Training Transfer in the Public Service: A Critical Review of the Factors Shaping Workplace Application Among PSTI-Trained Civil Servants in Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Training creates value only when employees apply what they learn after returning to work. This paper critically reviews the factors that facilitate or constrain the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired through public-sector training to the workplace, using the **Ondo State Public Service Training Institute (PSTI), Ilara-Mokin**, as the institutional focus. The article adopts a critical narrative review of peer-reviewed literature on training transfer, public-sector capacity development and Nigerian civil-service training, supplemented by official PSTI information. The review synthesizes evidence across five domains: the conceptualization and measurement of transfer; trainee-related factors; training-design factors; work-environment and organizational-support factors; and Nigerian public-sector evidence. The synthesis shows that successful transfer depends on more than course attendance or learning achievement. Training relevance, opportunity to apply learning, supervisor support, peer support, resources, motivation, feedback, and organizational climate are repeatedly identified as key conditions. Recent Nigerian studies similarly show that training is positively associated with employee competence and performance, but weak implementation, inadequate needs assessment, outdated content and poor post-training support can limit impact. Critically, however, most Nigerian studies measure learning acquisition or general performance rather than directly measured transfer, and evidence from other states cannot be assumed to apply to Ondo State. The paper develops a context-sensitive conceptual framework that explains how training and trainee factors, workplace enabling conditions, and follow-up mechanisms are expected to influence application, maintenance and generalization among PSTI-trained civil servants. It argues that PSTI's effectiveness should be assessed at the behavioural level: whether trained civil servants actually use, sustain and share acquired competencies in their ministries, departments and agencies. It recommends systematic post-training follow-up, supervisor involvement, transfer plans, workplace assignments, digital support and behaviour-based evaluation. The paper concludes that the real return on PSTI manpower development lies not in the number trained but in the degree to which learning becomes improved workplace practice and public service delivery. The framework and propositions developed here provide the conceptual basis for subsequent empirical testing during the PhD fieldwork.

Keywords: training transfer, knowledge transfer, skill transfer, civil servants, PSTI, manpower development

INTRODUCTION

Public organizations invest substantial financial and administrative resources in employee training because they expect learning to improve workplace performance. Yet participation in a training programme does not automatically produce better work. The critical stage occurs after the trainee leaves the classroom, workshop, seminar, or online platform and returns to the job. The central question is whether the knowledge and skills acquired are actually used, maintained and adapted in the workplace. This process is commonly described as training transfer. The issue is particularly important in the public service. Civil servants are expected to translate government policies into programmes, apply regulations, manage public resources, communicate with citizens, use increasingly digital work systems and maintain administrative continuity. Training can strengthen these responsibilities only when people apply newly acquired competencies to real tasks. Where learning

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remains at the level of course attendance or certification, the organization bears the cost of training without receiving the full performance benefit.

The PhD proposal from which this article is derived identifies training transfer as a central mechanism in the effectiveness of manpower development. It treats transfer as the application and continued use of knowledge, skills, and behaviours acquired during PSTI training in the participant's actual workplace. This emphasis aligns with the classic transfer model of Baldwin and Ford (1988), which conceptualizes transfer as generalizing learned material to the job and maintaining that learning over time. Recent scholarship confirms that the transfer problem remains relevant. Hamzah et al. (2025), in a systematic scoping review of soft-skills transfer, identified a wide range of factors related to capability, opportunity, and motivation that influence whether trained behaviours become established at work. Shukla (2024), reviewing online-training transfer, similarly concluded that transfer is shaped by multiple trainees, training-design, and work-environment factors. More recently, Ardondi et al. (2026) reviewed 45 studies involving more than 24,000 participants and found that tools for evaluating workplace transfer remain heterogeneous, reinforcing the need for clearer and context-sensitive approaches to measuring what employees actually apply after training.

This development is particularly relevant as workplace learning becomes more digital. A 2025 systematic review of workplace e-learning found that transfer research still relies heavily on self-report measures and lacks a common measurement framework (Transfer of Workplace E-learning, 2025). This matters for public institutions such as PSTI because online and self-paced learning now form part of its training portfolio alongside management and executive programmes. In Ondo State, the Public Service Training Institute, Ilara-Mokin, is the major government institution established for systematic human-capacity development. PSTI describes itself as a management-development institute for training middle- and senior-level manpower within and outside the Ondo State Public Service. It reports that hundreds of participants from ministries, departments, and parastatals are trained each year and that its programmes include Graduate Training Programmes, Management Training Programmes, Executive Training Programmes, and online learning options (PSTI, 2026a, 2026b).

PSTI's current training portfolio is directly connected to modern public-service competencies. Its executive programme covers areas such as public-sector leadership and governance, policy and strategic studies, research methodology, communication, financial regulation, ICT and project management, human-resource management, procurement, accounting and budget administration. The Institute also states that its management programmes are tailored to organizational needs (PSTI, 2026b). These programmes create a strong expectation of workplace application. A civil servant trained in project management should be better able to plan and monitor projects; one trained in ICT should use relevant digital tools more effectively; and an officer trained in financial regulation should demonstrate stronger procedural compliance. The true value of the programme therefore depends on behaviour after training, not on training attendance alone.

Recent Nigerian evidence provides reason for optimism but also caution. Anas (2024) found significant positive relationships between public-sector training and employees' knowledge and skill acquisition. Nwokorie (2025), studying the Imo State Civil Service Commission, reported that training content relevance, frequency, and post-training support were significantly related to employee performance. Eze, Mark and Ezeamu (2025) also found that training and development were important to employee performance in selected local governments in Southeast Nigeria. A 2026 study on the Nigerian civil service nevertheless argued that training impact remains constrained by poor implementation, inadequate funding, weak facilities, failure to determine training needs, outdated curricula, and limited feedback mechanisms (Impact of Training on Employees' Performance in Nigerian Civil Service, 2026).

The implication is clear: learning acquisition is necessary but not sufficient. Public servants can leave a programme with improved knowledge and skills yet fail to change their work behaviour because they lack opportunity, resources, supervisor support, or institutional permission to use what they learned. However, the existing Nigerian evidence base has two important limitations. First, most studies measure training participation, learning acquisition, or general employee performance rather than directly measured transfer.

Second, evidence from Imo State, Southeast Nigeria, or the civil service generally cannot be assumed to apply to Ondo State, whose institutional arrangements, funding, job roles, and post-training support may differ.

This article therefore addresses the following research question: **What factors facilitate or constrain the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired through PSTI training to workplace practice in the Ondo State public service, based on the available literature?** Because primary field data have not yet been collected, the question is addressed through a critical narrative review that synthesizes the available evidence and develops a context-sensitive conceptual framework for later testing during the PhD fieldwork. The article does not claim to measure the actual transfer rate among PSTI participants.

Objectives

The broad objective of this article is to critically review the factors that facilitate or constrain the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired by PSTI-trained civil servants to their workplaces. Specifically, the article seeks to:

1. critically examine the concepts and dimensions of training transfer in public-sector organizations;
2. synthesize evidence on trainee characteristics, training design and workplace conditions that facilitate or constrain transfer;
3. evaluate the relevance and limitations of existing Nigerian evidence for understanding training transfer in Ondo State;
4. develop a context-sensitive conceptual framework for examining transfer among PSTI-trained civil servants; and
5. propose evidence-based institutional measures for strengthening transfer and evaluating its contribution to public-service performance.

METHODOLOGY

Review Design and Rationale

This paper adopts a critical narrative review approach. A critical narrative review was chosen because the aim is not to estimate a pooled effect size but to interpret, compare, and synthesize heterogeneous evidence in order to develop a context-sensitive conceptual framework for a specific public-service institution. Narrative review is appropriate where the evidence base spans conceptual, qualitative and quantitative studies using different transfer measures, and where the review's purpose is framework development rather than meta-analysis (Ardondi et al., 2026). The paper is not described as a systematic review because the search and screening procedures below, while documented, were not conducted under a full systematic-review protocol with dual independent screening and formal quality appraisal.

The review draws on the conceptual framework and institutional context developed in the underlying PhD proposal and supplements these with recent peer-reviewed literature and current official PSTI information.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted by the authors using Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and the academic databases available through the authors' institutions. The final search was completed on 12th August,

2026. Search concepts and representative keyword combinations included:

- "Training transfer" AND "public sector"
- "Knowledge transfer" AND "civil service"

- "Workplace application" AND "employee training"
- "Supervisor support" AND "training transfer"
- "Transfer of training" AND "evaluation"
- "Nigeria" AND "public service training"

Priority was given to studies published between 2023 and 2026, while foundational works (for example, Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016) were retained where they remain central to training-transfer theory. Reference lists of included reviews were hand-searched for additional relevant studies.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed empirical or conceptual publications, or authoritative systematic/scoping reviews, addressing training transfer, training evaluation or public-sector capacity development. Official PSTI documents and webpages were included as sources of institutional facts only. Studies were excluded if they addressed only general training participation without any reference to learning application or transfer, if they were non-peer-reviewed opinion pieces, or if they were not available in English. Empirical studies were distinguished from conceptual articles and institutional information throughout the synthesis.

Evidence Extraction and Critical Synthesis

Each included study was recorded in a literature matrix capturing author, year, setting, research design, sample, transfer measures, major findings, limitations, and relevance to PSTI. The synthesis compares studies directly rather than merely summarizing them: it identifies where findings converge, where they diverge, which measurement approaches were used, and what methodological weaknesses limit the strength of conclusions. A compact evidence-synthesis table (Table 1) presents the results of this process.

Limitations of the Review

This narrative review has several limitations. It may be affected by publication bias, selective source inclusion, and limited access to unpublished or non-indexed studies. The included studies use heterogeneous transfer measures, which limits direct comparability. Much of the Nigerian evidence measures learning acquisition or general performance rather than directly measured transfer. Institutional claims about PSTI rely on the Institute's own published information and could not be independently verified against annual reports or programme-evaluation data, which were not publicly available. The framework developed here therefore represents propositions to be tested, not findings established by this review.

Conceptualizing Training Transfer

Training transfer refers to the extent to which learning acquired in a training setting is applied, generalized, and maintained in the work environment. Baldwin and Ford's (1988) formulation remains influential because it distinguishes between initial learning and subsequent application. An employee may score well during training yet demonstrate little transfer if the learning is not used after returning to work.

Transfer has at least three practical dimensions. The first is **application**: whether the employee uses acquired knowledge or skills when relevant tasks arise. The second is **maintenance**: whether the new behaviour continues over time rather than disappearing after the initial post-training period. The third is **generalization**: whether the trainee can adapt learning to situations that differ from the examples used during training.

For PSTI-trained civil servants, these dimensions can be expressed behaviourally. Application may involve using a newly learned procedure, digital tool, analytical method, or leadership technique. Maintenance means that the improved practice remains part of the employee's routine. Generalization means that the officer can

apply the knowledge to new cases, departments, projects or policy problems rather than simply reproduce a classroom example.

Ardondi et al. (2026) distinguish between instruments that assess transfer outcomes directly and instruments that assess factors enabling or hindering transfer. Their systematic scoping review found substantial variation in how transfer is evaluated. This is important for the present study because a meaningful PSTI evaluation should measure both actual application and the conditions that make application possible. Transfer also differs from satisfaction and from organizational results. A participant may enjoy a programme but fail to use its content. Conversely, a demanding course may receive mixed immediate reactions but lead to meaningful behavioural change. This distinction aligns with Kirkpatrick's model, where reaction, learning, behaviour, and results are separate evaluation levels (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). For the research question considered here, behaviour is the central level because it captures workplace application; improved organizational results require separate evidence and cannot be inferred directly from transfer.

Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework

Baldwin and Ford's Training Transfer Model

Baldwin and Ford (1988) propose that transfer is influenced by three broad sets of factors: trainee characteristics, training design and the work environment. These factors affect both the acquisition of learning and its retention and generalization to the job. The model remains relevant because it prevents organizations from attributing transfer failure solely to the employee.

Trainee characteristics include motivation, ability, self-efficacy and readiness to learn. Training design includes content relevance, instructional methods, practice, feedback and similarity between the learning environment and the workplace. Work-environment factors include supervisor support, peer support, opportunity to use new skills, and organizational climate. Applied to PSTI, the model suggests that transfer will be strongest when the participant is motivated and capable, when the program is closely connected to actual civil-service duties, and when the ministry or agency provides support and opportunities to apply the learning. In this article, Baldwin and Ford's model serves as the principal explanatory theory: it specifies the independent factors (trainee characteristics, training design, work environment) and the transfer outcomes (generalization and maintenance) that the review examines.

Kirkpatrick's Behaviour Level as an Evaluation Perspective

Kirkpatrick's four-level model provides a complementary evaluation perspective rather than a competing explanation. Reaction asks whether participants valued the programme; learning asks what they acquired; behaviour asks whether they use it; and results ask whether the changed behaviour produces organizational outcomes (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). The behaviour level is used here as the evaluation lens for defining and measuring transfer outcomes, while Baldwin and Ford's model explains why those outcomes vary. Evidence that a civil servant learned a new method does not answer whether it is used in practice. Measuring transfer therefore requires indicators such as frequency of application, change in work method, sharing of knowledge, sustained use and supervisor-observed behavioural improvement. Recent evaluation literature continues to note that behaviour and organizational results are less frequently measured than immediate learning outcomes, which justifies a PSTI-focused review centered explicitly on workplace application.

Integrating the Theories into a Coherent Analytical Framework

The two theories are integrated as follows. Baldwin and Ford's model supplies the **explanatory structure**:

trainee characteristics, training design and work-environment factors are the independent variables expected to influence transfer. Kirkpatrick's behaviour level supplies the **outcome definition and measurement logic**: transfer is operationalized as application, maintenance and generalization of behaviour in the workplace. Organizational results (Kirkpatrick's fourth level) are treated as a separate, downstream outcome that requires independent evidence and is not assumed to follow automatically from transfer.

This integration yields the context-sensitive conceptual framework presented in Section 8. The framework specifies the expected relationships as propositions to be tested empirically, not as findings established by this review. It advances understanding beyond a straightforward application of Baldwin and Ford's model in three ways: (a) it treats opportunity to perform and resource availability as structural conditions distinct from motivational factors; (b) it embeds post-training follow-up and feedback as a reinforcing mechanism linking training design to maintenance; and (c) it separates transfer outcomes from organizational results, preventing the common inferential error of attributing performance improvement to training without evidence of application.

Factors Affecting Transfer of Knowledge and Skills

Training Relevance and Job Alignment

Training transfer begins with relevance. Employees are more likely to apply learning when the content addresses real tasks, problems, and responsibilities. When a programme is poorly matched to the participant's duties, the employee may understand the material but have little opportunity or reason to use it.

PSTI states that its management programmes can be tailored to organizational needs (PSTI, 2026b). This is an important institutional strength because transfer is more likely when content is connected to the operational realities of ministries and agencies. However, tailoring must be supported by systematic needs assessment and appropriate participant selection. The evidence on relevance is consistent across studies: Nwokorie (2025) found content relevance significantly related to performance, and Shukla's (2024) review identified training-design factors, including content relevance, as central to transfer. What remains less clear is how relevance is determined in practice in Nigerian public institutions, where needs assessment is often weak (Impact of Training on Employees' Performance in Nigerian Civil Service, 2026).

Motivation and Self-Efficacy

Employees must also believe that the new behaviour is useful and that they are capable of performing it. Motivation to transfer is influenced by expected benefits, confidence, recognition, and the perceived value of change. A participant who believes that a new method will improve work and be supported by management is more likely to attempt transfer.

Hamzah et al. (2025) integrate capability, opportunity and motivation within their COMPASS framework for soft-skills transfer. Their review of 91 eligible studies identified numerous behavioural and contextual factors that influence whether trained skills 'stick' in practice. The framework reinforces the idea that motivation is not an isolated personal trait; it is shaped by organizational cues and the opportunities employees perceive. This convergence between Hamzah et al. (2025) and Baldwin and Ford's trainee-characteristics dimension strengthens the case for treating motivation as a modifiable organizational variable rather than a fixed personal attribute.

Supervisor and Peer Support

Supervisor support is repeatedly identified as one of the strongest workplace conditions for transfer. Supervisors can encourage application, provide feedback, assign relevant tasks, and protect time for practice. They can also block transfer by insisting on old procedures, discouraging experimentation or failing to provide needed resources. Peer support matters because work is often interdependent. Colleagues can reinforce new methods, exchange knowledge and create informal accountability. Conversely, employees may abandon new practices if colleagues ridicule them or if the work unit collectively resists change. In the Ondo State context, supervisor involvement should ideally begin before training. Supervisors should help identify needs, clarify expected post-training behaviour and discuss application plans with the participant after training. It should be noted, however, that the strength of evidence for supervisor support derives largely from studies in sectors and countries with different supervisory structures; its operation in Ondo State ministries and agencies requires empirical verification.

Opportunity to Perform

Transfer cannot occur when the job does not provide an opportunity to use what was learned. An officer trained in a specialized software application will show little observable transfer if the software is unavailable. Similarly, leadership or project-management training may not be applied where the employee has no relevant responsibility. Opportunity to perform is therefore a structural condition rather than a matter of motivation alone. PSTI and participating ministries should consider whether trainees will return to roles in which the competencies can be practiced. This is particularly important when training is tied to promotion, new technology or specific reform initiatives. Hamzah et al. (2025) similarly identify opportunity as a distinct determinant alongside capability and motivation, supporting its treatment here as a structural rather than attitudinal factor.

Resources, Technology and Organizational Climate

Many public-sector competencies depend on access to equipment, information and procedural authority. Digital skills require functioning devices, connectivity and system access. Data-analysis skills require data. Modern management practices require room for delegated decision-making and feedback.

Recent Nigerian civil-service evidence continues to identify inadequate facilities, poor funding, outdated curricula and weak implementation as constraints on the performance effects of training (Impact of Training on Employees' Performance in Nigerian Civil Service, 2026). These barriers can also be understood as transfer barriers: they prevent acquired competence from becoming routine practice. Organizational climate is broader than material resources. A learning-supportive climate values experimentation, constructive feedback and knowledge sharing. A rigid climate may discourage the application of new methods even where individual motivation and supervisor support are present.

Follow-Up, Feedback and Reinforcement

Transfer is more likely when learning is reinforced after the programme. Follow-up activities can include coaching, refresher sessions, peer-learning groups, assignments, digital reminders, communities of practice and supervisor review.

Ardondi et al. (2026) highlight the diversity of transfer-evaluation tools and the need for robust measurement. For PSTI, follow-up should therefore include both support and evaluation. A three-month or six-month transfer check can ask what has been applied, what barriers remain, and what organizational changes are needed. Nwokorie (2025) found post-training support significantly related to performance, providing direct Nigerian evidence for this mechanism. Post-training follow-up also improves accountability. It moves the emphasis from 'attendance completed' to 'application demonstrated' and creates information that can be used to improve future programmes.

Recent Empirical Evidence: A Critical Synthesis

Evidence from Nigeria

Recent Nigerian evidence broadly supports the relationship between well-designed training, transfer conditions and employee performance, but the strength and directness of that evidence vary considerably. **Anas (2024)** found that training in the Nigerian public sector was significantly associated with both knowledge and skill acquisition. This confirms that learning outcomes can be generated through public-sector training, but acquisition is the first stage rather than the outcome of interest. The study measures learning (Kirkpatrick level 2), not behaviour (level 3), and therefore cannot establish transfer.

Nwokorie (2025) examined training and development in the Imo State Civil Service Commission and reported significant effects for training content relevance, training frequency and post-training support on employee performance. The inclusion of post-training support is especially relevant because it acknowledges that the workplace environment continues to shape outcomes after the programme ends. However, performance was

measured through employee self-report rather than supervisor observation or administrative records, and the single-state setting limits generalizability to Ondo State.

Eze, Mark and Ezeamu (2025) examined training and development in selected local governments in Southeast Nigeria and concluded that training contributes to employee performance improvement. Their findings support the wider public-sector case for capacity development, although the study measures general performance rather than sustained workplace transfer. Local government settings also differ from state-level ministries and agencies in funding, structure, and job roles.

A **2026 Nigerian civil-service study** reported that effective training is important to employee performance but identified weak implementation, inadequate funding, insufficient facilities, failure to determine training needs, and outdated curricula as major limitations (Impact of Training on Employees' Performance in Nigerian Civil Service, 2026). These findings show that the question is not whether training has potential value but whether the full training system supports relevant learning and application. The study is cited by journal and year because its author details were not available at the time of writing and require verification before submission.

Taken together, the Nigerian studies converge on the importance of relevance and post-training support, but they diverge in setting, measurement approach, and outcome definition. Critically, **none directly measures transfer** among a defined cohort of trainees using supervisor ratings or workplace evidence. This is the principal gap that the present article addresses conceptually and that the forthcoming fieldwork will address empirically. Moreover, none of the studies was conducted in Ondo State; contextual differences in funding, organizational structure, job roles, and post-training support mean their findings require local verification rather than direct extrapolation.

Evidence from International Reviews

International research adds further detail and, in some respects, greater methodological rigour. **Hamzah et al. (2025)** found that soft-skills transfer is influenced by a complex set of capability, opportunity and motivation factors, synthesizing 91 studies into an integrated behavioural-science framework. **Shukla (2024)** similarly identified a broad taxonomy of factors affecting transfer of online training, distinguishing trainee, design, and environmental categories. The **2025 systematic review of workplace e-learning** found persistent measurement problems and heavy reliance on self-reports (Transfer of Workplace E-learning, 2025).

Ardondi et al. (2026) provide the most recent broad synthesis considered in this article. Their review of 45 studies involving more than 24,000 participants identified standalone, composite, and tailored instruments for transfer evaluation and highlighted the Learning Transfer System Inventory as a widely used tool. Their findings suggest that a PSTI transfer instrument should measure not only application but also facilitators and barriers. The convergence of these international reviews on multi-level determinants strengthens confidence in the Baldwin and Ford framework, while their shared finding of measurement heterogeneity signals that the PSTI framework must specify indicators carefully rather than rely on a single global transfer measure.

Summary of Evidence Synthesis

Table 1. Evidence synthesis by domain

Evidence domain	Key sources	What the evidence establishes	Principal limitation	Relevance to Ondo State
Training design and relevance	Nwokorie (2025); Shukla (2024); Anas (2024)	Relevance, practice, and feedback are consistently associated with learning and performance	Measures mostly learning or self-reported performance, not observed transfer	Relevance mechanisms likely similar, but needs-assessment practice requires local verification
Trainee factors	Hamzah et al. (2025); Baldwin & Ford (1988)	Motivation, readiness and self-efficacy relate to application	Largely synthesized from non-African settings	Requires empirical testing among PSTI trainees
Workplace	Hamzah et al.	Supervisor, peer, and	Supervisor support	Supervisory structures

support	(2025); Nwokorie (2025); Ardondi et al. (2026)	climate factors shape transfer	rarely measured from supervisor perspective	in Ondo State MDAs require local study
Structural conditions	Impact of Training (2026); Hamzah et al. (2025)	Resources, authority and opportunity constrain application	Evidence largely descriptive and national-level	Funding and facilities constraints likely present but unquantified locally
Transfer measurement	Ardondi et al. (2026); Transfer of Workplace E-learning (2025)	Instruments are heterogeneous; self-report dominates	No validated Nigerian public-sector instrument identified	Supports development of a PSTI-specific instrument
Nigerian public service	Anas (2024); Nwokorie (2025); Eze et al. (2025); Impact of Training (2026)	Training is positively associated with competence and performance; implementation weaknesses limit impact	None directly measures transfer; none conducted in Ondo State	Findings are indicative, not transferable; local fieldwork required

A Context-Sensitive Conceptual Framework for PSTI Transfer

Drawing on the synthesis above, this article proposes a conceptual framework that explains how training transfer might operate in the Ondo State public service. The framework is presented as a set of propositions to be examined in the forthcoming fieldwork, not as findings established by this review.

Figure 1 (described in text). Framework for examining training transfer among PSTI-trained civil servants

Component 1: Training and trainee factors
Job relevance · Training design · Motivation · Self-efficacy · Readiness to learn

Component 2: Workplace enabling conditions
Supervisor support · Peer support · Opportunity to perform · Resources · Organizational climate · Feedback

Component 3: Training-transfer outcomes
Application · Maintenance · Generalization

Component 4: Potential organizational implications
Improved work practices · Administrative efficiency · Service quality · Knowledge sharing

The framework makes three analytical claims. First, **transfer is the immediate outcome of interest**: knowledge and skills must be used and sustained in relevant workplace situations before improved organisational performance can reasonably be attributed to training. Second, **the workplace context may enable or constrain transfer**: a motivated employee may still be unable to apply new skills if the necessary tools, authority, time or job assignments are unavailable. Third, **organizational outcomes require separate evidence**: better transfer does not automatically prove improved service delivery, and administrative records, performance indicators or independent evaluations would be needed to substantiate such effects.

The framework advances understanding beyond a straightforward application of Baldwin and Ford's model by distinguishing structural conditions (opportunity, resources) from attitudinal ones (motivation, self-efficacy), by positioning follow-up and feedback as a reinforcing mechanism that links training design to maintenance, and by explicitly separating transfer from organizational results.

Propositions for Empirical Testing

- **P1:** Programmes whose content is closely aligned with participants' job tasks will show higher application than programmes selected without systematic needs assessment.

- **P2:** Supervisor support and opportunity to perform will be positively associated with maintenance of learned behaviour at three and six months.
- **P3:** Resource availability will moderate the relationship between motivation and application, such that motivated employees without resources will show lower transfer.
- **P4:** Participants who complete a written post-training application plan with their supervisor will demonstrate higher application and knowledge sharing than those who do not.
- **P5:** Transfer outcomes (application, maintenance, generalization) will be empirically distinguishable from organizational results and should be measured separately.

PSTI and the Transfer Question in Ondo State

PSTI's institutional mandate makes training transfer a particularly appropriate performance question. The Institute was established to strengthen human capacity in the Ondo State Public Service and states that its programmes are designed to develop human-resource potential. It offers more than one hundred courses across graduate, management and executive categories and now includes online and self-paced learning options (PSTI, 2026a, 2026b). These institutional descriptions are drawn from PSTI's own published information; they establish the Institute's stated mandate and portfolio but do not independently demonstrate programme effectiveness. Official annual reports, training statistics or programme-evaluation reports would be needed to substantiate outcome claims, and these were not publicly available at the time of writing.

The diversity of programmes means that transfer should be evaluated in relation to the specific competence taught. A generic question such as 'Did the training improve your performance?' may be too broad. A stronger approach asks what the participant learned, where the learning has been used, how frequently it is used, whether the behaviour has continued, and what evidence demonstrates change. For management programmes, possible transfer indicators include better planning, delegation, communication, decision-making and supervision. For ICT programmes, indicators may include use of software, digital communication, data management and reduced processing time. For financial and procurement programmes, transfer may be reflected in improved compliance, documentation and accuracy.

PSTI's current institutional information also indicates a move toward organizationally tailored programmes (PSTI, 2026b). This creates an opportunity to embed transfer requirements directly into course design. Each participant could complete a pre-training statement of need and a post-training workplace application plan, agreed with the supervisor. The extent of actual transfer among PSTI-trained civil servants cannot be stated responsibly until field data are collected. However, the literature strongly suggests that transfer is likely to vary across participants and agencies depending on programme relevance, opportunity to apply, supervisor support, resources and organizational climate. Therefore, the defensible answer to the research question at this stage is not a single percentage but a framework of measurable transfer dimensions that can be empirically tested.

DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed in this article leads to a central conclusion: the effectiveness of public-sector training should be judged at the point where learning becomes workplace behaviour. This distinction is critical for PSTI. The Institute may provide high-quality programmes, and participants may acquire knowledge and skills, but the public service receives the full return on investment only when those competencies are used consistently in work. The evidence also challenges the assumption that transfer is primarily the trainee's responsibility. Baldwin and Ford's framework, recent systematic reviews and current public-sector studies all point to a multi-level process. Individual motivation matters, but transfer is equally shaped by relevance, opportunity, leadership and resources. Consequently, low transfer should not automatically be interpreted as employee unwillingness.

What does this synthesis add to existing knowledge? Three contributions stand out. First, the review demonstrates that the Nigerian evidence base, while supportive of training's value, has not yet directly

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measured transfer among a defined trainee cohort; the framework developed here specifies how that gap can be closed. Second, the framework distinguishes structural conditions from motivational ones, which has practical consequences: interventions to raise motivation will fail where opportunity and resources are absent, and vice versa. Third, the review separates transfer from organizational results, cautioning against the common policy inference that training automatically improves service delivery. For Ondo State, this has practical implications for the relationship between PSTI and ministries, departments and agencies. Training institutions control curriculum, facilitation and learning design, but ministries control work assignments, supervision, equipment and procedures. Sustainable transfer therefore requires shared responsibility. PSTI cannot guarantee application without workplace support, while ministries cannot expect behavioural change from irrelevant or poorly designed training.

A second implication concerns evaluation. Immediate post-course questionnaires may capture participant reaction but provide weak evidence of behavioural transfer. Evaluation should be delayed long enough for participants to encounter relevant work situations. Three-month and six-month follow-ups can assess frequency of application, persistence, barriers, and supervisor-observed change. A third implication concerns knowledge sharing. Transfer should not be limited to individual application. Civil servants who attend specialized programmes can serve as internal knowledge multipliers. Short departmental debriefings, learning notes or peer sessions can diffuse acquired knowledge and increase the organizational return from a single training place.

A fourth implication is methodological. Because self-report transfer measures may be affected by social desirability and recall bias, the PhD fieldwork should combine participant responses with supervisor ratings or administrative indicators where feasible. This is consistent with recent literature calling for stronger and more diverse transfer measurement (Ardondi et al., 2026). Finally, the increasing use of online and self-paced learning adds a new transfer challenge. Digital delivery can widen access, but it does not automatically produce workplace application. The 2025 systematic review of workplace e-learning found substantial variation in transfer measurement and heavy reliance on self-report (Transfer of Workplace E-learning, 2025). PSTI's online programmes should therefore include deliberate transfer mechanisms such as workplace assignments, reflection logs and supervisor confirmation.

Practical Framework for Strengthening PSTI Training Transfer

Table 2. Transfer actions, responsibilities and evidence by stage

Stage	Transfer action	Responsible actor	Suggested evidence
Before training	Identify job-specific need; agree expected behaviour	PSTI + MDA + supervisor	Needs form; baseline indicator
During training	Use realistic cases, practice and application planning	PSTI/facilitator	Practical task; application plan
Immediately after	Agree first workplace application	Trainee + supervisor	30-day action plan
1–3 months	Provide feedback, resources and opportunity to perform	Supervisor/MDA	Transfer checklist; work sample
3–6 months	Evaluate sustained application and barriers	PSTI + MDA	Trainee survey; supervisor rating
6+ months	Link evidence to programme review and HR planning	PSTI/Head of Service	Outcome report; curriculum update

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are prioritized in order of urgency and feasibility:

1. **PSTI should incorporate a formal transfer plan into every management and executive training programme.** Each participant should identify specific workplace behaviours or tasks to be changed after training, agreed with the supervisor before the programme ends.

2. **Ministries, departments and agencies should involve supervisors in training-needs identification and post-training follow-up** so that programme content and workplace expectations are aligned. This addresses the structural conditions (opportunity and resources) that the review identifies as decisive.
3. **Post-training evaluation should extend beyond participant satisfaction.** PSTI should conduct structured transfer checks approximately three and six months after major programmes, using the indicators specified in the framework.
4. **Supervisors should provide trainees with opportunities to apply acquired skills.** Where transfer requires technology, data, authority or revised procedures, the relevant resources should be addressed as part of the training intervention rather than left to individual initiative.
5. **PSTI should develop a standard training-transfer instrument** covering application, maintenance, generalization, supervisor support, peer support, opportunity to perform and resource availability, drawing on the instrument categories identified by Ardondi et al. (2026).
6. **Participant self-reports should, where feasible, be complemented by supervisor ratings, work samples, performance indicators or evidence of completed post-training projects.**
7. **Knowledge sharing should be institutionalized.** Trained civil servants should be encouraged to brief colleagues, prepare learning notes or lead short internal sessions after specialized programmes.
8. **PSTI should use transfer evidence to review curricula.** Courses with consistently low application should be examined for relevance, participant selection, instructional design or workplace barriers.
9. **Online and self-paced programmes should include workplace assignments and supervisor-supported application tasks** rather than relying solely on completion certificates.
10. **The Ondo State Head of Service should consider linking major capacity-development programmes with competency frameworks, performance management and career-development systems**, so that transfer is reinforced by institutional incentives rather than left to individual discretion.

CONCLUSION

This article critically reviewed the factors that facilitate or constrain the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired by PSTI-trained civil servants to their workplaces, drawing on current training-transfer literature, Nigerian public-sector evidence and the institutional context of PSTI. The evidence shows that training transfer is not a single post-course event but a process involving application, maintenance and generalization of learning. Recent research consistently indicates that transfer is strengthened when training is relevant, employees are motivated and confident, supervisors and peers are supportive, resources are available, and participants have genuine opportunities to use new skills. Conversely, weak needs assessment, outdated content, poor implementation, insufficient facilities and lack of follow-up can reduce the workplace impact of otherwise useful programmes.

The review also establishes an important qualification that the existing Nigerian literature has not adequately addressed: most Nigerian studies measure training participation, learning acquisition or general employee performance rather than directly measured transfer, and none of the studies reviewed was conducted in Ondo State. The evidence is therefore indicative rather than directly transferable. Contextual differences in funding, organizational structure, job roles and post-training support mean that findings from Imo State, Southeast Nigerian local governments or the national civil service cannot be assumed to apply to PSTI-trained civil servants without local verification. For PSTI, the implication is that success should not be measured mainly by the number of civil servants trained. The stronger measure is the proportion and quality of acquired competencies that become sustained workplace practice. A robust transfer system should therefore connect training-needs assessment, programme design, workplace application, supervisor support and delayed evaluation. The conceptual framework developed in this article specifies these connections as testable propositions, distinguishing training and trainee factors, workplace enabling conditions, transfer outcomes and organizational implications, and separating transfer from organizational results so that performance improvements are not attributed to training without evidence of application.

The actual extent of transfer among Ondo State civil servants remains an empirical question to be answered through the forthcoming PhD fieldwork. The present review nevertheless establishes the conceptual basis, relevant indicators, measurement considerations and organizational conditions required for that assessment. In this sense, it provides both a publishable critical analysis and a direct foundation for testing the research propositions during the main thesis. Future research should prioritize direct, multi-source measurement of transfer—combining participant self-reports with supervisor ratings, work samples, and administrative indicators—among a defined cohort of PSTI trainees, and should examine how structural conditions such as resources and opportunity to perform moderate the relationship between motivation and application in the Ondo State context.

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