performed business needs assessment carefully. Even SourceCode reacted in haste with training when the need to make software development team members work together effectively emerged (see 5.3.4.1). Others could not identify specific training needs, especially when all of them were free from immediate business threats. The companies usually had a rather broad business focus, such as ‘achieving customer satisfaction,’ or ‘excellent customer service’ but none was able to translate that focus into specific human resource needs.

Training needs assessment

This was not conducted adequately either. Many directors simply stated that they wanted to upgrade their staff. Personal training needs/desires were usually ignored entirely. In fact, the companies did not have suitable in-house expertise or outside assistance to undertake the task. As discussed in the case of WoodFurn and ClothPrint, those companies entered training unprepared through an invitation from training services or professional associations. Companies like SourceCode and EyeHealth perceived the obvious training needs when their staff joined in a team-based customer-oriented professional working environment. All in all, training needs assessment was not conducted thoroughly.

Training course design and content development

Without needs assessment, these companies were not able to design the training they needed, or become involved actively in selecting the most appropriate courses provided by the public training services. Furthermore, information about training offers was rather limited, the people in charge of training in each company were not able to select or become involved in obtaining a course attuned to their staff. Therefore, it was a common complaint from the trainees about having to cope with irrelevant training contents in class. Those more active like EyeHealth and

SourceCode tended to bring training back in-house with customised training contents, but so far the phase of design and development was fully in the hand of service providers.

Selection of providers and training delivery

Providers were selected primarily based on their reputation, sometimes largely subject to the name of a famous trainer, or a foreign training partner. Otherwise, in the cases of ClothPrint and WoodFurn, they conveniently joined the training their respective associations offered. Not screening providers carefully, the companies also tended to leap across training courses with a wide variety of subjects. Training delivery was outsourced totally to training service providers. In-house training conducted by staff or in-house trainers was not popular. Though training was a more intensive business, professional training delivery seem to be peculiar to expensive training services. From the trainee side, they were not well prepared before training as a result of the previous steps of the training process. Therefore, as a training course developer noted, the training market has not been developed to the level that allowed the pure western training method, where trainees are central and active and filter out what they really need.

Audit and evaluation

All companies under research exercised a laissez-faire policy after their trainees returned. As mentioned earlier in 10.4.1.2, no follow-up existed to facilitate or review post-training activities. Since the management have already considered training a favour for their staff, there was little positive signal of efforts to reinforce improved performance. Auditing the changes to reward and reinforce learning transfer was neglected. A trainer commented: “When they can plan to better serve more customers, how much is to be awarded to staff? The business owners do not want to reward that way. They are not prepared to recognise what the staff bring back to them.” This can be included as a reason for not conducting training evaluation. However, the lack or appreciation of its importance and the lack of expertise were largely responsible for the lack of performing evaluation.

In all fairness, facilitation would receive more attention if training evaluation were undertaken to show how training contributed to individual and company performance, and what was necessary for better learning transfer. But in reality,

below is what happened when evaluation with assistance from outside experts was attempted, as a trainer revealed:

They themselves feel that it is difficult, it is hard to conduct that [evaluation]. They feel that if the training is effective, it would be effective anyway without measurement... They were not very collaborative in having us come to the company to measure. Sometimes, initially, they agreed, they let us in for measurement. But we returned and they thought that it was time consuming, they did not cooperate any more.

To be precise, similar to the design of training, companies were short on expertise on how to have proper evaluation. Even so, most companies gave fulsome opinions on the outcomes of management training so far.

In summary, the companies were confident in putting money into training. But they were not aware of their homework to benefit really from the return on their investment. Therefore, there were shortcomings in many of their training support activities.

10.4.2. Insights into Training Purposes

The chapters examining individual cases have provided some grounds for the specific reasons for each company to embark on training. In addition, the above review of how training was conducted in the five companies allows for further accounts on why the businesses jumped on the bandwagon of management training. For instance, the way they treated training as many one-off expeditions rather than overseeing them as single long-term programmes again reflects the prevalence of the purpose of ‘tracking down’ courses in the hope that they could pick up some useful things to benefit businesses overnight. The fact that a few companies started with management training following invitations by associations they were members of, and limited their options to such offers, shows that training was not really an urgency for them. The critical steps of business needs analysis and training needs analysis were largely neglected revealed a reality that training was not used for solving business problems but in the hope of a certain ambiguous ‘business improvement.’ Nevertheless, there were some rationales and hidden agendas in the reasons why these companies undertook management and business training.

The following section will bring together such accounts to discuss the convergence of training purposes. First, the individual accounts of training identified in the previous single case study chapters are summarised.

Table 10-3: Rationales for training

Company Objective	SourceCode	ClothPrint	Stream	WoodFurn	EyeHealth
<i>Business-related issues</i>					
Increasing competition within industry		✓		✓	✓
Growth of business	✓	✓	✓		
Staff expansion, bigger middle management teams	✓		✓		✓
Decentralisation decision	✓				✓
To fulfil business focus	✓		✓		✓
To improve business's chance of survival		✓		✓	
Staff's deficient skills	✓		✓	✓	✓
Staff of unfit background need retraining	✓		✓		
<i>Managers' and trainees' individual issues/characteristics</i>					
Overconfidence (or certitude) in training and knowledge, knowledgemia		✓	✓	✓	
Serendipity		✓	✓	✓	
Personal status		✓	✓	✓	
Training as an opportunity facilitating work and personal advancement	✓			✓	✓

10.4.2.1. Training Purposes from the Organisational Perspective

Staff deficiency in practical skills was found in all companies, and seemed to be the most convenient reason to start training. To a certain extent, the reason is valid as the traditional education in Vietnam in general, and universities in particular, produced more scholars than practitioners. Furthermore, even in the case of advanced industries, practical skills and essential techniques like teamwork, brainstorming or presentation were rare qualities among employees, as exemplified in SourceCode. Coupled with family preference in recruitment policies (Stream, ClothPrint) or the nature of a technical profession (SourceCode, or Stream), the situation of people in managerial positions without necessary skills was more significant. On the other hand, a number of managers (in ClothPrint and WoodFurn) with lower educational experience found basic knowledge from short courses about entrepreneurship novel and exciting, though in fact they had already mastered them in practice. However, whether there was genuine training need or not, it was considered that missing skills needed to be built up. It was the most direct reason for trainees to follow the widespread trend of making up the missing skills. Soft skills training in SourceCode is a case in point.

However, it should be noted that specifically what skills were lacking or how to identify the right people to send for appropriate training, or whether a missing skill was really necessary have not been addressed (as discussed previously in 10.4.1 – how training was conducted). Lack of skills was *believed* as a universal truth that led to overtraining in Stream or the eagerness of attending as much training as was offered in WoodFurn. The belief in a deficiency of skills existed not only among the top management but also the staff at the grassroots level. Not surprisingly training was almost always regarded positively from people sent to public courses at company expense. Anyway, a large number of managerial people and staff were lacking in practical skills as well as the body of foundation knowledge in management. So training was resorted to to make up the void.

In particular, in companies like ClothPrint, where real power was kept strictly among the owner's family members, or Stream where recruitment policy favoured people with a family relationship to the business owner, before addressing professional capacity, the inadequacy of skills and necessary knowledge was felt more evidently. It was resolved by capable staff covering for others and giving on-the-job training,

but when businesses expanded, geographically in the case of Stream, the concerns about staff capacity gradually appeared and training filled the gap naturally. In reality, in companies of small size like ClothPrint and WoodFurn, or even Stream with its multiple branches nationwide, businesses were basically run by the owners. As described in the single-case chapters, the owners and their close assistants, usually being next of kin, ran the business on a daily basis. Total control of businesses was in their hands, in terms of both management as well as technological know-how. The ingrained habits of running a small business had been developed, and these habits showed in working overtime shoulder-to-shoulder with their employees on the shopfloor. Business seemed out of control when they could not be at different places at the same time while confidence in staff was not firmly built. The anxiety was cured as training was seen as a promise to help them control the business better.

In addition, the recruitment policy of family preference led to situations where people with unfit background and lacking experience held managerial positions only because of trust due to family relationships. Therefore when there were training opportunities, these people had every reason to be chosen ahead of others. In all five companies in this research, promote from within was the common policy. In particular, when a person was promoted in SourceCode, training was used as a signal to show trust, backing from the company, to provide the person with confidence to perform the job, and to show that he was taken care of by the company. And provision of training considered as a measure to develop affinity or win over staff (e.g. *‘tình cảm’* in 8.3.3.4) was a rather popular tactic, found not only in SourceCode.

Besides, in some industries where the entry barrier was not high, i.e. garment or interior design and decoration, competition became more intense. The group of companies facing heightened competition includes WoodFurn, ClothPrint and EyeHealth. The need to rely on training to cope with stiff competition and improve survival opportunities was another reason for having staff trained. Managers as well as trainers recognised that the period of easy business by speculation, taking advantage of monopoly over the supply of goods or equipment was over. Business in general had to compete on the front of efficiency. Even in manufacturing industries, WoodFurn and ClothPrint had to expend enormous efforts fighting for customers as well as suppliers, let alone businesses concentrating heavily on service like

EyeHealth hospital. This required more *flexibility* and *creativity* rather than routine manufacturing and technical work. As noted in most companies, training was heavily focused on ‘soft skills’ or customer service techniques, reflecting responses to increasing competition in their industries.

SourceCode and Stream on the other hand were not in the situation of fierce competition. They had established themselves as leaders within their industries. Foreign and domestic Vietnam customers of SourceCode and Stream respectively had confidence in their products already. They were confronted with other kinds of problems: expanding to match the increasing demand from the customers. New layers of middle managers, branch managers were created. They were certainly chosen because of their existing technological expertise and managerial potential. However, on top of their existing qualities, as mentioned in how training was conducted (10.4.1), the middle management group enjoyed priority in terms of training as the companies felt the constant need to upgrade their key employees to fit the challenges of the new positions. The same view about the inferior qualities of the employees was shared by managers who had experience of management outside the country: necessary qualities like people management skills, leadership, team building and presentation were to be developed from scratch since traditional culture, basic education and the popular mentality had for a long time placed community ahead of personality. In fact, a few trainees admitted training had given them the general idea of the role of a manager and moreover they felt *accredited* to perform in their new roles.

Expanding middle management staff induced some training, but it was further opened when the management supported and acted on decentralisation and empowered their staff. This is articulated in all the cases, i.e. encouraged training in Stream, SourceCode and EyeHealth, limited mainly to the owner in WoodFurn, while totally restricted in ClothPrint. SourceCode might have undertaken training to support teamwork since software development and outsourcing must be organised into projects, but the other cases really illustrate that decentralisation influenced the training decision. EyeHealth genuinely planned to make medical doctors managers, while Stream promoted staff to branch management and leaders of mobile service teams. These companies provided their managers and staff with much broader

training than WoodFurn and ClothPrint did, in which the most valuable training was reserved for the owners of the businesses.

However, a few companies seem to use training for more than reaction to fight intense competition or improve the chance of survival of the business. Those such as EyeHealth and Stream had to some extents the idea of training as a way to fulfil their business ideas. Without being concerned about training effectiveness, one may find a rather clear intention of achieving professionalism in the services of the staff, based on extensive training in this field provided to doctors, nurses and orderlies of EyeHealth (9.3.1). Stream, though facing bitter results after much ill-targeted training, showed a desire to develop strong after sales service centres through training (7.3.2.2). SourceCode, from reaction to rapid growth of staff size to meet the booming orders, made it clear that training would be utilised as an indispensable measure for team-building (5.3.2.1). Anyway, among the three companies mentioned, only EyeHealth appears to be the company most clearly demonstrating a linkage of training and business objectives.

Above were the accounts of training purposes viewed from organisations as a whole. In most of the cases, training was decided by and related to people with power in the companies. The coming section deals with training objectives viewed from the individual perspective of businesses' owners, managers and trainees.

10.4.2.2. Training Purposes from Individual Perception

Many times during the fieldwork, the benefit of training was considered as *'không bỏ ngang cũng bỏ dục'* (literally 'if it is not to make you grow taller, then it must help develop your girth') in the eyes of the interviewed trainers when they provided insights into why many attended training without specific ideas what the courses would benefit them. Some managers admitted that they viewed knowledge as an inventory to be utilised 'when having opportunities,' or 'at the right time.' The most prominent example of this trait is Stream's manager who became infamous among his staff due to his knowledgemia (7.3.2.1). His radical view about training has not helped in leading his staff to desired outcomes, but his belief in the ultimate effect of training did not change. Not only his own belief, it was manifested in his action of giving away a good deal of training without considerable effects. Albeit an extreme example, in addition to the case of the owner of WoodFurn, their furores nonetheless

typified a national and Oriental tradition, where knowledge has always been highly regarded.

Under the great influence of Confucianism, education in general has always been believed as a sacred but simple solution, that can change one's life, fate, and destiny. In fact, for a long time in the past, students with outstanding academic results were placed with certainty in important positions of the feudal administration system. They could enjoy substantial material perquisites, privileges, and honour so that there was an old saying, '*một người làm quan, cả họ được nhờ*' or 'a mandarin can protect his whole kindred' (or 'the whole kindred can enjoy nepotism from a mandarin.')

Having such a mystical and versatile reputation over generations, the power of knowledge is still recognised nowadays.

The traditional respect for knowledge was transferred into business as well. It was not only the bosses who put their trust in training, but also the majority of employees. Many pursued their personal long-term training plans as evidenced in all companies under research. And in all discussions about improving business performance, training seemed to be an unchallenged alternative. Stream aside, the other cases also showed that unquestioning belief in the power of knowledge played an important role in training decisions, especially in WoodFurn and ClothPrint. The manager of ClothPrint unflinchingly declined the chance of attending management training to people outside of his family as it might enable them to establish competing businesses is another example. This particular characteristic superseded others so that it left an impression that the businesses started training without particular objectives.

Because of the adoration of knowledge and belief in the advantage of possessing unlimited knowledge, to attend 'interesting' training in the hope of reaping 'something' valuable is another common approach. Companies following this approach had no specific or business-related reason but *serendipity* became a reason. Not as universal as knowledgemia, serendipity was found in smaller companies, where management was not as well organised as in the bigger ones. Those less experienced or having limited educational background were sometimes attracted by popular training courses. So a number of trainees especially valued the lore, the actual experience of others, something readily replicable from other businesses. It was typically represented in the campaign of searching for tips and tools (8.3.2.2) of WoodFurn's manager who jumped from one training topic to another. From the

training service side, inadequate and boastful information about what the courses offered further encouraged the managers or owners to follow this opportunistic approach. This approach can be seen as totally in contrast to Western ones, discussed in 3.3.2, where training objectives must be defined clearly prior to commencement. Trainees of this approach found it easier to consider the training they received satisfactory since they almost always discovered something ‘interesting’ from the training content. As one of the trainers put it, ‘they are happy that they know something in this life, by themselves or from others, not just the theory...’ The most opportunistic managers from ClothPrint and WoodFurn were elated with ‘enlightenment’ obtained officially from the courses about the crafts they had mastered in their work. Training in these cases helped the trainees to fulfil the purposes of going over the familiar subjects to glean the old morals, obtaining precious experience out of the blue and broadening their knowledge. In fact, many trainers interviewed for this research were concerned about the widespread serendipitous view of training of their trainees.

From a different perspective, one trainer noted, ‘If we tell [a manager] to go to study... to be an effective manager for instance, he will not go. But if we tell him to attend a course for CEOs, he will.’ Personal status and how to be viewed in the eyes of others are important to people in the Eastern countries in general. ‘Being studious’ has long been valued as a precious quality and is still esteemed in the modern market economy where being rich is more glorious, especially for businessmen. An example can be found in the manager of Stream, who spent significant resources to obtain higher academic credentials alongside running his business. His style did gradually bring about a movement among his managerial staff, who spent more time in various evening classes to undertake ‘personal development.’ Training in this case did not fit any short-term or long-term business objective. An excuse for lavish training was the ignorance of the trainees. Being humble was also generally encouraged, but it was in this case an excuse for training without clearly defined objective, just to develop an image of a manager with updated knowledge. Managers of this type were not in the majority, but as leaders of their businesses, they were accountable for such formalistic and superficial training. The supply side in fact has taken advantage of this phenomenon by their boastful advertising, generously giving out ceremonious titles to their courses. On a broader scope, appreciation of form over substance is still

strong in the national psyche so that a considerable number of people in business continued training as a means of promoting personal status.

In contrast, some younger managers had more practical views about training. They were more direct on the purpose of the training they wanted to attend. Training served as preparation for their career advancement, and they justified the connections between training and their managerial roles. In their workplace, they were more active than others, contemplating the role of training, instead of developing status through studying, they did so more effectively by spreading the knowledge gained to subordinates, and by application in daily work. Compared to middle managers in Stream who closely followed their managers in collecting one certificate after another, the proactive young managers of SourceCode and EyeHealth were more selective in their training opportunities, and knew how to make a case for the training they needed. The more democratic business culture in SourceCode enabled their inputs into training decisions. The more decentralised environment in EyeHealth facilitated the staff to be more active in using knowledge, so they had better ideas of which working areas needed more training attention. As a matter of fact, these proactive people were not the majority in their organisations, however, their serious consideration and actions on training have carried some weight in the training strategies of the firms. It was because of their attitudes and initial work improvement that the companies retained their confidence in further training.

10.4.2.3. Two Approaches to Training

From the analysis above, the five companies under research can be divided into two groups, corresponding to the purposes, approaches and practice of training. Stream, WoodFurn and ClothPrint belong to a group of small companies following an ‘Oriental,’ impulsive and serendipitous training style. Meanwhile, EyeHealth and SourceCode can be classified as members of a group with a ‘Western,’ more rational and purposeful training strategy.

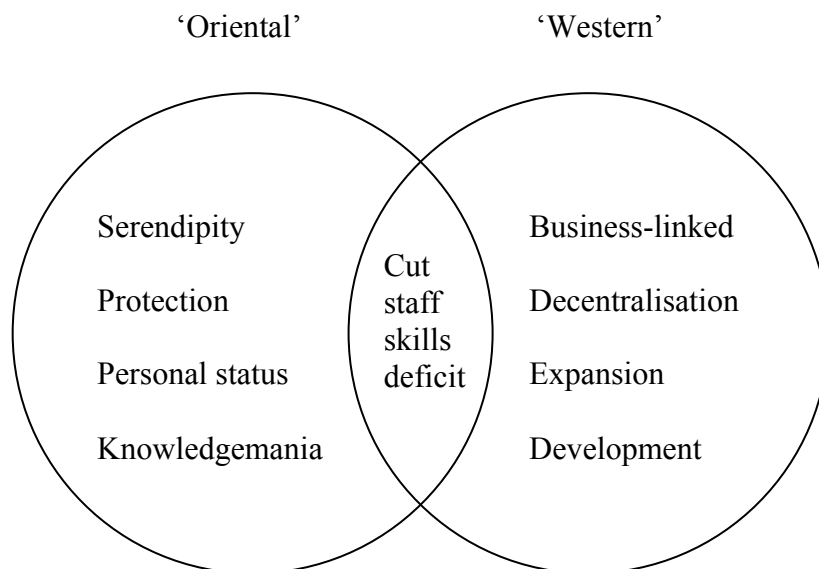
The Oriental group, from its family-centred management style in business, extended in the same direction into training. They took on training as another item in the apparatus to reinforce the business in front of the coming competition in their industries. Training was provided primarily to privileged people, usually being family members or relatives of the owners. Having a traditional mindset about the

invariably constructive power of knowledge, the managers in these companies usually acquired a wide range of training courses of different topics, hoping to obtain something valuable for managing the businesses, at the same time improving their personal status.

The Western group often possessed a more formal management structure. Training for this group was more results-oriented, better targeted, and supported by a more decentralised management system. Training was provided to supply the staff with necessary skills as well as preparation for promotion. Management and business training were usually used as an instrument to facilitate the delivery of business objectives. Training was more widely available to the staff, while they were more active in taking advantage of the opportunities of advancement within the organisations.

Characteristics of one group can be found in another to different extents, such as serendipity was sometimes present in the Western group, or training was distributed extendedly as a preparatory step for potential managers in the Oriental group. The two groups anyway had a common intention from training: to reduce skills deficiency among staff. However, the overall difference in training approaches of the two is rather clear. The figure below summarise differences of the two approaches.

Figure 10-2: Oriental vs. Western training purposes



Source: Researcher's compilation

10.4.3. Training Outcomes and Learning Transfer

The analysis from the previous single case study chapters indicated only modest outcomes of training in the majority of the companies, contrary to heavy investment in training. Not only did this involve the description of the poor outcomes themselves, but also the impression training left on many people involved. In addition, in 10.4.2 and 10.4.1, the training purposes and the way training was conducted have been classified and discussed. These analyses represent the input for enumerating and explaining the reality of training outcomes and learning transfer identified in the five companies.

First, the table below summarises the landscape of training outcomes discovered in the individual cases.

Table 10-4: Training outcomes – classified following Kirkpatrick’s (1959) model

Company Level	SourceCode	ClothPrint	Stream	WoodFurn	EyeHealth
Learning / Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teamwork skills - People management skills - Confidence in managing teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic business management principles - Confidence in leading business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of different areas of management - Confidence in conducting business transactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analytical and methodical views about business - Actual business tools/tips and experience - Confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills of customer care - Functional management skills - Confidence for managerial staff
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soft skills applied - Improved skills of negotiation with customers - Manager voluntarily involved in in-house training - Staff active in seeking further training, knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be oriented and kept alerted about training opportunities - Knowledge, training materials gathering - Approaching credit agencies for capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better work delegation - Some personal communication skills applied - Planning habit changed - Staff opened own private business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business tips applied immediately - Changes in communication with staff - Very active in acquiring more training - Promulgation of knowledge to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes in practices of communications with patients/customers
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better project management - Overtime reduced - Project deadlines met more easily - Productive and collaborative work environment - Corporate culture reinforced 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some work processes established - Company image improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some overhead cost categories reduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional service image established - Customer satisfaction achieved

At the second level of Kirkpatrick's model (*learning/attitudes*), a universal outcome of training was 'confidence,' found in all companies of diverse organisational characteristics. The outcome was found as well in people at various levels from business owners to ordinary staff. Not only was it recognised by young and inexperienced project managers at SourceCode, but it was also identified by older and shrewd managers at ClothPrint and WoodFurn. It was mentioned as the primary, most visible outcome of training.

Besides, other prominent outcomes of training were knowledge and vicarious experience obtained from all the different courses. These varied greatly among the trainees. In essence, they expected and reaped more practical lessons than developing 'knowledge.' A number of trainers were dubious about the trainees' limited ability of generating their own 'knowledge,' that could be manipulated for use in different situations, from all the 'know-how' they had been given. In cases of training described as 'cursory visit,' trainees were even more occupied with *reactions* about the training experience (Kirkpatrick's level 1) than considering what they brought back from the classroom. Though trainees essentially adored knowledge, they seemed unable to develop a solid foundation that could facilitate further self-learning.

Last in the category of *learning* was the practical 'tools and tips' of management. Three companies especially enjoying benefits of this type include WoodFurn, SourceCode and EyeHealth. Compared to Stream and ClothPrint, they were more purposeful in training. Though they were all training opportunistic to different degrees in their approaches, the three former companies had manifested the more practical intention of bringing the practical and applicable skills home. In terms of application to their organisations, these collections of skills seemed to be more of personal efficiency improvement rather than being organisation-focused.

At level three of Kirkpatrick's model (*behaviour*), evidence was not as strong as in the previous category. One was unlikely to find people in the five companies transforming substantially. Mostly they have had several minor individual 'soft skill' applications. Among the applications most applied are interpersonal skills to improve communications in-house and with the customers (e.g. negotiation techniques), techniques to manage and motivate groups of employees (skills of delegation, empowerment), and also a few changes in functioning their managerial roles (starting

the habit of making business plans, for instance.) Another group of rather popular actions is advocacy for further training. A number of avid managers were actively involved in recommending staff for training or playing the role of in-house trainers.

Ultimately, impacts at the organisational level (*results*) were not distinctly evident. The conduct of better trained employees' resulted in an image of professionalism in the eyes of the customers as well as building up their satisfaction, especially for companies in service businesses like Stream and EyeHealth. In general, there have been few specific indicators about training outcomes personally and company-wide due to the lack of monitoring and evaluation. A few sporadic outcomes can be (qualitatively) listed as overtime and overhead costs reduction, better project management and met deadlines. Training impacts at this level seemed to be most satisfying in SourceCode where it helped developing an open, sharing, collaborative work environment and at the same time reinforcing corporate culture.

The major training outcomes and the associating contextual factors as well as the training process, taken from the proposed evaluation model, are summarised in the table below. Further discussion on how the specific factors influenced the outcomes then follows.

Table 10-5: Outcomes under the influence of business environment factors

Factor Outcome	Social-Cultural	Legal	Economic	Political	Technological	Training Process
Confidence	✓					✓
Knowledge, experience	✓		✓		✓	✓
Awareness of business tools and tips	✓		✓			✓
Application of soft skills/ personal working techniques	✓		✓			✓
Advocacy for further training	✓		✓		✓	✓
Image of professionalism			✓			
Minor operational improvements	✓				✓	✓
Reinforcement of corporate culture						✓

From Table 10-5 above, some points can be highlighted. First, the internal ‘training process’ played an important role in realising the outcomes as such. Second, economic, technical and social cultural values were also critical in facilitating the translation of knowledge into those demonstrated actions/results. Third, other factors of the environment analysis SLEPT model, namely legal and political factors, did not have a strong influence to the knowledge transfer and the end results. These points are to be discussed sequentially in the following sections.

10.4.3.1. Training Process, the Role of Business Owners and Training Outcomes

The training process was not an idea familiar to the companies under research. Even in SourceCode, where training was conducted seriously, a training process was only developed recently, not yet fully operational or received close management’s attention. The process in SourceCode focused more on recruiting trainers and selecting trainees and organising courses for the majority. Lukewarm efforts were exerted on the later phases of the process: evaluating and fine-tuning the activities. Elsewhere, training process did not exist. The ‘process’ instead was manifested totally in the managers’ perception, decision and action about training. Furthermore, in small private businesses, power was heavily concentrated in business owners. In Stream and EyeHealth, where business spread out geographically and technically requiring organisational decentralisation, everyday operation was still under strict control of the general managers. Training matters were no exception. Staff were easily dispatched to training but were not monitored and reviewed when returning, due to their top manager’s limitation of time. Outcomes therefore were poor and unsustainable. Training in a rather spontaneous manner, solely from the view and actions of the business owners, consequently brought about limited results.

One may not expect small companies to have a formal system dedicated to training, especially when the companies had to focus on business to survive. However, a number of top managers under research were not aware of the necessity of handling training more seriously. They equated training, for themselves and for their staff, with the end rather than the start of a goal-oriented plan. Therefore, the return from training concentrated on the lower levels of Kirkpatrick’s scale, the trainees mainly recalled

knowledge, interesting training sessions, or even 'stress releasing opportunities' rather than changes in their work. They finished by knowing about the existence of tools and methods to assist business, and there has been no programme of actions to implement. That is why 'confidence' was usually cited as a significant outcome of training: the trainees became on par, in terms of knowledge, with the positions they held. This weakness in management in the private sector seems to be universal. The Ministry of Planning and Investment conducted a survey to discover that only a fifth of small and medium sized enterprises were successful in executing business plans (Le, 2005). In a broader scope, in terms of awareness of training as a process that must be managed, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) identify the distinction between American and Asian managers. While the American managers immediately picked up the relevance of the gap between knowledge and action, their Asian counterparts found it difficult to appreciate that managerial activities were needed to bridge the gap.

Anyway, management science in general and business process management as well as considering business training as a process originated in the West. The way training was exercised in the companies under research was clearly spontaneous and opportunistic. The background of some managers prevented them from being able to manage training in a 'standard' way. For self-made managers building their own businesses from scratch, training represented opportunities to make up for a deficit of knowledge. This view to some extent explains the hunger for basic knowledge resulting in the behaviour of some managers who wholeheartedly advocated and were involved in spreading their new discoveries to the staff.

Due to the lack of awareness of training management, behaviour changes from staff and manager were individual, spontaneous and not coordinated. Changes were not properly recognised and then institutionalised, so they remained with the initiators or were ill-fated. Moreover, power concentration in the business owners allowed them to compromise work procedures, reserve their own privileges, and so sometimes unintentionally jeopardised the staff's efforts and their newly established habits. For instance, in Stream, the top manager could bypass all financial procedures to obtain some cash for personal purposes before his staff completed the paperwork to recognise the transaction. This case was highlighted by the staff as an example how the

paternalistic approach to management frustrated the employees when they tried to apply the standard from classroom into reality. It was even worse when preferences or leniency were given to people who exerted no effort after training, and had kinship relations with the managers. As a result, the staff gradually refrained from taking initiative and safely acted as per instruction from their managers (7.3.2.3).

Alongside the training process cycle, there was no single activity considered adequately conducted. Training courses were not screened carefully, personal needs were not considered, and trainees did not share the purposes of training with the companies. Additional activities to bolster the outcomes of training were not paid enough attention. Limitation of resources was given as an excuse, but measures like internal mentoring or simple follow-up after training were not carefully considered. On the contrary, know-how and experience were sometimes strictly kept inside the circle of the owners' family members. Where mentoring was implemented, like a case of a project manager in SourceCode, the trainee manager seemed to really focus on management functions and produced some specific achievements. Otherwise such a case was rare, and the owners of the companies seemed to be very watchful in keeping their control and their staff in check. Therefore, the staff had to be satisfied with more 'confidence,' better knowledge, piecemeal personal improvement, and companies enjoyed better 'image' rather than action, while continuing to waste of resources.

In conclusion, the majority of the organisations were not sufficiently developed to have formal training processes integrated into the business. More importantly, understanding about the potential of training, awareness of the way to employ and utilise training were still missing among powerful business owners. Hence, training has not yet travelled beyond the provision of some practical knowledge to trainees.

10.4.3.2. The Effects of LEPT

As specified in the table 10-5, the legal and political factors did not appear to make impact on learning transfer in the five companies studies. The focus all the five companies expressed was business alone. A couple of managers even explicitly indicated that they wanted to maintain their business inconspicuous to avoid harassment from all kinds of visitors, tax agencies, and competitors. In addition, while the legal

environment was improved in terms of transparency, sometimes conflicts and legal matters were still settled on personal negotiation, *tin h cam* (8.3.3.4) or under-the-table arrangement rather than resorting to the law. So, in general, businesses have not yet taken legal matters very seriously. The same applies for political environment. The government has already had some policies related to training in the business sector, but they were more of encouragement rather than enforcement of the activity, requiring employers to provide training for employees. Meetings with government officials in charge of business assistance confirmed that they had not appreciated their roles in campaigning for better training. Several official business assistance centres at country and city levels focused on providing the same training courses, hiring the same trainers as those of universities or business associations. Consequently, these two factors did not play important roles in facilitating training in businesses, let alone learning transfer.

Concerning the economic factor, after twenty years since *doi moi*, the country can be considered as still under economic transformation from the central-planning line (see Chapter 2). Total control was relaxed and options in many aspects of business life were introduced. Trainees, trainers and businesses were all benefiting from emerging business and management training. From the trainer's perspective, businesses and trainees are much better off to pay for the courses the suppliers offer. From the demand side, they had the opportunities of enjoying training of various levels of complexity. In addition, development in technology has contributed in facilitating learning transfer.

However, even though trainees and organisations have witnessed a great deal of improvement, the training offers were still rather short in terms of practicality. A number of training centres were established as outreach facilities of universities, which unfortunately were not famous for providing practical skills. Moreover, training delivery from these institutions still had a taste of academism from university lecturers. So the trainees returned more knowledgeable rather than better skilled. Nonetheless, there were not only the theory-prone training courses. More and more advanced training institutions were opened, with trainers being successful executives or having advanced training methods and delivering more practical issues. As a result, initial outcomes such as soft skills, and personal development techniques were observed in application. Courses of this type also resulted in managers drawing inspirational lessons from prestigious

speakers. The effects of such practical inputs were highly appreciated by smaller companies' managers. From the courses, they found interesting tips for their business besides broadening their own network of contacts.

With the open economy, domestic trainees had opportunities to enjoy training courses based on materials from the West. The Western–Oriental barriers will be mentioned later, but these courses were novel to the trainees in both content and approach. Though charged at hyper-premium fees, training sessions by leading authorities like Tony Buzan or Phillip Kotler were fully subscribed. Results from training of this kind might not be immediately observed, but at least the trainees were able to familiarise themselves with modern business concepts. Again, what was obtained was more of an introduction to theory than an action-oriented programme. A few programmes had pioneered action-plans at the end, but the training management situation in-house, as discussed earlier, did not facilitate transfer of knowledge.

The changes in the economy on the other hand also transformed the clientele of domestic companies. Requirements on quality of products and services became more severe, so businesses had to find solutions to cope with the more demanding customers. The shift towards the market also had its impact on training and therefore learning transfer. Training which focused on the skills of marketing, sales and customer care was the favourite among service companies. Results accordingly have been illustrated in the improvement of staff communication skills, better images of professionalism, improved rate of customer satisfaction found in SourceCode, Stream and EyeHealth.

The development of technology did not leave a significant mark on learning transfer. Its contribution was identified in a few presentation-aid facilities as well as electronic computer systems to proliferate knowledge (a knowledge base in SourceCode). In terms of enriching the experience of the trainees inside the classroom, technology was mentioned as a contributor but not very important. In management and business training, the interviewed trainees were more impressed with and tended to imitate those trainers who seemed to have both charm and wisdom. Therefore, the technology factor was minor in assisting learning transfer: it was only the vehicle for knowledge, experience, and a few undistinguished improvements in work routines.

In short, the changing economy and technology advancement have facilitated and at the same time pushed business training toward benefiting both companies and customers. In reality, training has opened up opportunities for improving performance, but the companies have not yet found profound impacts from it.

10.4.3.3. Cultural Values and the Process of Learning Transfer

In Vietnam, business training seems to have a comfortable cultural environment. The premise for this argument is the recognised common attitudes towards learning, training and knowledge. The Vietnamese people have a long tradition of appreciation of educational achievements (Nguyen, 2002). Nowadays, after substantial socio-economic transformation and more practical values (e.g. being rich, promoting individual values) have emerged, that basic conception about the power of knowledge still holds. As evidenced in Chapters 5-9, business training did not face many problems until the post-training phase. The following section analyses the issues of learning transfer in the five companies under the influence of the Vietnamese cultural values.

As per the classic research by Hofstede (2001), the five dimensions of differences among national cultures include: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and Confucian dynamism (or long-term orientation). Index score estimates for Vietnam and a few selected countries are given in the following table.

Table 10-6: Hofstede's cultural indices – Vietnam and some other nations

Dimension Country	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity	Long-term orientation
Vietnam	70	30	20	40	80
China	80	30	20	66	118
Thailand	64	64	20	34	56
Japan	54	92	46	95	80
Hungary	46	82	80	88	50
Sweden	31	29	71	5	33
Great Britain	35	35	89	66	25
United States	40	46	91	62	29

Source: Hofstede (2001)

Vietnam shares its cultural values with the neighbouring China to a large degree. At the same time, it is in very much contrast to Western countries such as Great Britain and the United States. From this perspective alone, modern management science and techniques which originated from the West, seem to have to overcome a basic and high barrier to prove their applicability and usefulness in the East. As its culture is shifting towards Western values along with the tendency of opening the economy and integration to different international communities, Vietnamese cultural values have become more dynamic, especially among the younger generation (Nguyen, 2004). However, since culture is well grounded, more stable than volatile, so the above dimensions and their corresponding values can still be the foundation for analysing the influence of culture to learning transfer.

The specific values of Hofstede's dimensions in Table 10-6 indicate in the Vietnamese mentality a rather strong sense of acceptance of power distance, and an ability to endure uncertainty to a great extent. In addition, Vietnamese people are generally collectivists, rather 'feminine,' and incline to 'long-term oriented' values. These cultural characteristics played a substantial part in the reality of learning transfer evidenced in the five individual cases.

Natural acceptance of power distance can be accounted as a major inhibitor that prevented the trainees from producing more outcomes from training. The fact was clearly present in the cases of smaller companies managed in a 'traditional' way (i.e. ClothPrint, Stream and WoodFurn.) Power was concentrated in the managers/owners of these companies. The absolute power witnessed in everyday business naturally spread out to training. The trainees, especially the ordinary employees, then usually acted on the safe side. They dutifully attended courses when suggested, provided positive reactions when questioned, but delivered little as they did not find themselves in a position to act independently. A short but straightforward reasoning was from a trainee of WoodFurn, 'we are just employees.' The sense of differentiated hierarchy was so strong that even though the managers worked closely with them on the shopfloor providing motivation, there was still little result. Even in EyeHealth, where the Western-style of management was in place officially empowering the managerial staff, doctors and ordinary employees, learning transfer has yet been as productive as desired.

'Hierarchy,' which the manager/owner intentionally wanted to destroy, has always been observed by the culturally unconscious mind. Limited outcomes from the 'no hierarchy' approach for a rather long time have forced the manager of the hospital to change direction (9.3.2.2). In addition, power in Oriental societies did not come from designated position alone. There is a Vietnamese saying '*sống lâu lên lão làng*' or 'longevity makes seniority.' Respect toward the elder most of the time prevents a junior from taking initiative without '*xin phép*' or 'consulting' those who are older than him or her. Therefore, sometimes the prevision of the culturally necessary step of 'consulting' has deterred the exuberance of trying to put knowledge into action. In contrast, in SourceCode where managers and staff are of roughly the same age and relatively young, this type of culture barrier was not too high to overcome. In the main, a high level of power distance and acceptance of hierarchy put trainees in the positions of followers, encouraged inertia and prevented experimentation by people lower on the organisation ladder.

The combination of high power distance and low uncertainty avoidance put Vietnam in the same group as Asian countries like Indonesia, Hong Kong, and India. There, organisations resemble families or tribes and may be described as paternalistic according to Schneider and Barsoux (2003). These authors also argue that with these properties, business enterprise is often characterised by centralised power and personalised relationships. The reality that kinship was popular in these small businesses, together with the influential personal relationships, on the one hand fortified the power of the manager, but on the other hand introduced more barriers to changes. A trainer expressed his frustration after a course about communication:

[I asked them] How to show competence to your boss?... My trainees smiled, 'The boss and I are on the same *side* already. Otherwise, if we were not on the same *side*, no matter what I tried, he would not recognise [my efforts] and the more I tried, the more he would hate me...' Or how to give a clear message for effective communication, when the organisation for instance was divided into two *sides*. It was not the case that the message was not clear, but the other *side* intentionally pretended that it was not clear.

Personal relationships or corporate politics might exist or even prevail in small businesses everywhere. However in the companies under research, the negative influence of being on the ‘wrong side’ that worked against trainees’ contributory actions after training was noticeable.

Low uncertainty avoidance is also characterised by less formalisation in terms of written or established rules and procedures. Subordinates in such an environment do not have clearly defined task roles and responsibilities but instead social roles (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003). It sounds so flexible as if there were room for free experiment and improvement. Nevertheless, it applies only to the top management with power, not the staff below. Confused about their own tasks and responsibilities when completely at the disposal of the managers, and easily assigned to temporary trivial work (in contrast to intentional job-rotation), the staff were not able to make substantial inputs from what they had been trained in (see Chapter 7 - Stream). As discussed in this chapter, the paternalistic behaviour of the managing director has incidentally negated the efforts of the staff to establish better financial procedures. In WoodFurn, the staff decided to contribute ‘just enough.’ As a consequence of the attribute of weak formalisation, the post-training phase was usually neglected, without a well prepared plan, hence the underachievement.

It is well recognised that Vietnamese people are collectivists in general. The values of face, harmony, the sense of belonging to community are usually highly appreciated. The long effort in EyeHealth to leave individual initiative to grow naturally has failed partly because the staff did not want to move out of character of their groups. Although scoring low in uncertainty avoidance, the Vietnamese people are not risk-taking either. They may take risks with their own personal projects, which show an opportunistic mentality. But the value of ‘face’ prevents them from risking their own reputation when responsible for projects that involved their colleagues. Not just during the post-training phase was individualism avoided, this was already manifested in the classroom. They avoided ‘making themselves conspicuous’ and ‘wanted to make sure they have the sanction of their peers’ before speaking up (Nguyen, 2002). Another interviewed training organiser commented, “for Vietnamese, except for the boldest and most confident guys who have the guts to provide inputs [to modify content of training

materials], others are afraid of being considered show-offs, going against what was taught.” Back at the workplace, there were examples of individual improvement, enhanced skills utilisation and personal efficiency. These improvements led to the vague results at the top of Kirkpatrick’s scale: contributing to the corporate image of professionalism, or better service quality or improved customer satisfaction. However, in essence, no outcome proved to be the result of concerted efforts and organised actions because on returning to the workplace after training, individuals were unwilling to upset the harmony of the group by taking individual initiative. Is it contrary to the recognised cultural characteristic of collectivism? It is not because they had been collectivist in avoiding the risk of the being the leader of change, stick one’s head out and being challenged. They had already been collectivist under the influence of the other factors, i.e. large power distance and ambiguous roles in the businesses.

The low score in the dimension of individualism in general has been further reinforced by the history of education and the recent experience of central planning. The ever-present slogan found in all education institutions is *‘tiên học lễ, hậu học văn’* (learn to behave first, then to strengthen knowledge). ‘Behave’ throughout Vietnamese history can be interpreted as ‘respecting hierarchies.’ It is totally compatible with the value dimension inclining to ‘feminine.’ Bearing this cultural value, instead of being competitive and assertive, both managers and staff bias towards modesty and harmonious relationships. Besides being concerned with the bottom line, managers appeared to try to win over staff by taking care of their all-round well-being, behaving in conformity with the values of benevolence and camaraderie (see Chapter 6 and Chapter 8). In many organisations, decisions are made by the management in consensus with the party or the trade union for collective benefits, especially in State-owned enterprises (Zhu, 2003). The like can be found most explicitly in the managers of WoodFurn and ClothPrint.

However, the less demanding the management was, the fewer results the staff produced (especially under the influence of collectivism discussed above). On the other hand, efforts were not adequately made by the staff since they always had the excuse of ‘sympathy for the weak.’ Meanwhile, the majority of managers were predisposed to forbearance, so that the status quo seemed to be maintained. This is to a great extent in

accordance with the findings of Berrell et al. (1999), who point out the cultural differences between Vietnamese managers and foreign counterparts. A feminist characteristic therefore is another inhibitor to learning transfer.

Broadly considered, Confucianism still leaves strong influences in modern Vietnamese society. Values of love for humanity, appreciation of learning, peace, justice, persistence, thrift and patience are still highly regarded. These 'long-term' values might have contributed to the success of the companies under research – they were all in good shape in terms of business – but did not seem to facilitate effectively the transfer of learning. Persistence, thrift and patience are not perfectly action-oriented. They are otherwise knowledge facilitators. In terms of training, the long-term orientation values were manifested in a common reality of employees' individual training programmes for personal objectives. The staff became more knowledgeable, but in the long run, this may even jeopardise their commitment to the companies. Furthermore, with such a mentality and when personal development was not job-related, the companies did not benefit from their trained staff. The value of long-term orientation facilitates learning transfer only at the lower levels of Kirkpatrick's model.

In summary, cultural values can be considered more as hindrances than as stimulants to learning transfer. Culture has created too high a barrier that companies such as EyeHealth had to change their training approach. Learning-to-know was better facilitated by cultural values in comparison to learning-to-do. From the cultural perspective, modern management theories and techniques from the West were shown to be not easily transferred to the companies being investigated.

The main results of the cross-case analysis are summarised in table 10-7.

Table 10-7: Summary of cross-case analysis

Research issues		Company			‘Oriental’		‘Western’	
		ClothPrint	Stream	WoodFurn	SourceCode	EyeHealth		
Objective of training	Personal status and knowledge oriented	X	XX	X				
	Application and business oriented				XX	X		
Training-related practice	Official management of training				XX	X		
	Training process available				X			
	Organised facilitation for learning transfer				X			
	Unorganised/inconsistent facilitation		X	X			X	
Training outcomes	Learning	X	XX	XX	X	XX		
	Behaviour change	X	X	XX	XXX	X		
	Organisational results		X	X	XX	X		
Influencing factors	Training process				X X			
	Social-Cultural	XX	XX	XX	X X	XX		
	Legal							
	Economic	X	X	X	X	X		
	Political							
	Technological				X			

10.5. Summary

In the five Vietnamese private companies, business and management training was acquired with results concentrated at the lower levels of Kirkpatrick's model. They harvested more knowledge besides a little behaviour and organisational changes. Awareness about training management was missing, and this very shortcoming curtailed the benefits of training. Training objectives were rarely set in relation to business objectives. An opportunistic approach was observed as prevailing in training practice. Improving staff professionalism or cutting staff's skill deficit was the common reason for business and management training. The smaller private companies pursued an 'Oriental,' knowledge orientation, while the larger companies with more sophisticated management followed the more practical 'Western' business-oriented direction.

The proposed evaluation model was utilised in performing the cross case analysis. It was identified that in general the post-training period was not given adequate attention. Generalist and specialist knowledge were the primary outcomes of training. An imperfect 'training process' (a misnomer in most companies) played an important part in introducing little impact from training activities. Among environmental factors, typical Oriental cultural values turned out to be the critical inhibitors to learning transfer.

11. CONCLUSIONS

11.1. Introduction

The chapter reviews the theoretical and practical issues covered in this research study. It will provide conclusions on the important points drawn from the field research and presented in individual case studies and cross-case analysis in view of the topics examined in the literature review. Specifically, it highlights the findings on the purpose and practice of business and management training in private businesses in Vietnam. At the same time, it discusses the initial training results as well as the factors facilitating and hindering outcomes of training activities. Reflections on the research methodology and in particular the model employed for training evaluation are also given. Based on these conclusions, the chapter presents a summary of contributions that this study makes and identifies implications for practitioners and researchers in the field of business training evaluation. The chapter concludes by examining the limitations of this research and opportunities for further study.

11.2. Summary of the Research

The new economic policy of *doi moi* has changed the centrally planned society and brought Western management training to Vietnam as local businesspeople began to call for a different body of knowledge in order to compete in the market economy. Management training has become a lucrative industry and, most importantly, businesses have invested significant resources in this novel activity in human resource development. Meanwhile, outcomes of management training appeared not to be taken seriously, from all parties involved: the trainers, the trainees, and the businesses themselves. The supply side continued to introduce new inviting short courses while businesses sent their staff out indiscriminately and the trainees' contribution to their companies was uncertain and unclear. On the other hand, the need to justify training investment or obtain better understanding of the return on training is universal in the business world (3.4.1 and 3.4.2), let alone Vietnamese private businesses where financial resources were usually scarce.

The research was proposed to address the issues of business and management training in Vietnamese private businesses, with an emphasis on training evaluation. The four aims of the research include (1) reviewing theories of training evaluation as well as empirical research on the subject, (2) illustrating the practice of training

activities from start to finish inside private companies in Vietnam, (3) identifying training outcomes that the training has brought about to the people and companies under research, and (4) establishing what was facilitating and what was hindering the process of learning transfer.

The issues of business and management training, and training evaluation had not been studied adequately in the context of Vietnamese businesses. In a broader context, the theory and practice of training evaluation did not have substantial exposure in the last several decades either. Hence, the research hoped to contribute to the literature of both theoretical and practical aspects of training evaluation.

Part One of the thesis started with a general Introduction – Chapter 1, presenting research aims and organisation of the thesis. To ‘set the scene,’ Chapter 2 overviewed the changes introduced by *doi moi* during the late 1980s. Though political control has never been relaxed, a market economy with essential elements has been firmly established and resulted in the implication that managers and staff had to equip themselves with a proper set of skills to operate in the more transparent economic environment (2.3). In the more competitive Vietnam of today, management training became one of the measures to improve the human resources for those who wish their businesses to compete effectively on the market.

Chapter 3 reviewed the literature on training and training evaluation. The value of competent human resources and training has consistently been enumerated throughout the literature (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.1). Training approaches and a basic training process (3.3.2 and 3.3.3), which typically represent Western management science, were also reviewed. In that process, the specific step of training evaluation was paid special attention (3.4.2), highlighting the popular evaluation model of Kirkpatrick (1959) and its several variants (3.4.3 and 3.4.4). A review of training evaluation in practice reconfirmed the popularity of Kirkpatrick’s model and pointed out the difficulties of climbing up to higher levels of the model. In general, findings from practice in different parts of the world indicated the pre-eminence of Kirkpatrick’s training evaluation model, and positive relationships between training and different personal and organisational outcomes (3.5).

Based on the literature review of the pros and cons of Kirkpatrick’s variants, Chapter 4 proposed a modified evaluation model (4.1.2), which incorporated a wider range of

environmental variables and special attention to the training process. Having proposed the research questions (4.2), the chapter suggested a research design (4.3) favouring qualitative data collection and analysis in order to preserve the context for holistic evaluative conclusions. Methodological aspects of the study, such as unit of analysis (private company), modes of data collection (face to face interview, documentary review), geographical area covered (Ho Chi Minh City) and management of data were also discussed (4.4).

In total, five small private companies were included in the field research. A summary of the data collection phase and an initial overview of management training in these companies were given in the opening of Part Two. An outline designed by Stake (1995) was selected as the template to analyse the single company data.

Each of the five subsequent chapters (Chapters 5-9) covered a private company. They revealed the brief business history, human resources characteristics as well as training strategies of these companies. Training matters peculiar to each company were singled out with full description while preliminary explanation of these issues was given. At the end of each chapter were verdicts of training outcomes and the corresponding influencing factors. As evidenced from the single case analyses, in general, business training appeared to be initiated without well thought out objectives, delivered without adequate management attention and extended without proper evaluation. Throughout the cases, the sense of serendipity about training results prevailed. In most of the cases, the management did not seem to acknowledge fully the sophistication of the management of training, especially during the post-training period. The single cases exemplified the common lack of organised business training in Vietnamese private enterprises while they also highlighted the contrast between resources committed, knowledge obtained, reactions articulated, and final outcomes materialising in the workplace.

These individual analyses were followed by the cross-case comparison in Chapter 10, in which the proposed training evaluation model was put into application. The objectives of training, under the influence of traditional Vietnamese mentality, appeared to be very distant from the 'action-prone' Western approach. In the 'better' managed companies, the magnitude of result-orientation in acquiring business training courses was different from that of family managed companies by a wide margin. From this perspective, it was possible to categorise the companies into

groups following ‘Western’ and ‘Oriental’ directions (10.4.2.3). Back in their workplace, the overall implication was that any ‘learning transfer’ was to happen naturally. No specific expectation was explicitly planned or communicated. In response, the trained staff showed little change, which did not last very long. In both the short term and long term, the impacts of training were weak. Training outcomes were mainly identified at the lower levels of Kirkpatrick’s model. The reality of weak learning transfer was examined from different perspectives as the proposed model was applied. In terms of the practice of training, the ‘training process’ was revealed as virtually non-existent, ignored or incomplete. The management of training was a somewhat exotic concept to many managers. In terms of environmental factors influencing learning transfer, traditional cultural values were identified as having profound impacts on the inertia of the post-training period (10.4.3.3). In particular, the legacy of Confucianism has hindered the formation of actions required for substantial and organised changes in the local business environment.

11.3. Contributions of the Research

11.3.1. Training Practice in Private Companies Exposed

The research study provides insights into the situation of employing business and management training in a new setting. The private sector in Vietnam has been the research object for a large number of studies, but training evaluation, the focus of this research, has not yet received adequate attention from both academics and practitioners. In this research, the practice of business and management training, its outcomes and the factors influencing learning transfer in selected private businesses were identified and presented. Therefore, Aims 2, 3 and 4 of the research are achieved.

From the research results, it is suggested that besides some companies with practical training objectives, business training was employed quite frequently for the purposes not directly connected to business goals (Research Question 1). In examining the purpose of business training in those private companies, it turned out that besides the need of skills for realising business objectives, there were hidden agendas in the motives of both the managers and staff. Under the influence of an oriental culture prizing the value of knowledge for the sake of better ‘face’ and social status, there

were excessive evidence of training acquired but loosely aligned to business needs. It was the personal motivation to equip oneself with the more knowledge the better, to improve one's profile, and hope for a better career advancement in the future, rather than focusing on skills to enhance performance of one's current job, hence the categorisation of Western and Oriental training approaches (10.4.2.3). There were companies following the more practical route that had strong linkages between training and business goals. But even when operating in competition intensive industries, some other companies still undertook training in a knowledge driven fashion. Both types of training approaches seemed to try to tackle the immediate deficit of skills among the staff. However, the urge for training to improve knowledge alone in those of the Oriental group and even some individuals of the Western group was considerably strong so that attention had to be expended if companies' management wanted to benefit from these efforts in amassing knowledge. From the research perspective, the phenomenon of a well-grounded oriental training approach besides the emerging practical western approach deserves further long term examination to see if there is a transformation from knowledge-oriented to business-oriented training. For businesses, for the time being, the strong preference for knowledge and knowledge only can be seen both as a barrier to application as well as an opportunity to build up a knowledge foundation for sophisticated changes.

While training was widely employed in a opportunistic, knowledge driven fashion, an official and practical training process was absent in many companies. The companies lacked attention to all crucial steps of management of training (10.4.1 and Table 10-2). Training related activities can be best described as *laissez-faire* (Research Question 2).

After training, the benefits to organisations were not apparently manifest. On the practical front, the research study has confirmed the early impression about the imbalance between training investment and return (Research Question 3). In the companies visited, as well as from observation and feedback of training management officials, only a modest return on investment was reported. This is largely attributed to the business leaders' unawareness of the necessity of systematic management of training, in addition to reasons peculiar to the oriental culture. Also revealed from the research was the contentment with that situation on the part of employees sent to

training, managers and, to a certain extent, trainers. An immediate implication is that changes, or improvement to this dilemma, would be difficult. From discussion of the case studies, a breakthrough would depend on top managers of the companies, first from familiarising themselves with the training matters in order to develop the necessary awareness about not only training content but also leadership and management of training. Furthermore, this calls for investigation to clarify if the weak learning transfer was really a waste of resources and for corrective actions from different sides such as trainers, the business community, state management agencies, managers, and foreign investors.

Reality was, nevertheless, not all negative. Knowledge which is always welcomed, and practical skills or at least confidence gained from training have already contributed a little to improved behaviour, image and performance of small companies. So far, the tradition that values knowledge highly (sometimes just because it is associated with better 'face') has not yet given any indication of sinking into oblivion. Nonetheless, to keep on with that mentality, as the research reveals, has not yet done any particular harm to business either, except for wasting some precious resources. In the long run, even the general or academic knowledge obtained under business or personal training programmes would be useful once learning transfer accelerates. In other words, the research exhibits the reality of excess knowledge which may have been latent inside the companies and needs to be channelled into business purposes.

From the training supply side, the role of the trainers was identified to be still limited inside the classroom as the guides of knowledge development rather than facilitators of more profound change at the workplace. The role of trainers was minimal partly because of the traditional view equating trainers and teachers. Even so, there was little concern from the trainers' side about learning transfer or evaluation. Therefore, they found it difficult and furthermore did not have enough incentives to penetrate business for further promote the application of new skills. Little efforts were attempted at assisting business back in the workplace (e.g. failure of Business Clinic, Chapter 6). It was observed that the evaluation by training organisations, the immediate move they could do, did not go beyond 'happy sheet' or measuring 'reactions' of the trainees. More sophisticated questionnaires (a sample can be seen in Appendix 5) were aimed at fine-tuning marketing strategies to capture more

potential customers, or just to decide to continue or stop cooperation with specific trainers, based on the reactions of the trainees. Even in the best scenario, such data has not been analysed and utilised effectively enough. This to a certain extent contributed to the situation of limited learning transfer in businesses.

From the business side, the research identifies management of training (10.4.3.1) and culture (10.4.3.3) as the most important factors influencing the limited learning transfer (Research Question 4). While management of training in general is an important factor similar to determinants of the effectiveness of training in the West as indicated by Hussey (summarised in Figure 4-3), cultural values seem to be an emerging significant factor peculiar to the private Vietnamese businesses under research. The lack of management of training was down to the unawareness of its necessity from the business leaders and the belief of the natural and ultimate effects of knowledge. Meanwhile, the cultural values appeared to be against rather than facilitating learning transfer. The contrast of the companies more successful with learning transfer and those less successful was the contrast in terms of management of training and the magnitude of influence of culture values.

All the points presented above concerning the four research questions were summarised in Table 10-7.

These conclusions about the peculiarities of business management in a few private businesses might help practitioners and researchers of training evaluation to have more focused orientation in practice and research in the field of human resource development. The companies as well as trainers had some substantial difficulties to overcome when putting this activity into application. The models of training evaluation can be an initial suggestion for application inside companies and for people within the research community to test and improve. Even the original four-level model of Kirkpatrick can be used to raise awareness about training evaluation, and can be quickly adapted in small businesses. The specific techniques of training evaluation may be introduced in larger companies first and would take some time to digest, and implement; but the introduction of basic evaluation concepts such as needs assessment, programme outcomes, impact, and cost-benefit analysis can readily benefit businesses of any size.

To build the theoretical foundation to achieve the research aims, the thesis presents a systematic review of training evaluation, drawing on theoretical as well as empirical research to present a conceptual model that may serve as an entry point to any business training evaluation. Pros and cons of the different existing evaluation models were identified so that the research thesis provides insights for practical improvement to evaluation practice incorporated in the proposed model. The model as a primary result of the research is open to refinement, by practitioners or researchers in different national, business, and cultural contexts in order to improve its usability. From the findings so far, the proposed model can be further improved as the following section discussed. Improving the proposed model, it is also the completion of research Aim 1.

11.3.2. Reflection on the Proposed Model

The advantages of the proposed evaluation model were discussed in the previous section 4.1.2. It was put into practice in Chapter 10, and was facilitative as a framework to give a full account of the process of learning transfer in the five companies under research. Meanwhile, it is discernible that for either research or business purpose, application of the suggested evaluation model was rather complicated. The addition of research process and environmental factors help more thorough understanding of the subjects and processes under evaluation. The interview guide based on the model has proven to help elicit useful information during field evaluation. Nevertheless in practice, its completeness reduces its flexibility, makes it a common ‘one size fits all’ prescription for any large, small, developed or underdeveloped business. A balance between the completeness of the model and its practicality would be desirable. To improve applicability of the model, it needs modification and mostly simplification.

The core of the proposed model comprising the last three levels of Kirkpatrick’s model, i.e. learning, behaviour change and results, is retained for its simplicity and practicality. The full advantages of Kirkpatrick’s original model were discussed in 3.4.3. The levels remain intact to allow users to explore and contrast knowledge concentration in *learning* and actions, benefits in *behaviour change* and *results*.

For the component of contextual elements, in a high-context environment like Vietnam and other oriental societies, they need to be retained in the model.

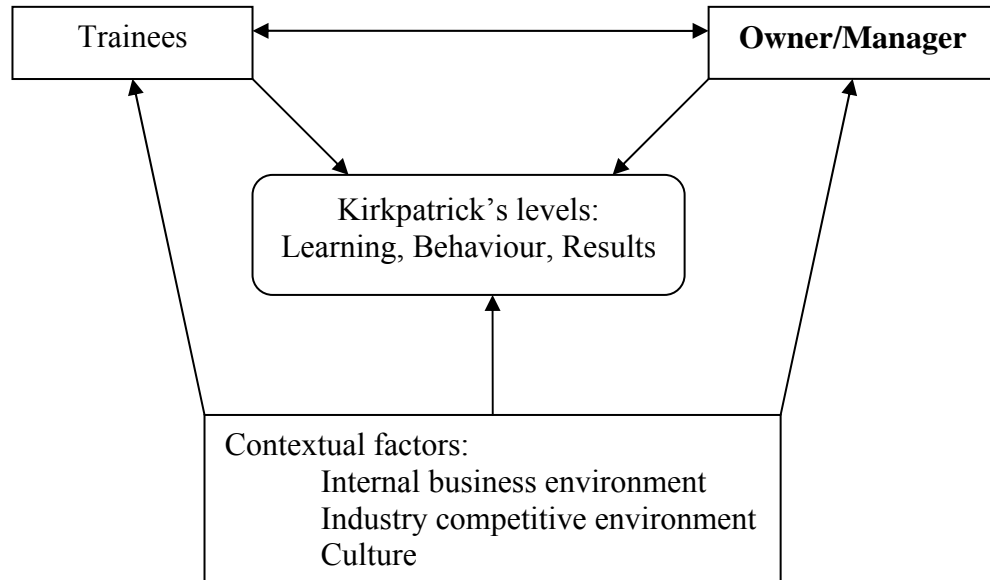
Understanding the impacts of the contextual factors (both internal and external) was key in interpreting the reality of learning transfer in the businesses. Therefore a revised model needs to retain these elements. This was evidenced in the influence of the cultural factor on the learning transfer process in Vietnam (10.4.3.3). In light of the fieldwork and analysis, the factors that stood out were culture, economy and technology. So, contextual factors are pruned to retain these relevant factors.

The concept of a training process is still alien to local *small companies*. Traditional family management style may continue to be popular so that training related decision making is likely to be kept under the control of owner managers. The well-grounded paternalistic management style may continue to prevail. In small businesses where power is concentrated totally in the business owners, they naturally oversee every step of training activities. But they are not ready for 'process' so long as their family management style is still effective in other business functions. The training process therefore needs not to be viewed strictly as a well-engineered tool to manage training activities through designated staff, but rather as awareness and skills for managers to make the best from knowledge of themselves and their staff. Therefore, the focus of the model needs to shift from evaluating the training process to assessing the role, ability and actions of the managers throughout the period from pre-training to post-training, besides identifying outcomes of training at individual and organisational levels.

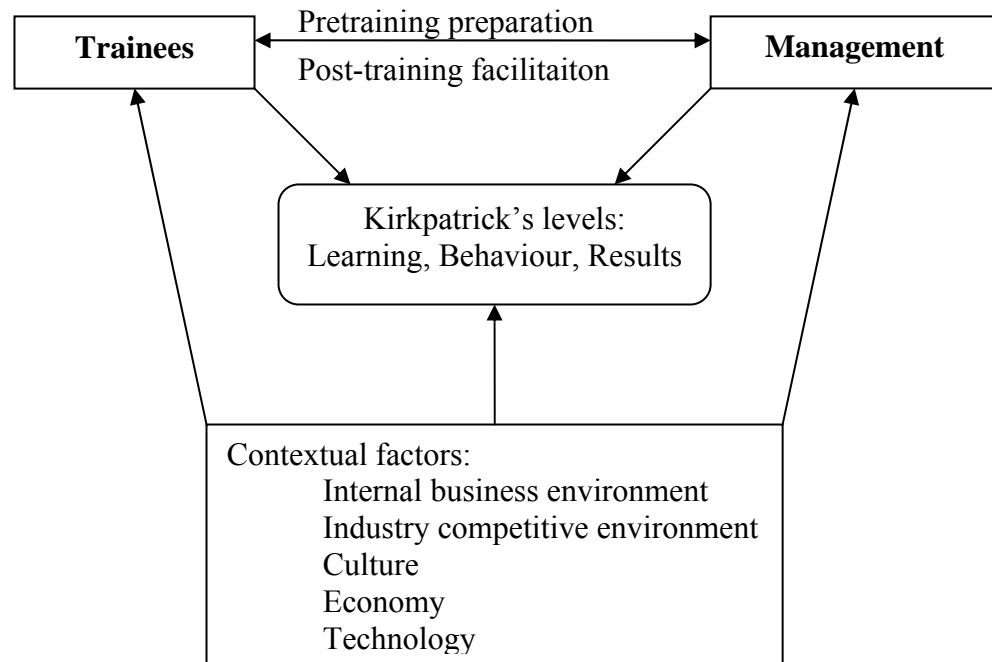
For *larger companies*, managers seem to begin to be aware of the sophistication of training activities, some after experiencing failure, others by their own research. The training process therefore can be retained in the model since its importance has been gradually recognised. Since training is outsourced to providers, simplification can be made by directing focus on important phases: before and after training. Review of key groups of activities (i.e. *preparation* – aligning business objectives and expected knowledge, skills before training; *facilitation* – empowering, monitoring, evaluation after training) in these two phases would be adequate when the staff receive simple, practical training courses and do not require complex management efforts to translate knowledge into action when back in the business. From a practical perspective, this approach would be feasible for those businesses which usually have tight resource constraints.

The refined models of training evaluation for small family companies and larger companies are given in the following figures.

Figure 11-1: Refined training evaluation model – small family businesses



In this refined model for smaller businesses, the strength of Kirkpatrick's framework, that is, its simplicity with three levels of evaluation, namely learning, behaviour change and results is retained. The role of the business owner and manager is emphasised as it is dominant and embodies all the orientation and participation for the trainees. Therefore, in this model, the focus of evaluation is on the top manager's behaviour in training related matters. To better understand learning transfer in this type of company, contextual factors including the company's internal and external industry business environments and culture are incorporated.

Figure 11-2: Refined training evaluation model – larger businesses

This model differs from the previous one in the inclusion of or emphasis on the preparation for training and facilitation of learning transfer. The contextual factors are more extensive, including economy and technology. As discussed, awareness of the training process in larger companies is better than in smaller ones. Therefore, evaluation encompasses a wider range of activities in the pre-training and post-training periods to assess the effects of facilitation. Furthermore, economic and technological factors are added since they are more influential in larger businesses (e.g. better condition to apply advanced technology to assist in-house training and spread knowledge, better economic position to have more choices in training).

The two models are slightly different in complexity corresponding to the level of development of companies under evaluation. In the one-man band family company, it is the owner's awareness, attitude, skills and efforts in promoting training in his business that is the focus of the evaluation. In the larger company, where training matters are somewhat delegated, the environment after training needs to receive special attention.

Meanwhile, in low-context societies like those of the United States and Britain, focus is to be directed to the training process. There, businesses are more independent from otherwise important factors like '*guanxi*' in the East, let alone the differing characteristics of the cultural dimension. On the other hand, in the western countries

the application of advanced technologies is more widespread and may have profound impacts on training and learning transfer. In any case, these need to be studied by further research in western companies. The earlier proposed model may still be seen as a potential tool for training evaluation there since it incorporates features more familiar to western business culture: training process, management of training, learning transfer, comprehensive business environment analysis, and monitoring and evaluation.

11.3.3. Contributions – Research Perspectives

For researchers who are interested in the comparative dimension of management practice, the research study contributes to enhancing understanding of the trends of business and management training practices in private enterprises in Vietnam. Insights into the impacts of management knowledge from the West on companies' operations and performance were presented. Observations and reflection about learning transfer related issues under the conditions of an oriental transitional society expand understanding about the topic in a new locale.

Among the factors influencing learning transfer, cultural values were identified as having a strong impact on the process. Putting research of training evaluation into practice, the research study has placed it in a novel environment, namely a transitional economy. In this new training-related research environment, it uncovered that economic change has made training necessary while the traditional oriental culture, which encourages accumulation of knowledge, has been facilitating the expansion of business training. In addition, the open-door policy has created more options for training for businesses. The same growth of the 'training industry' and weak training-performance linkage had already been identified in the West (Westhead and Storey, 1999). The weak linkage in the Vietnamese business environment was attributed to a new dimension of Confucian culture that tends to delay action for change, besides the classic problems of lack of nurturing and facilitation during the post-training phase. Similarly to the concerns of Westhead and Storey (1999) about the quality of training provided, and the appropriateness of training content at different stages of business development, the cultural dimension opens up another concern over the appropriateness of Western practice in management, its issues, techniques, and the art of running businesses in a transitional, oriental environment. The role of culture in this specific HR

development activity identified in the research echoes the conclusion of Le et al. (2007) about the transferability of foreign HR practices into Vietnam. More seriously, as mentioned in the cross-case analysis chapter (Chapter 10), cultural values seem to militate largely against the process of learning transfer. They seem to prevail so strongly that, coupled with the nature of small private family business with its imbalanced power polarity between the boss and his employees, culture emerges as an important factor hindering learning transfer as well as awareness of the importance of a well-managed training process. The research has highlighted this point throughout the single- and multiple-case analysis chapters (Chapters 5-10).

Also with regard to the Vietnamese private business context, the popular paternalistic approach of management contributes to making training an ineffective investment since business owners usually focused on showing their attention to employees by sending them to training courses rather than concerning themselves with the real training needs of the individuals or their businesses. The research exposes this obstacle in this special context that is outside the common barriers of learning transfer, such as poor management of training or lack of empowerment. Also exposed is the particular type of training outcomes experienced by business managers which can be described as 'training gratification,' and which is the result of the very action of sending staff to training courses. It reveals that what matters to many local managers was winning staff over to gain their loyalty, at the same time gaining better control of their businesses. The research therefore suggests the linkage between the characteristics of small business management and hidden, but primary, training outcomes.

Primarily for other researchers in training and management, qualitative research practice in this study provides primary data on training evaluation issues in selected Vietnamese private companies, which can contribute to a more encompassing study of management in Vietnam. This study adds to a small number of qualitative studies into training evaluation, whereas most studies on the issue have concentrated on quantitative outcomes. It is a concern that with quantitative, cross-sectional research, the long-term benefits of management training schemes could not be fully captured (Westhead and Storey, 1999). This study, though not having a longitudinal design, provides greater contextual information so that training outcomes and learning

transfer can be understood thoroughly. Theoretically, the research study gives some grounds for considering alternative strategies of conducting training evaluation.

11.4. Limitations of the Thesis

Classic limitations because of problems with time, financial resources and the selection of suitable samples for study apply to this research to differing extents. As a matter of fact, research sampling had to fit with constraints of time available for fieldwork (around six months) and funds as well as other resources the researcher was able to mobilise. The methodology discussion justified ‘case study’ (i.e. qualitative data) as a suitable design to address the research questions. Pros and cons of this selection, along with data collection tactics, were discussed in Chapter 4.

Five companies which qualified under predefined criteria (ownership, time experienced business and management training) were successfully approached. They basically illustrated diversified issues and dimensions related to the research interests. However, the companies were all located in Ho Chi Minh City, where a large number of businesses are concentrated, and they may not totally represent private businesses in Vietnam as a whole. The strategy to access those five companies through training organisations may introduce biases towards ‘good examples’ though the researcher had freedom in deciding which companies to include in the sample from the list of their customers. The same applies for the selection of interviewees inside each company.

The five companies were already participating in management training. A minor concern is that no company without training experience was included for comparison, even though the primary aim of the research is to explore the training situation, and explain the reality of learning transfer. Besides, the delay in learning transfer was accounted for by interviewing only those who had returned from training to work for at least three months. However, the evidence is not conclusive about the delay in learning transfer in different types of training so that it was a slim possibility that interviews were made when learning transfer had not yet happened or been completed. Furthermore, learning transfer is a very complex process. Therefore, there are risks involved in establishing, say, whether a particular ‘achievement’ was the (direct) result of training. This problem was already partly resolved by verification of information from different people, and sources.

In addition, training data in small businesses has not been maintained and updated with care, in some cases it was not available due to security policies. The quality of some statistical data is therefore not completely reliable. Again, it was addressed by recalculation of data as well as checking with multiple sources.

Finally, dependency on premises derived from Kirkpatrick's original model or Hofstede's cultural analysis dimensions may have ignored alternatives more suitable to the particular subjects in this research.

11.5. Implications for Further Research

The subjects of training evaluation and the issues of learning transfer have been little researched in Vietnam so far. Several directions for research may arise to improve knowledge of the current issues. In business and management, learning transfer is complicated as already mentioned, and usually requires time to be realised. In the same research topics, a different longitudinal design may better describe the process of translating knowledge into ultimate firm benefits, identify the stages of that process (if any) and the corresponding influencing factors. With such a design, a researcher is able to witness the evolution of learning transfer in vivo rather than relying on the recollections of the issues in the short term like in this research. In contrast, using the same case study design in larger companies, which have better facilities, resources, and management institutions may reveal different focuses which these companies need to deal with in order to expedite the process of learning transfer.

In general, different combinations of research designs and research subjects will contribute to a better understanding of the practice and impacts of management training in Vietnam. Starting from this perspective, comparisons of the research issues between transitional economies and other established ones, or between Vietnam and countries of similar/different culture, can help practitioners and researchers when exchanges of business and management training are conducted in different parts of the world. Other researchers may also benefit from this when exploring the transferability of training content outside of Vietnam: they have been warned of enthusiasm for knowledge accompanying limited learning transfer. Moreover, the dimension of culture and its influences were highlighted in this research so that researchers may narrow down the research subjects and follow up

the findings from this research for a more thorough understanding of cultural values as facilitators and inhibitors of learning transfer.

On a narrower scope, tests of the refined evaluation models may specifically be useful in order to come up with practical tools of training evaluation for businesses, and for researchers. These tests can be carried out in similar research environments, i.e. domestic urban business hubs, or big cities, in private companies. On the other hand, the original proposed model may be used in large companies where all resources and formal processes are in place, so that it would be also refined for practitioners.

The research is under the heavy influence of Kirkpatrick's work. Evaluation using models following different philosophies may give interesting data to compare and decide about the appropriateness of the tools in this specific business setting. Besides, in challenging the validity of the findings of the current research, other directions and options are possible. Given the complexity of the learning transfer process, subsequent research might explore potential or latent benefits of management training for the trainees, management and their companies. Furthermore, they might look into a combination of training and other factors that had militated against the outcomes of training.

11.6. Concluding Remarks

Business training has become popular in the dynamic private sector in Vietnam. In spite of some basic problems in the way it was conducted, as revealed throughout this thesis, training complemented the experience of the successful old entrepreneurs, supplied young managers with confidence, and all in all broadened the knowledge of the people in business. More importantly when the country embarked upon transition and established a market economy, updating the human resources with necessary business skills and an effective way of looking after their businesses helps them cope better with competition on domestic and foreign markets.

To optimise training investment, training evaluation is required, but this function seems to receive insufficient attention. Therefore, sometimes, training could not fulfil its mission because of the lack of information from evaluation. In the specific business environment of Vietnam, under the influences of various factors peculiar to the country's socioculture and economy, learning transfer in private companies has

experienced many difficulties. So, training evaluation may be a starting point for businesses to adjust their training activities and enjoy a greater return from training.

The research has provided an overview of business training and the results in some private businesses in Ho Chi Minh City. The longstanding tradition of revering knowledge enabled training to be easily accepted as a way of investment for the future. However, more evaluation is needed to identify specific advantages and disadvantages of current practice inside business during the post-training phase. The required evaluation would definitely benefit by further research studies on the subject which generate more understanding and produce superior tools for training evaluation.

These would benefit practitioners in business, but at the same time also serve those who conduct research on business training and HR management in Vietnam. Therefore, the findings from the research may open up new avenues and encourage more efforts in this field of human resource development and specifically in the context of a transitional economy.

Appendix 1 Milestones of Transition in Vietnam

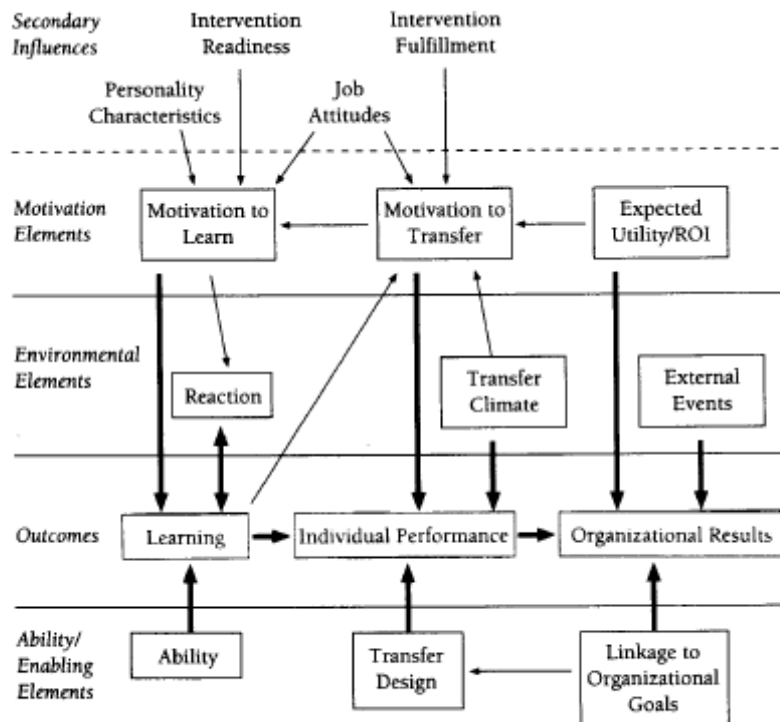
Year	Major reforms	Major achievements
1978	"Three-plan" system for SOEs	SOEs were given more autonomy; market relationships started to be established
1981	"100" contracting (product contracting) for farmer households	Farmers were given more autonomy in producing and selling their products
1985	"Price, wages and money" reform	Hyperinflation. Planned price system removed, old currency system replaced
1986	The Sixth Party Congress announced its programme of renovation (<i>doi moi</i>)	Launching of <i>doi moi</i> reform process Breakthrough in economic development thinking, promoting a multi - sector economy with the leading role of the state sector. Transition to a market economy with state management started.
1987	The first Foreign Investment Law Open-door policy accelerated Enactment of Land Law which established agricultural land- use rights Introduction of more market-determined exchange rate	Popularization of new thinking in society
1988	Establishment of two-tier banking system Adoption of Resolution 10 on agricultural land-use rights farmer households.	Approval of first joint – venture Export reached US\$1 billion mark for the first time ever
1989	Removal of two-tier price system Abolishment of quotas for most commodities, except for ten exports and fourteen imports. Unification of exchange rate system	From a rice net importing country, Vietnam became the third largest exporter in the world High inflation was curbed
1990	Foreign investment Law amended Approval of Law on Central Bank, State-owned banks and credit institutions. Corporate Law establishing a new framework for activities of liability limited and joint-venture companies approved.	Twenty million tons of grains were produced Two million tons of crude oil was extracted Total accumulated FDI license approvals surpassed US\$ 1 billion.
1991	Private companies were entitled to export an import directly	The industry sector grew by nine per cent

1992	<p>Adoption of New Constitution which officially recognized the multi-sector economy.</p> <p>Trade Pact with Equalization of SOEs</p> <p>Hunger Elimination and Poverty Reduction Programme (HEPR - programme) started.</p>	<p>Total accumulated FDI licence approvals surpassed US\$ 5 billion mark.</p> <p>The number of SOEs reduced while that of private enterprises began to rise.</p> <p>The literacy rate reached around 87 percent</p> <p>National program for hunger elimination and poverty reduction (HEPR) started</p>
1993	<p>Amendments of Land Law</p> <p>Approval of Bankruptcy Law and Environment Law</p> <p>Removal of US's embargo against Vietnam</p>	<p>Poverty survey indicates that poverty declined from well over 70% to 58% since mid-1980s;</p> <p>First mobile telephone put in use.</p> <p>Relationships with broader international donor community re-established: first international Donor Conference held in Paris.</p>
1994	<p>Enactment of Labour Code</p> <p>Export licenses for most of goods except rice, wood and crude oil removed.</p> <p>National Program of goods except rice, wood and crude oil removed.</p> <p>National program of safer water and environmental sanitation launched.</p>	<p>Vietnam became a member of Association of South Eastern Asia Nations.</p> <p>Total accumulated FDI licence approvals surpassed US\$ 10 billion.</p>
1995	<p>Law on State - Owned Enterprises approved</p> <p>Number of import goods controlled by quotas reduced to seven</p>	<p>AFTA membership granted</p> <p>Export value reached US\$ 5 billion mark</p> <p>Relation with US normalized.</p> <p>GDP growth rate was 9.3 per cent</p> <p>Total FDI licence approvals reaches US\$ 27 billion, while GDP growth rate was 9.3 per cent.</p>
1996	<p>Regulations on Industrial Property Protection issued</p> <p>Eighth Party Congress debates leading role of SOE sector</p>	<p>Total FDI licence approvals reaches US\$ 27 billion, while GDP growth rate was 9.3 per cent</p>
1997	<p>All barriers against internal trade of rice removed</p> <p>Private enterprises granted licenses to rice export subject to certain conditions.</p> <p>Adoption of National Action Plan for Women Advancement</p>	<p>Rice exports reach level of 3 million tons mark</p> <p>Internet was first used.</p>

1998	<p>New range of non-tariff measures and exchange controls to restrain imports and protect domestic production temporarily introduced</p> <p>Implementation of Programme to support most difficult communes</p> <p>Start of National Target Employment Programme</p> <p>Approval of Grassroots Democracy Decree</p>	<p>Over ninety per cent of children were vaccinated Annual population growth rate below two per cent.</p> <p>Based on the Vietnam Living Standard Survey, overall poverty drops from fifty-eight per cent in 1993 to thirty-seven per cent in 1998.</p> <p>APEC membership granted</p> <p>Literacy rate increases to 89.4 per cent</p> <p>Total registered FDI passed US\$ 30 billion.</p>
1999	<p>Decree 57 which liberalized export rights passed</p> <p>Approval of New Enterprises Law</p> <p>Introduction of VAT</p> <p>Acceleration of SOE equitization programme</p>	<p>Rice exports reach 4.5 million tons</p> <p>Viet Nam was granted UN's award for achievement in the field of population and family planning.</p> <p>Life expectancy at birth reached 68.3</p> <p>HDI ranking: 101 out of 162 countries.</p>
2000	<p>New Enterprises Law becomes effective Bilateral Trade Agreement with the US signed</p>	<p>Economic growth picks up to 6.7 percent.</p> <p>Nearly 15,000 private enterprises established</p> <p>Adult literacy rate is 94 percent.</p>
2001	<p>Ninth Communist Party Congress adopts Ten Year Socio-Economic Strategy 2001 - 2010.</p>	<p>IMF and World Bank resume structural adjustment lending to Vietnam.</p> <p>Economic growth is at around seven percent ranked second in the region.</p> <p>Socio-political stability maintained</p> <p>Nearly 23,000 private companies have been established with 25,000 billion VND of capital, providing nearly 500,000 new jobs</p> <p>Approved a program of SOE reform in the period 2001 - 2005 WB and IMF resumed structural lending.</p>

Source: Vo D.L., (2004), Vietnam's Economic Renovation along Socialist-Oriented Market Economy, pp 24-126

Appendix 2 Holton's Training Evaluation Framework



Source: Holton (1996), The flawed four-level evaluation model. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 7, p.17.

Appendix 3 Outline of a Case Study Report

Entry vignette	I want my readers immediately to start developing a vicarious experience, to get the feel of the place, time.
Issue identification, purpose and method of study	Although most of my readers care little about my methods, I want to tell them something about how the study came to be, who I am, and what issues I think will help us to understand the case.
Extensive narrative description to further define case and contexts	I want to present a body of relatively uncontested data, not completely without interpretation, but a description not unlike they would make themselves had they been there. I have controversial data to present, I am likely to present them, if I can, as views of a contender or witness.
Development of issues	Somewhere, perhaps in the middle, I want to carefully develop a few key issues, not for the purpose of generalising beyond the case but for understanding the complexity of the case. It is often here that I will draw on other research or on my understanding of other cases.
Descriptive detail, documents, quotations, triangulating data	Some of the issues need further probing. This should be the place for the most confirming experiential data. I will indicate not only what I have done to confirm the observations (my triangulations) but what I have done to try to disconfirm them.
Assertions	It is my intent to provide information that allows the readers to reconsider their knowledge of the case or even to modify existing generalisations about such cases. Nevertheless, having presented a body of relatively uninterpreted observations, I will summarise what I feel I understand about the case and how my generalisations about the case have changed conceptually or in level of confidence.
Closing vignette	I like to close on an experiential note, reminding the readers that the report is just on person's encounter with a complex case.

Source: Stake (1995)

Appendix 4 Data Collection Guide

Interview with business

- Rapport creation
- Introduction of research purposes
 - o Name/from/name card
 - o Referees
 - o Purposes
 - o Confidentiality
 - o Consent of recording
 - o Invitation of co-operation
- Business history and current operations
 - o History
 - o Capacity
 - o Prospect
 - o HR activities
 - o The leader profile
- Roles of training in business – training strategy
 - o Official? Regulations?
 - o Training promotion
 - o Corporate culture include knowledge recognition?
 - o View of training as building competition power
 - o Knowledge of training activities of competitors, within sector
 - o Knowledge of training opportunities available for business
 - o In search of a training partners
- Training needs identification
 - o Formal process
 - o By experience
 - o Harmonising individual needs and business needs
 - o Relationship with training institutions before and after training
 - o Training needs audit and follow-ups
 - o Proactive vs. reactive training approach in view of business strategy
- Training process
 - o Description

- Strengths and weakness of the process
- Promotion for a learning organisation activities
- Collaboration with training provider, involvement of trainee/employee
- Impacts of employee's business training
 - What considered as outcomes
 - Individual level
 - Department level
 - Business level
 - Positive and negative experience
 - Relationship between training and corporate performance
- Activities to facilitate learning transfer
 - Motivation from supervisors and leaders
 - Promotion
 - Financial reward
 - A facilitating culture
 - Individual traits of trainees
- Opinions on training practice and impacts in relations to environment aspects.
 - Culture
 - Technology
 - Economic
 - Legal
 - Business reasons

Interview with trainee

- Rapport creation
- Introduction of research purposes
 - o Name/from/name card
 - o Referees
 - o Purposes
 - o Confidentiality
 - o Consent of recording
 - o Invitation of co-operation
- Demographic information (beginning or end of interview)
 - o Age
 - o Sex
 - o Time working for firm
 - o Education background
 - o Previous training provided
 - o Learning style
 - o Time availability
 - o Training finance availability (self-funded/sponsored)
 - o Seniority
- Training/development needs (business-related, not tech)
 - o Why trained? Sent to training? Search for, suggested and agreed? Self financed/free? Organisation awareness?
 - o Promotion opportunity/requisite after training
 - o Opportunity outside organisation/intention
 - o Just for doing better the current task?
- Knowledge on firm training strategy
 - o Strategy existed?
 - o Formality/seriousness in development and application of strategy
 - o Communication of strategy to trainees
 - o View on firm strategy in compared to personal development plan
- Course attended description
 - o Time, venue
 - o Pre-training activities

- Content
- Duration
- Teaching/learning style
- Application of IT/high-technology
- Course organisation
- Customisation of training content
- Firm involvement during training
- General reactions
- Firm's evaluation on trainee after course
- Overall view of course effects
 - Knowledge gained from course
 - Description of learning transfer process
 - Opportunity of applying new knowledge into work
 - Success
 - Output
 - Individual benefits
 - Recognition (peer/org)
 - Financial
 - Intrinsic satisfaction
 - Factors
 - Investment of deliverables
 - Peers
 - Supervisors relationship
 - Organisational policy/culture
 - Individual benefits
 - Trainer related
 - Others
 - Impacts/effects (department-wise)
 - Failure
 - Factors
 - Personal
 - Organisational
 - Relationship/politics

- Empowerment
 - Effects (department-wise)
- Not applying
 - What supplied
 - What necessary
 - What supplied but not needed
 - Intention of future application
 - Need of further training?
 - What needed for immediately application?
- View others not having this training
 - Less opportunity in organisation?
 - Same remuneration?
 - Feel content with reality?
 - Recommendations for trainer/organisation/peers
- Any other input/comment/recommendation

Interview with business

- Rapport creation
- Introduction of research purposes
 - o Name/from/name card
 - o Referees
 - o Purposes
 - o Confidentiality
 - o Consent of recording
 - o Invitation of co-operation
- Business history and current operations
 - o History
 - o Capacity
 - o Prospect
 - o HR activities
 - o The leader profile
- Roles of training in business – training strategy
 - o Official? Regulations?
 - o Training promotion
 - o Corporate culture include knowledge recognition?
 - o View of training as building competition power
 - o Knowledge of training activities of competitors, within sector
 - o Knowledge of training opportunities available for business
 - o In search of a training partners
- Training needs identification
 - o Formal process
 - o By experience
 - o Harmonising individual needs and business needs
 - o Relationship with training institutions before and after training
 - o Training needs audit and follow-ups
 - o Proactive vs. reactive training approach in view of business strategy
- Training process
 - o Description
 - o Strengths and weakness of the process

- Promotion for a learning organisation activities
- Collaboration with training provider, involvement of trainee/employee
- Impacts of employee's business training
 - What considered as outcomes
 - Individual level
 - Department level
 - Business level
 - Positive and negative experience
 - Relationship between training and corporate performance
- Activities to facilitate learning transfer
 - Motivation from supervisors and leaders
 - Promotion
 - Financial reward
 - A facilitating culture
 - Individual traits of trainees
- Opinions on training practice and impacts in relations to environment aspects.
 - Culture
 - Technology
 - Economic
 - Legal
 - Business reasons

Appendix 5 A Sample of Post-Training Questionnaire

Centre for Excellence in Management Development

University A – Ho Chi Minh City

Questionnaire

Course No: XXXX

From: dd/mm/yyyy To: dd/mm/yyyy

Dear Participants,

Your responses to this questionnaire would help us in improving the quality of the course. Please answer the following questions and you can give further comments if any at the end of the questionnaire.

	Circle your choice		5	4	3	2	1	
1	The training course							
1.1	Content	Attractive	5	4	3	2	1	Unattractive
1.2	The course overall	Inspiring	5	4	3	2	1	Uninspiring
1.3	Explanation of the topics	Apprehensible	5	4	3	2	1	Ungraspable
1.4	Practicality	Practical	5	4	3	2	1	Impractical
1.5	Lecturing speed	Sensible	5	4	3	2	1	Insensible
1.6	Examples/Case studies/Activities	Relevant	5	4	3	2	1	Irrelevant
1.7	Guides provided	Appropriate	5	4	3	2	1	Inappropriate
1.8	Facilities	Appropriate	5	4	3	2	1	Inappropriate
1.9	Materials	Useful	5	4	3	2	1	Useless
1.10	Services	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
2	Trainer							
2.1	Preparation for the course	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
2.2	Professional ability	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
2.3	Knowledge on the topics	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
2.4	Motivation	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
2.5	Efforts to communicate	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
3	Your comments on the trainer							
3.1	The trainer cared about our learning	Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
3.2	I felt comfortable attending the course with the trainer	Positive	5	4	3	2	1	Negative
3.3	The trainer cared about our concerns and interests	Positive	5	4	3	2	1	Negative
3.4	The trainer had personal appeal	Appealing	5	4	3	2	1	Unappealing

3.5	I was not afraid of exchanging with the trainer about my personal concerns	Not afraid	5	4	3	2	1	Afraid
3.6	For me, the trainer is reliable	Reliable	5	4	3	2	1	Unreliable
3.7	For me, the trainer set a good example	Yes	5	4	3	2	1	No
4	Overall comment about the course							
	All issues accounted for, I think the course is...	Excellent	5	4	3	2	1	Mediocre
5	Personal statements							
5.1	I feel that I learned	A lot	5	4	3	2	1	Nothing
5.2	I feel that I am more confident on the topics I learned	Positive	5	4	3	2	1	Negative
5.3	I will tell my friends about the course so that they can attend	Definitely	5	4	3	2	1	Never
5.4	The course is relevant and appropriate to my job	Positive	5	4	3	2	1	Negative
5.5	I will apply what I learned with the course into my job	A lot	5	4	3	2	1	Nothing

According to you, how would it be organised so that your friends can attend and get the most from the course? (Scoring: 1 = most convenient; 5 = most inconvenient)

- Five days a week
- Mornings only
- Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (3 days a week)
- Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday (3 days a week)
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday (3 days a week)

If your answer to question 5.3 was 3 or greater, please provide the correspondent addresses of the people you want to introduce.

Name	Address	Telephone no.	E-mail	Employer

Other comments:

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix 6 Biographical data of informants interviewed during fieldwork

(See Table II-1 for the companies' details)

No.	Company/Institution	Name	Sex	Position
	<i>SourceCode</i>			
1		H. L. Nguyen	M	Chairman
2		V. H. Tran	M	Training manager
3		T. D. Le	M	Training manager
4		A. T. Nguyen	M	Project manager
5		T. A. Nguyen	M	Project manager
6		T. T. Nguyen	M	Senior manager
	<i>ClothPrint</i>			
7		A.P. Vo	M	Manager/owner
8		N. T. Tran	M	Deputy manager
	<i>StreamCo</i>			
9		Q. B. Le	M	Branch manager
10		C. H. Ho	F	Warehouse manager
11		T. H. Tran	F	Chief accountant
12		N. H. Tran	M	Deputy manager
13		T. C. Hoang	M	Service centre manager
	<i>WoodFurn</i>			
14		T. T. Le	M	Manager/owner
15		V. T. Luong	M	Sales manager
16		T. T. Pham	F	Accountant
	<i>EyeHealth</i>			
17		V. H. Bui	M	Doctor
18		D. K. Nguyen	M	Manager/owner
19		B. Nguyen	M	Hospital manager
20		K. L. Nguyen	F	HR manager
21		Q. B. Nguyen	M	Hospital deputy manager
22		M.C. Ta	M	Marketing manager
23		T. H. Cu	F	Head of nurses
	<i>Training Centre C. (University E.)</i>			
24		H. L. Nguyen	M	Manager/trainer
	<i>VCCI Management Centre</i>			
25		K. T. Tran	M	Trainer
26		M. E. Luong	M	Trainer
	<i>D.P. Facilities (Foreign- assisted Training Programme)</i>			
27		K. C. Duong	F	Course developer
28		T. T. Le	F	Programme developer

	Training Division (Youth Entrepreneurs Assoc.)			
29		N. N. Ho	M	Trainer
	Training Centre B. (University T.)			
30		Q. T. Tran	M	Trainer
	L. Software Enterprise			
31		T. Ha	M	Manager
	P.S.V.			
32		H. P. Ngo	M	Manager
	A.B.C. Services			
33		A. T. Phuong	F	Deputy manager
	Training Assistance Centre (Ministry of Planning and Investment)			
34		Đ. T. Tran	M	Branch manager
	Foreign Assisted Training Programme			
35		P. T. Tran	F	Senior manager
36		H. T. Mai	M	Supervisor
	International Trade Promotion Centre			
37		M. C. Hoang	M	Manager
38		T. T. Truong	F	Officer
	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industries			
39		L. A. Tran	F	Deputy manager
40		Đ. B. Nguyen	M	Branch manager
	HCMC Youth Entrepreneurs Assoc.			
41		T. H. Nguyen	F	Training officer

References

- Abernathy, D. J. (1999) Thinking outside the evaluation box. *Training & Development*, **53**(2), 19-23.
- Adams, S. and Hicks, W. (2001) *Interviewing for journalists*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- ADB (2005) *Vie: Private Sector Assessment*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- Alexander, G. S. and Skapska, G. (Eds.) (1994) *A fourth way?* London: Routledge.
- Alliger, G. M. and Janak, E. A. (1989) Kirkpatrick's levels of training criteria: thirty years later. *Personnel Psychology*, **42**(2), 331-342.
- Alliger, G. M., Tannenbaum, S. I., Bennett, W., Traver, H. and Shotland, A. (1997) A meta-analysis of the relations among training criteria. *Personnel Psychology*, **50**(3), 341-358.
- Anderson, L. and Eddy, K. (2004) Heavy demand for EMBA course in Kiev. *Financial Times*. 23 Feb. p.12.
- Anonymous (2003) Employers investing in training for administrative support staff. *SuperVision*, **64**(6), 26.
- Anonymous (2004) Calculating the value of leadership training. *HR Focus*, **81**(2), 2.
- Aragon-Sanchez, A., Barba-Aragon, I. and Sanz-Valle, R. (2003) Effects of training on business results. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(6), 956-980.
- AusAID (2000) *Vietnam - Legal and judicial development*. Melbourne: The Australian Government's Overseas Aids Program.
- Axtell, C. M., Maitlis, S. and Yeararta, S. K. (1997) Predicting immediate and longer-term transfer of training. *Personnel Review*, **26**(3), 201.
- Bae, J., Chen, S.-j., Wan, T. W. D., Lawler, J. J. and Walumbwa, F. O. (2003) Human resource strategy and firm performance in Pacific Rim countries. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(8), 1308-1332.
- Bardhan, P. K. and Roemer, J. E. (Eds.) (1993) *Market socialism: the current debate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bassi, L. J. and Cheney, S. (1997) Benchmarking the best. *Training & Development*, **51**(11), 60-64.
- Bates, R. (2004) A critical analysis of evaluation practice: the Kirkpatrick model and the principle of beneficence. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, **6**(27), 341-347.
- Bates, S. (2004) Coaching focuses on today, not tomorrow. *HRMagazine*, **49**(1), 16.
- Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (1997) *Human Resource Management: A Contemporary Perspective*. 2nd ed. London: Pitman Publishing.
- Bee, F. and Bee, R. (1994) *Training needs analysis and evaluation*. 1st ed. London: CIPD.
- Belling, R., James, K. and Ladkin, D. (2004) Back to the Workplace: How Organisations Can Improve Their Support for Management Learning and

- Development. *Journal of Management Development*, **23**(3), 234-255.
- Bernthal, P. R. (1995) Evaluation that goes the distance. *Training & Development*, **49**(9), 41-45.
- Berrell, M., Wright, P. and Tran, V.-H. (1999) The influence of culture on managerial behaviour. *Journal of Management Development*, **18**(7), 578-589.
- Bickman, L. and Rog, D. J. (Eds.) (1998) *Handbook of applied social research methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Bjorkman, I. and Xiucheng, F. (2002) Human resource management and the performance of Western firms in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **13**(6), 853-864.
- Blanchard, P. N. and Thacker, J. W. (1999) *Effective Training: Systems, Strategies and Practices*. 1st ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall.
- Bonfield, H. (2003) Executive coaching is not just for big companies. *The British Journal of Administrative Management*, **Summer 2003**(36), 18.
- Boselie, P., Paauwe, J. and Jansen, P. (2001) Human resource management and performance: lessons from the Netherlands. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **12**(7), 1107-1125.
- Bramley, P. and Kitson, B. (1994) Evaluating training against business criteria. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **18**(1), 10-14.
- Brewer, J. and Hunter, A. (1989) *Multimethod research: a synthesis of styles*. 1st ed. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Brown, J. F. (1991) *Surge to freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe*. 1st ed. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Buckley, R. and Caple, J. (2004) *The theory and practice of training*. 5th ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Bushnell, D. S. (1990) Input, process, output: a model for evaluating training. *Training & Development Journal*, **44**(3), 41-43.
- Carlzon, J. (1987) *Moments of truth*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company.
- Chan, L. L. M., Shaffer, M. A. and Snape, E. (2004) In search of sustained competitive advantage: the impact of organizational culture, competitive strategy and human resource management practices on firm performance. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **15**(1), 17-35.
- Chapman, A. (2005) *Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model* [online]. Available from: <http://www.businessballs.com/trainingprogramevaluation.htm>. [Accessed June 17 2005].
- Chelimsky, E. and Shadish, W. R. (Eds.) (1997) *Evaluation for the 21st century: A handbook*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Clarke, A. and Dawson, R. (1999) *Evaluation research: an introduction to principles, methods, and practice*. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Cohen, M. (2002) A tough call in Vietnam. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, **165**(17), 32.

- Cohen, M. (2004) Corporate overhaul. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, **167**(40), 16.
- Collin, A. (1997) Learning and development. In Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (eds) *Human Resource Management: A Contemporary Perspective*. London: Pitman Publishing.
- Collins, N. T. (2005) *The Transformation of Employment Relations in Transitional Economies: the Case of Vietnam*. The University of Melbourne.
- Cosh, A., Hughes, A. and Duncan, J. (1998) *Investment in training and small firm growth and survival*. Sheffield: Department for Education and Employment.
- Cree, V. E. and Macaulay, C. (Eds.) (2000) *Transfer of Learning in Professional and Vocational Education*. London: Routledge.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1990) *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*. 1st ed. New York: Times Books.
- Dapice, D. O. (2000) *An overview of the Vietnamese economy after the Asian Crisis* [online]. Available from: http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/cbg/research/d.dapice_cbg_overview.vietnam.ec on.pdf. [Accessed 14 February 2005].
- D'Arcimoles, C.-H. (1997) Human resource policies and company performance: a quantitative approach using longitudinal data. *Organization Studies*, **18**(5), 857-874.
- de Vaus, D. (2001) *Research design in social research*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Dixon, B. R., Bouma, G. D. and Atkinson, B. J. (1987) *A handbook of social science research*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dixon, N. M. (1990) The relationship between trainee responses on participation reaction forms and posttest scores. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **1**, 129-137.
- Dollar, D. (1999) The Transformation of Vietnam's Economy: Sustaining Growth in the 21st Century. In Rondinelli, D. A. and Litvack, J. I. (eds) *Market Reform in Vietnam, Building Institutions for Development*. Westport.
- Dollar, D. (2001) Reform, growth, and poverty in Vietnam. In: *Economic growth and household welfare: policy lessons for Vietnam*. Hanoi May 16-18, 2001.
- Donovan, P., Hannigan, K. and Crowe, D. (2001) The learning transfer system approach to estimating the benefits of training: empirical evidence. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **25**(2), 221-228.
- Dunford, M. (1998) Differential development, institutions, modes of regulation and comparative transitions to capitalism. In Pickles, J. and Smith, A. (eds) *Theorising transition*. Routledge, pp. 76-111.
- Duong, N. (2002) Foreign Investment in Vietnam: Sign of Recovery. *Vietnam Economic Review*. July 7. p.36-41.
- Easterby-Smith, M. (1986) *Evaluation of management education, training and development*. 1st ed. Brookfield: Gower.
- Easterby-Smith, M. and Mackness, J. (1992) *Completing the cycle of evaluation*. 1st ed. London: Personnel Management.

- ENP, R. (2007) *Giai phap an toan nguon dien tai Vietnam cua tap doan HiPT va ENP* [online]. Available from: <http://www.vnmedia.vn/print.asp?newsid=100979>. [Accessed 15 Oct 2007].
- Fahey, S. (1997) Vietnam and the 'Third Way': the Nature of Socio-economic Transition. *Journal of Economic and Social Geography*, **88**(5), 469-480.
- Ferguson, T. (2007) Europe Now Biggest Outsourcing Market. *BusinessWeek*. 25 Oct 2007.
- Fey, C. F., Bjorkman, I. and Pavlovskaya, A. (2000) The effect of human resource management practices on firm performance in Russia. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **11**(1), 1-18.
- Fforde, A. and Vylder, S. d. (1996) *From plan to market: The economic transition in Vietnam*. 1st ed. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Freeman, N. J. (2001) Understanding the decline in foreign investor sentiment towards Vietnam during the 1990s. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, **8**(1), 1-18.
- Friedman, J. (2004) Firm ownership and internal labour practices in a transition economy - An exploration of worker skill acquisition in Vietnam. *Economics of Transition*, **12**(2), 333-366.
- Fullbrook, D. (2004) Office Space in Vietnam Going, Going... *Asia Times*. 17 November 2004. p.12.
- Garavan, T. N. (1997) Training, development, education and learning: Different or the same? *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **21**(2), 39-50.
- Geber, B. (1995) Does your training make a difference? Prove it! *Training*, **32**(3), 27-34.
- Gerrard, P., Schoch, H. and Cunningham, B. (2002) Values and skills of female entrepreneurs in Vietnam: an exploratory study. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, **10**(2), 139-159.
- Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (Eds.) (2000) *Case study method: key issues, key texts*. London: Sage.
- Gordon, J. (1991) Measuring the 'goodness' of training. *Training*, **28**(8), 19-25.
- Grabher, G. and Stark, D. (1998) Organising diversity - evolutionary theory, network analysis and post-socialism. In Pickles, J. and Smith, A. (eds) *Theorising transition*. Routledge, pp. 54-75.
- Gross, A. (1994) *Vietnam - A Hot Prospect For The Medical Device Industry* [online]. Available from: <http://www.pacificbridgemedical.com/publications/html/VietnamDec1994.htm>. [Accessed 26 April 2007].
- GTZ (2005) *Vietnam's Garment Industry: Moving Up the Value Chain*. Ho Chi Minh City: Mekong Project Development Facility.
- Guba, E. G. (1972) The Failure of Educational Evaluation. In Weiss, C. H. (eds) *Evaluating Action Programs*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 250-266.
- Guerrero, S. and Sire, B. (2001) Motivation to train from the workers' perspective: example of French companies. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **12**(6), 988-1004.

- Hamblin, A. C. (1974) *Evaluation and Control of Training*. 1st ed. London: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Hare, P. G. and Davis, J. R. (Eds.) (1997) *Transition to the Market Economy: Critical Perspectives on the World Economy*. London: Routledge.
- Harrison, R. (1997) *Employee Development*. 1st ed. London: CIPD.
- Harrison, R. (2000) *Employee development*. 2nd ed. London: CIPD.
- Hashim, J. (2001) Training evaluation: clients' roles. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **25**(7), 374-379.
- Hayes, J. (2002) *The theory and practice of change management*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ho, N. N., Nguyen, P. D. and Ngo, Y. N. (2003) Executive training: expectation and buying process of companies in the south of Vietnam. *In: Management education for 21st century - managing future challenges*. Hanoi
- Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Holbeche, L. (1999) *Aligning Human Resources and Business Strategy*. 1st ed. Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.
- Holmes, L. (1997) *Post-communism: An introduction*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Holton, F. E., III (1996) The flawed four-level evaluation model. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **7**(1), 5-21.
- Huselid, M. A. (1995) The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, **38**(3), 635-672.
- Hussey, D. E. (1988) *Management training and corporate strategy*. 1st ed. London: Pergamon Press.
- IER. (2006) *Nganh Det May Viet Nam Hau WTO* [online]. Available from: <http://www.vienkinhte.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/xemtin.asp?idcha=4122&cap=3&id=4123>. [Accessed 5 August 2007].
- Jackson, T. (1989) *Evaluation: relating training to business performance*. 1st ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Jamieson, N. L. (1995) *Understanding Vietnam*. 1st ed. London: University of California Press.
- Jeffries, I. (1993) *Socialist economies and the transition to the market - a guide*. 1st ed. Routledge.
- Johnson, H. (2004) The Whole Picture? *Training*, **41**(7), 30-34.
- Jones, J. T. (2004) Training and development, and business growth: a study of Australian manufacturing small-medium sized enterprises. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, **42**(1), 96.
- Kamoche, K. (2001) Human resources in Vietnam: The global challenge. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, **43**(5), 625-650.

- Kaplan, R. S. and Norton, D. P. (1996) Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System. *Harvard Business Review*, **Jan-Feb**75-85.
- Kaufman, R. and Keller, J. M. (1994) Levels of evaluation: beyond Kirkpatrick. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **5**(4), 371-381.
- Kazmin, A. (2005) Vietnam Tries to Ride Tech Outsourcing Wave. *Los Angeles Times*. 17-Oct-2005.
- Kennedy, P. M. (1993) *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*. 1st ed. New York: Random House.
- King, J. A., Morris, L. L. and Fitz-Gibbon, C. T. (1987) *How to assess program implementation*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Kingston, P. (2003) Further education: More training for bosses: Managers demand public cash to boost their own skills. *The Guardian*. 10 June 2003. p.53.
- Kirkpatrick, D. (1959) Techniques for evaluating training programs. *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, **13**(11), 3-9.
- Kirkpatrick, D. (1959) Techniques for evaluating training programs: Part 2 - Learning. *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, **13**(12), 21-26.
- Kirkpatrick, D. (1960) Techniques for evaluating training programs: Part 3 - Behavior. *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, **14**(1), 13-18.
- Kirkpatrick, D. (1960) Techniques for evaluating training programs: Part 4 - Results. *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, **14**(2), 28-32.
- Kirkpatrick, D. (1996) Revisiting Kirkpatrick's four-level model. *Training & Development*, **50**(1), 54-57.
- Klimoski, R. (1991) Theory presentation in human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review*, **19**(4), 253-271.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. 1st ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Kontorovich, V. (1993) The economic fallacy. *National Interest*, **7**(31), 35-45.
- Kornai, J. (1992) *The Socialist System: the Political Economy of Communism*. 1st ed. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Kornai, J. (1993) Market socialism revisited. In Bardhan, P. K. and Roemer, J. E. (eds) *Market socialism: the current debate*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 42-68.
- Krames, J. A. (1997) *The Welch Way*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Larsen, G. (1997) From Plan to Market: the Economic Transition in Vietnam. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, **56**(4), 1160.
- Lavigne, M. (1999) *The Economics of Transition*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Le, C.-T., Truong, Q., Rowley, C. and Warner, M. (2007) To What Extent Can Management Practices Be Transferred Between Countries? The Case of Human Resource Management in Vietnam. *Journal of World Business*, **8**(42),

113-127.

- Le, D. (1992) *The Role of the State by Turning the Vietnamese Economy to a Market Economy*. Stockholm.
- Le, P. (2005) Thuc trang doanh nghiep nho va vua Viet Nam. *Vietnam Economy*. 28 November 2005. p.18.
- Leung, S. (2006) Integration and Transition - Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR. In: *Accelerating Development in the Mekong Region - the Role of Economic Integration*. Seam Reap NCDS/APSEG.
- Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (1994) The evaluation of training: an organisational culture approach. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **18**(8), 25-32.
- Li, J. (2003) Strategic human resource management and MNEs' performance in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(2), 157-173.
- Litvack, J. I. and Rondinelli, D. A. (1999) Economic Reform, Social Progress, and Institutional Development: A Framework for Assessing Vietnam's Transition. In Litvack, J. I. and Rondinelli, D. A. (eds) *Market Reform in Vietnam, Building Institutions for Development*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, pp. 1-30.
- Mallon, R. (1993) Vietnam: Image and Reality. In Heath (eds) *Revitalizing Socialist Enterprise, a Race Against Time*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Marchington, M. and Wilkinson, A. (2003) *People management and development*. 2nd ed. London: CIPD.
- Martin, R. (1999) *Transforming Management in Central and Eastern Europe*. 1st ed. Oxford University Press.
- May, T. (2001) *Social research: issues, methods and process*. 3rd ed. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Mayo, A. and Lank, E. (1997) *The power of learning*. 2nd ed. CIPD.
- McCargo, D. (Ed.) (2004) *Rethinking Vietnam*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- McDaniel, D. O., Schermerhorn, J. R. and Huynh, C. T. (1999) Vietnam: the environment for management development in the twenty-first century. *The journal of management development*, **18**(1), 79.
- McKenna, E. and Beech, N. (2002) *Human Resource Management: a concise analysis*. 1st ed. Prentice Hall.
- McKenzie, J. (2000) Creating a market in management training for Vietnam's private firms: MPDF's experience. In: *Business services for small enterprises in Asia: developing markets and measuring performance*. Hanoi, Vietnam April 3-6, 2000.
- Mello, J. A. (2003) Profiles in leadership: Enhancing learning through model and theory building. *Journal of Management Education*, **27**(3), 344.
- Merriam, S. (1998) *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis*. 2nd ed.

Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

- Mintzberg, H. (1973) *Nature of managerial work*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row.
- Mishler, E. G. (1986) *Research interviewing: context and narrative*. 1st ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Moock, P. R., Patrinos, H. A. and Venkataraman, M. (1998) *Education and Earnings in a Transition Economy - The Case of Vietnam*. Chicago: World Bank.
- Mumford, A. (1997) *Management development: Strategies for action*. 3rd ed. London: IPD.
- Nadvi, K. and Thoburn, J. (2003) Challenges to Vietnamese firms in the world garment and textile value chain, and the implications for alleviating poverty. *In: Clusters and Global Value Chains in the North and the Third World*. Novara, Italy
- Nadvi, K. and Thoburn, J. (2004) Vietnam in the Global Garment and Textile Value Chain: Impacts on Firms and Workers. *Journal of International Development*, **16**, 111-123.
- Napier, N. K. (2006) Cross Cultural Learning and the Role of Reverse Knowledge Flows in Vietnam. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, **6**(1), 57-73.
- Napier, N. K., Ngo, H. M., Nguyen, M. T. T., Nguyen, T. V. and Vu, T. V. (2002) Bicultural team teaching: experiences from an emerging business school. *Journal of Management Education*, **26**(4), 429-448.
- Napier, N. K. and Vu, T. V. (1999) Views from afar: a videoconference. *Organization*, **6**(2), 349-360.
- Neupert, K. E., Baughn, C. and Dao, T. T. L. (2005) International management skills for success in Asia: A needs-based determination of skills for foreign managers and local managers. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **29**(2/3), 165-180.
- Newby, T. (1992) *Validating your training*. 1st ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Ng, Y. C. and Siu, N. Y. M. (2004) Training and enterprise performance in transition: evidence from China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **15**(5), 878-894.
- Nguyen, L. H. (2003) Role and competency profiles of human resource development practitioners in Vietnam. *In: Management education for 21st century - managing future challenges*. Hanoi.
- Nguyen, P. A. (2004) Pursuing Success in Present-day Vietnam: Young Graduates in Hanoi. In McCargo, D. (eds) *Rethinking Vietnam*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 165-176.
- Nguyen, T. H. A. (2002) *Cultural Effects on Learning and Teaching English in Vietnam* [online]. The Language Teacher. Available from: <http://www.jalt-publications.org/tlt/articles/2002/01/an>. [Accessed June 14 2007].
- Noe, R. A. (1986) Trainee attributes and attitudes: Neglected influences on training effectiveness. *Academy of Management Review*, **11**, 736-749.

- Noe, R. A. and Schmitt, N. (1986) The influence on trainees' attitudes on training effectiveness: Test of a model. *Personnel Psychology*, **39**, 497-523.
- Nuti, M. D. (1993) Economic inertia in the transitional economies of Eastern Europe. In Uvalic, M., Espa, E. and Lorentzen, J. (eds) *Impediments to the transition in Eastern Europe*. Florence: European University Institute, pp. 25-49.
- O'Reilly, C. A., III and Pfeffer, J. (2000) *Hidden Value - How great companies achieve extraordinary results with ordinary people*. 1st ed. Harvard Business School Press.
- Panayotopoulou, L., Bourantas, D. and Papalexandris, N. (2003) Strategic human resource management and its effects on firm performance: an implementation of the competing values framework. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(4), 680-699.
- Park, H. J., Mitsuhashi, H., Fey, C. F. and Bjorkman, I. (2003) The effect of human resource management practices on Japanese MNC subsidiary performance: a partial mediating model. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(8), 1391-1406.
- Parlett, M. and Hamilton, D. (1976) Evaluation as Illumination. In Tawney, D. (eds) *Curriculum Evaluation Today*. London: MacMillan Education, pp. 84-101.
- Patton, M. Q. (1982) *Practical evaluation*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Paul, A. K. and Anantharaman, R. N. (2003) Impact of people management practices on organizational performance: analysis of a causal model. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(7), 1246-1266.
- Peters, T. J. and Waterman, R. H., Jr (1992) *In search of excellence*. 1st ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Pettigrew, A. M., Arthur, M. B. and Hendry, C. (1990) *Training and human resource management in small to medium sized enterprises*. Sheffield: Training Agency.
- Pettigrew, A. M., Ferlie, A. and McKee, L. (1992) *Shaping Strategic Change*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Pfeffer, J. (1994) *Managing with power : politics and influence in organizations*. 1st ed. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Pfeffer, J. (1998) *Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First*. 1st ed. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Pfeffer, J. and Sutton, R. (2000) *The Knowing-Doing Gap - How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*. 1st ed. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.
- Pham, H. T. (2003) Training needs of Vietnamese small and medium enterprises on business management. In: *Management education for 21st century - managing future challenges*. Hanoi
- Phillips, J. J. (1991) *Handbook of Training Evaluation and Measurement Methods*. 2nd ed. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Pickles, J. and Smith, A. (Eds.) (1998) *Theorising transition*. Routledge.
- Pierson, C. (1995) *Socialism after Communism: The new market socialism*. 1st ed.

Oxford: Polity Press.

- Porter, M. E. (1980) *Competitive Advantage*. 1st ed. New York: Free Press.
- Prahalad, C. K. (1995) How HR can help to win the future. *People Management*, **1**(1), 34-36.
- Prahalad, C. K. and Hamel, G. (1990) The Core Competence of the Corporation. *Harvard Business Review*, **68**(3), 79.
- Prokopenko, J. (1991) *Management Implications of Structural Adjustment*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Pulley, M. L. (1994) Navigating the evaluation rapids. *Training & Development*, **48**(9), 19-24.
- Quelch, J. A. and Dinh-Tan, C. M. (1998) Country managers in transitional economies: The case of Vietnam. *Business Horizons*, **41**(4), 34-40.
- Rae, L. (2002) *Assessing the Value of Your Training: The Evaluation Process from Training Needs to the Report to the Board*. 1st ed. London: Gower Publishing.
- Reade, Q. (2004) Senior executives lack vital leadership training. *Personnel Today*. 3 Feb 2004. p. 6.
- Reay, D. G. (1994) *Evaluating training*. 1st ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Reed, A. (2001) *Innovation in Human Resource Management*. 1st ed. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Reid, M. A. and Barrington, H. (1999) *Training interventions*. 6th ed. London: IPD.
- Richard, O. C. and Johnson, N. B. (2001) Strategic human resource management effectiveness and firm performance. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **12**(2), 299-310.
- Riedel, J. and Turley, W. S. (1999) *The politics and economics of transition to an open market economy in Vietnam*. OECD Development Center.
- Robinson, W. S. (1951) The logical structure of analytic induction. In Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds) *Case study method: key issues, key texts*. London: Sage, pp. 187.
- Rodriguez, J. M. and Ventura, J. (2003) Human resource management systems and organizational performance: an analysis of the Spanish manufacturing industry. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(7), 1206-1226.
- Roemer, J. E. (1993) Can there be socialism after communism? In Bardhan, P. K. and Roemer, J. E. (eds) *Market Socialism: the current debate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rondinelli, D. A. (Ed.) (1994) *Privatization and Economic Reform in Central Europe: the Changing Business Climate*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books.
- Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W. and Freeman, H. E. (2004) *Evaluation: a systematic approach*. 7th ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Rynes, S. L., Trank, C. Q., Lawson, A. M. and Ilies, R. (2003) Behavioral

- coursework in business education: Growing evidence of a legitimacy crisis. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, **2**(3), 269.
- Santos, A. and Stuart, M. (2003) Employee perceptions and their influence on training effectiveness. *Human Resource Management Journal*, **13**(1), 27-45.
- Schneider, S. C. and Barsoux, J.-L. (1997) *Managing across cultures*. 1st ed. Edinburgh: Prentice Hall.
- Schneider, S. C. and Barsoux, J.-L. (2003) *Managing Across Cultures*. 2nd ed. London: Prentice Hall.
- Schuler, R. S. and Jackson, S. E. (1987) Linking Competitive Strategies with Human Resource Management Practices. *Academy of Management Executive*, **1**(3), 207-219.
- Sels, L. (2002) 'More is not necessarily better': the relationship between the quantity and quality of training efforts. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **13**(8), 1279-1298.
- Senge, P., Roberts, C., Ross, R., Smith, B., Roth, G. and Kleiner, A. (1999) *The dance of change: The challenges to sustaining momentum in a learning organization*. 1st ed. New York: Random House.
- Senge, P. M. (1990) *The fifth discipline*. 1st ed. London: Random House.
- Shaw, I. F. (1999) *Qualitative evaluation*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Sidel, M. (2003) *Understanding foreign donor support for legal reform in socialist transitional states: The changing nature and continuing dilemmas of legal reform assistance in Vietnam*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Singh, K. (2003) Strategic HR orientation and firm performance in India. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **14**(4), 530-543.
- Sloman, M. (2004) Learning evaluation, or not? *T + D*, **58**(9), 45.
- Spilsbury, M. (1995) *Measuring the effectiveness of training*. Brighton: The Institute for Employment Studies.
- Stake, R. E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Stewart, J. (1999) *Employee Development Practice*. 1st ed. London: Pitman Publishing.
- Stiglitz, J. (1993) Market socialism and neoclassical economics. In Bardhan, P. K. and Roemer, J. E. (eds) *Market socialism: the current debate*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 21-41.
- Stiglitz, J. (2002) *Globalization and its discontents*. 1st ed. London: Penguin Books.
- Stocking, B. (2005) Valley Firms Start to Help Vietnam Join Tech World: Software Industry Blossoms in South. *Mercury News*. 22 April 2005.
- Stokking, K. M. (1996) Levels of evaluation: Kirkpatrick, Kaufman and Keller, and beyond. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **7**(2), 179-183.
- Storey, D. J. (2004) Exploring the link, among small firms, between management training and firm performance: a comparison between the UK and other

- OECD countries. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **15**(1), 112-130.
- Storey, D. J. and Westhead, P. (1997) Management Training in Small Firms: A Case of Market Failure? *Human Resource Management Journal*, **7**(2), 61-71.
- Subedi, S. B. (2004) Emerging Trends of Research on Transfer of Learning. *International Education Journal*, **5**(4), 591-599.
- Suliman, A. M. T. (2001) Work performance: is it one thing or many things? The multidimensionality of performance in a Middle Eastern context. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **12**(6), 1049-1061.
- Tamkin, P., Yarnall, J. and Kerrin, M. (2002) *Kirkpatrick and beyond: a review of models of training evaluation*. Brighton: The Institute for Employment Studies.
- Tan, J. A., Hall, R. J. and Boyce, C. (2003) The role of employee reactions in predicting training effectiveness. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **14**(4), 397.
- Taylor, M. C. (2000) Partners in the Transfer of Learning: A Qualitative Study of Workplace Literacy Programs. In: *Adult Education Research Conference*. Vancouver University of British Columbia.
- Tennant, C., Boonkrong, M. and Roberts, P. A. B. (2002) The design of a training programme measurement model. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, **26**(5), 230-240.
- Thayer, C. A. (2000) Vietnam, the Asian Financial Crisis and Doi Moi 2. *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, **4**(1).
- Tran, T. (2001) Vietnamese Gradualism in Reforms of the State-Owned Enterprises. *Vietnam's Socio-economic Development: A Social Science Review*, **Summer**(26), 3-23.
- Trang, N. (2003) *Unemployment rate highest in Red river delta* [online]. Available from: <http://vnexpress.net/Vietnam/Xa-hoi/2003/10/3B9CCD28/>. [Accessed 23 August 2004].
- Truong, L.-A. (2003) Change Process in Growing SMEs in Vietnam and a Human Resource Approach to Organizational Restructuring. In: *The Seventh International Conference on Global Business and Economic Development*. Bangkok, Thailand
- Truong, Q. and Le, T. C. (2004) HRM in Vietnam. In Budhwar (eds) *Managing Human Resources in Asia-Pacific*. London: Routledge, pp. 173-200.
- Truong, Q. and Le, T. C. (2005) Human Resource Management Practices in a Transitional Economy: A Comparative Study of Enterprise Ownership Forms in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, **11**(1), 25-47.
- Tyler, K. (2003) Beat the clock. *HRMagazine*, **48**(11), 103.
- Tyson, S. and Fell, A. (1995) A focus on skills, not organisations. *People Management*, **1**(21), 42.
- Ulrich, D. (1997) *Human resource champions: the next agenda for adding value and delivering results*. 1st ed. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

- UNDP (2001) *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Programme.
- VCCI. (2004) *SMEs fact sheet* [online]. Available from: <http://www.sme.com.vn/SMEfactsheet.htm>. [Accessed April 8 2005].
- Vinatex, R. (2006) *Khai truong trung tam dao tao nhan luc det may* [online]. Available from: <http://www.vnagency.com.vn/TrangChu/VN/tabid/58/itemid/114966/Default.aspx>. [Accessed Jun 1 2007].
- Vita, E. D. (2004) Training a la mode. *Management today*, (Jan. 2004).
- VNA. (2005) *Ho Chi Minh City's economy grows steadily* [online]. Available from: http://www.vnanet.vn/newsa.asp?LANGUAGE_ID=2&CATEGORY_ID=30&NEWS_ID=147305. [Accessed June 13 2005].
- VNEconomy. (2005) *Buc xuc lao dong nganh det may: Chat luong dao tao, nang suat lao dong thap* [online]. Available from: <http://www.moi.gov.vn/News/detail.asp?Sub=51&id=11780>. [Accessed 18 Sep 2007].
- Vo, L. D. (2004) Vietnam's Economic Renovation along Socialist-Oriented Market Economy. In: *International Policy Conference on Transition Economies*. Hanoi, Vietnam
- Vu, U. (2004) Numbers-cruncher makes impact on training culture at TD. *Canadian HR Reporter*, **17**(13), 1.
- Wang, Z. K. (1996) Integrating Transition Economies into the Global Economy. In *World Development Report 1996: From Plan to Market*. New York: World Bank.
- Warner, M. (2000) Introduction: the Asia-Pacific HRM model revisited. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **11**(2), 171-182.
- Warner, M. (2002) Globalization, labour markets and human resources in Asia-Pacific economies: an overview. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **13**(3), 384-398.
- Warner, M. (Ed.) (2003) *Culture and Management in Asia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Warner, M., Edwards, V., Polonsky, G., Pucko, D. and Zhu, Y. (2005) *Management in Transitional Economies: from the Berlin Wall to the Great Wall of China*. 1st ed. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Warner, M. and Joynt, P. (Eds.) (2002) *Managing Across Culture: Issues and Perspectives*. London: Thomson Learning.
- Warr, P., Allan, C. and Birdi, K. (1999) Predicting three levels of training outcome. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, **72**, 351-375.
- Warr, P., Bird, M. W. and Rackham, N. (1970) *Evaluation of Management Training*. 1st ed. London: Gower Press.
- Warr, P. and Bunce, D. (1995) Trainee Characteristics and the Outcomes of Open Learning. *Personnel Psychology*, **48**(2), 347-375.
- Wattanaputtipaisan, T. (2003) ASEAN-China Free Trade Area: Advantages,

- challenges, and implications for the newer ASEAN member countries. *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, **20**(1), 31.
- Watts, M. J. (1998) Recombinant capitalism. In Pickles, J. and Smith, A. (eds) *Theorising transition*. Routledge, pp. 450-505.
- WB (1991) *World Development Report*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- WB (1993) *Transition to the Market*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- WB (1996) *World Development Report*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- WB (1997) *Annual Report*. New York: World Bank.
- Weiss, C. H. (1972) *Evaluation research: Methods of Assessing Program Effectiveness*. 1st ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- West, J. (2003) Show me the value. *Training*, 40(8). 62.
- Westhead, P. and Storey, D. J. (1999) Management Training and Small Firm Performance: Why is the Link So Weak? *International Small Business Journal*, **14**(4), 13-24.
- Williams, M. (2000) *The war for talent: Getting the best from the best*. 1st ed. London: CIPD.
- Williams, M. C. (1992) *Vietnam at the crossroads*. 1st ed. London: Pinter Publishers
The Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Woodall, J. and Winstanley, D. (1998) *Management development: Strategy and practice*. 1st ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wright, P. M., Gardner, T. M. and Moynihan, L. M. (2003) The impact of HR practices on the performance of business units. *Human Resource Management Journal*, **13**(3), 21-36.
- Yamhill, S. and McLean, G. N. (2001) Theories supporting transfer of training. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, **12**(2), 195-208.
- Yin, R. K. (1993) *Applications of case study research*. 1st ed. London: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (1998) The abridged version of case study research: design and method. In Bickman, L. and Rog, D. J. (eds) *Handbook of applied social research methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 229.
- Zanko, M. (2003) Change and diversity: HRM issues and trends in the Asia-Pacific region. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, **41**(1), 75-87.
- Zhu, Y. (2002) Economic Reform and Human Resource Management in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, **8**(3), 115-134.
- Zhu, Y. (2003) Culture and Management in Vietnam. In Warner, M. (eds) *Culture and Management in Asia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 249-263.
- Zhu, Y. and Fahey, S. (1999) The impact of economic reform in industrial labour relations in China and Vietnam. *Post-Communist Economies*, **11**(2), 173.