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Lisa Kaslon

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lkaslon2@unl.edu

Nathan W. Conner

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, nconner2@unl.edu

Gina Matkin

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, gmatkin1@unl.edu

Mark Balschweid

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, mbalschweid2@unl.edu

Chuck Hibberd

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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A Case Study on the Transfer of Training as Influenced by Perceptions of Self-Leadership by Extension Professionals

**Lisa Kaslon
Nathan Conner
Gina Matkin
Mark Balschweid
Chuck Hibberd**

University of Nebraska –Lincoln

Employee potential and development are critical, and training has been identified as a way to create high-performing work cultures and high-potential employees. The purpose of this study was to understand how Extension employees perceive their self-leadership as impacting their transfer of training after they participate in professional development. The study aims to answer the following research question, “How do Extension professionals describe their experiences of transfer of training as influenced by their perceptions of their self-leadership? The methodological approach used for this research was the case study. Data collection methods included a questionnaire, interviews, and document review. A semi-structured interview protocol was used, and explanation building was used for this purpose. Through the coding of data, three themes and 12 subthemes emerged. Findings revealed that while they were specifically not aware of the strategies of self-leadership, participants did use some of the strategies naturally, found success when using the strategies as they related to transfer, and firmly believe Extension faculty need to learn more about self-leadership and the strategies to support transfer and their overall role.

Keywords: Extension, transfer-of-training, self-leadership, professional development

Introduction

Employee potential and development are critical, and training has been identified as a way to create high-performing work cultures and high-potential employees (Sung & Choi, 2014). A high-performance human resource practice has consistently been employee training (Combs et al., 2006). Bhatti and Kaur (2009) stated that training is the most common form of human resource development and increases workforce effectiveness and productivity. According to Beer et al. (2016), over \$356 billion is invested worldwide in employee training programs each year, and training has been identified as a factor in organizational success globally (Zahra et al., 2014). According to Shrivastava (1983), employee training is not only about acquiring new knowledge but also about updating, revising, and meeting the future needs of employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, and habits.

While training is important, training programs are only effective to the extent to which skills and behaviors learned and practiced are transferred to the workplace (Chiaburu & Lindsay (2008). Transfer of skills to the workplace is called transfer of training and is key to the continued efforts to develop employees (Chiaburu & Lindsay, 2008). Grossman and Salas (2011) report that organizations struggle to identify factors that are critical to transfer, and Blume et al. (2010) concluded that there “are no magic bullets for leveraging transfer” (p. 1096).

To remain successful, Extension must attract, develop, motivate, and retain successful educators who will make a difference (Garst et al., 2007; Maddy et al., 2002). The success of employees and the organization depends on how quickly learning from training transfers to the workplace and employees’ practice (Baldwin et al., 2017). The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy recommended that Extension adapt and improve the quality and skills of Extension professionals to transform Extension (ECOP, 2002, 2010). Additionally, knowledge and human capital are increasingly important elements of an organization’s competitive advantage (Gorman et al., 2004).

Theoretical Framework

Leadership theories and research have spent a great deal of time focused on how leaders influence followers (Stewart et al., 2011). However, a specific perspective, self-leadership, was introduced over 40 years ago (Manz & Sims, 1980), focusing on how people lead themselves. The exploration of self-leadership opened new ways of thinking about informal leadership (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003) and how, in organizations, individuals can be empowered to make their own decisions about tasks and implementation of the tasks (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Self-leadership suggests that people control themselves, their actions, and their behaviors (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Stewart et al., 2011). Manz (1992) stated that self-leadership is an influence-related process in which people navigate, motivate, and lead themselves toward achieving desired behaviors and outcomes.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this case study is to understand how Extension employees perceive their self-leadership as impacting their transfer of training after participating in professional development. The research question for this study was “How do Extension professionals describe their experiences of transfer for training as influenced by their perceptions of their self-leadership?”

Methods

The qualitative methodological approach chosen was the case study. Yin (2014) asserted that a case study is preferred when examining contemporary events where the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. In this case study, professional development training for Extension professionals is considered a contemporary event, and even though the training is intended to teach behaviors, the actual behaviors of the participants after the training cannot be

manipulated. This case study assumes a constructivist view and focuses on gathering different perspectives of participants to see how and why their perspectives address the study (Yin, 2014). The epistemological perspective used for this study was an interpretive/constructivist approach (Merriam, 2009). Constructivism suggests that learning is an active process and new concepts are constructed from prior knowledge to give meaning to experiences (Kumar, 2006). Additionally, an interpretive approach is directed at understanding a phenomenon from an individual's perspective (Creswell, 2009). Interpretive methods yield insight and understanding of behavior (Scotland, 2012).

Subjectivity Statement

The lead author has worked in Nebraska Extension for over 20 years and has served as Professional Development Coordinator since 2019. She has also facilitated multiple professional development programs over the years. One of the coauthors currently has an Extension appointment and facilitates professional development for Extension Educators. Another coauthor has extensive experience in leadership development, while one coauthor has served as the Dean of Nebraska Extension. The final coauthor also has experience facilitating professional development within agricultural education.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to allow the researcher to select individuals to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Participants for this study were Nebraska Extension Educators with at least three years of experience as a Nebraska Extension Educator. The years of experience allowed for the time needed for employees to have participated and experienced professional development opportunities.

Data Collection

An open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and document review were used in data collection. Potential participants were emailed an overall synopsis of the study and asked to consider participating by completing the participant interest form using the link in the email. Two reminders were sent, and a link to the consent form was distributed upon agreement to participate. Participants were then sent an email with a link to the questionnaire and given a deadline for participation. Once the deadline passed, ten individuals were randomly chosen from the pool of returned questionnaires to participate further in the case study interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed via Zoom, using Delve online software. The questionnaire allowed for data collection on the Educator's perception of self-leadership, and the interview allowed for further examination in relation to transfer of training.

Data Analysis

Data from all three data collection methods were brought together into what Yin (2014) calls the case study database. Concepts were first identified through open coding by examining the data line by line (Tesch, 1990). The constant comparative method was used for coding to

categorize and compare the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Once the category became clear, axial coding was used to analyze one category at a time.

Trustworthiness

According to Dooley (2007), “Trustworthiness relates to the degree of confidence that the findings of the study represent the respondents and their context” (p. 38). The data were shared with another researcher familiar with the topic to scan the raw data as a peer reviewer to assess whether the findings were reasonable and to check for researcher bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An audit trail with documentation on methodological decisions and reflections was used to ensure the dependability of the findings. In addition, data are traceable back to the original sources, ensuring confirmability and trustworthiness. Triangulation of data was also achieved using multiple data sources and more than one data collection method (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking or respondent validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was also used to assist the researcher with the study’s internal validity and credibility. The transcripts were emailed to the participants for verification of their words and to increase the accuracy of their voices. In addition, notes and interpretations of the interviews were given to participants to review and return to see if their experiences and reality were captured accurately.

Findings

The themes and subthemes that emerged are identified in Table 1 and supported with data in the following paragraphs.

Table 1. Themes and Subthemes

Factors of Successful Transfer of Training	Barriers to Transfer of Training	Self-Leadership Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Putting Training into Action •Direct Application to Them/Key Points •Reminder Items •Required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Time Management •Too Much time, information, opportunity •No Connection/Interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Views of Their Own Self Leadership •Behavior Focused Strategies •Natural Reward Strategies •Constructive Thought Pattern Strategies •Importance of Self-Leadership to Extension Role

Factors of Successful Transfer of Training

One theme that emerged was factors of successful transfer of training. The ideas shared were grouped into subthemes, and the ones that were identified most strongly as factors to success included putting training into action, direct application to their job responsibilities, reminder items, and required training.

Putting Training into Action

The subtheme of putting training into action included several similar ideas shared by participants that were grouped. The ideas included approaching training with a plan, developing a plan for implementation, reflecting, doing follow-up after training, and immediately putting the training into use (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, & P10). When approaching training with a plan, P5 stated,

If you have a plan, then it's easier to make yourself implement it. It really is about taking the time to make a plan, to implement it or go back and revisit it; it's about making the time to follow up.

P7 agreed, "Do the work ahead of time to know what you want to get out of training, really go in with this is what I'm looking for."

Putting training into action for participants also meant having a way to follow up or a plan for implementation after the training. Putting the training into action during or shortly after learning the new information was important (P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, & P10). P5 stated, "I have to start working on it right away. I just dig in and make an implementation plan." P10 agreed, "I am more successful if I can incorporate it into my life right away." P2 compared it to learning other skills and stated, "It's kind of like learning to knit, if you sit down for an hour to learn to knit, that's great, but if you don't continue to knit, it's not." P4 mentioned intention, "I set an intention for what I intend to do this week to put it into practice, then I do it and reflect on it." Additionally, P4 shared that follow-up is helpful:

About a year after the original training, we had a meeting where they gave us some more information, and we talked about how we'd been using it, so there's just been a lot of follow-up to make sure that it stays fresh in our minds.

P3 suggested, "Training has to be important enough that if we attend, it's something we are going to use frequently, not just one time a year."

Participants also highlighted using reflection as a way to put training into action. P10 said, "You schedule out time for the training, so I try to schedule out a half day or day to try and focus on what I learned to implement." P5 stated, "You have to have a high level of self-reflection during training to say, I'm having this awesome experience, but what am I going to do now when I get home to make sure I use this training." Talking to others, using mentors and accountability partners, was also identified as a way to reflect and follow up on training material (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, & P10).

Direct Application

An additional subtheme under factors to successful transfer was the participants finding a direct application or connection to them in the training or training material, including interest and being able to find key points of material to focus on (P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, & P10). P2 stated, "My level of interest is a big motivator in the transfer of knowledge." P8 stated, "I

find what is most real world that I can get out of it, and then I take that and directly apply it.” P5 acknowledged, “I like to visualize how I can take it back and use it.” P7 agreed, “Sometimes it’s very easy to connect the experience to my practice, and sometimes it’s a bit harder.”

Finding or being given the key points to take home from the training was important to several participants (P3, P8, & P9). P9 stated, “Simple points will stick with me more than a huge barrage of information; I want it condensed into something tangible.” P3 agreed: “I want the bullet points of what we need to know because sometimes after two hours, you kind of miss the point.”

Reminder Items

Another subtheme under factors of successful transfer was the use of reminder items. This included anything participants received or could use to help keep the training in front of them and fresh in their minds (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, & P10). A few participants noted that keeping the training materials on their desks is effective, so when they see them, they are reminded of what they learned and can use in their jobs (P2, P7, & P9). P6 mentioned using the “little cards or pieces of information from training” as reminders.

Required Training

Under the factors of successful transfer of training theme, a final subtheme was required training. Participants felt that if training was required for something they needed to know, they were more likely to transfer (P2, P3, P4, P5, & P10). P3 stated, “I didn’t have a choice; I had to do it, and I had to use it.” P5 stated, “I knew I had to pass the test after the training to be certified; it was a powerful way to me to implement what I learned.” P4 talked about having required assignments to do to make the training stick, and P10 stated it helped “when our entire office staff had to do the training, and then we could all share, and everyone knew what we were talking about.”

Barriers to Transfer of Training

Another theme identified by participants surrounded barriers to the transfer of training. Subthemes identified were time management, too much, and no connection to, or interest in, the material.

Time Management

A subtheme identified in multiple ways was time management. Participants identified things like being too busy to implement, not making the time, other circumstances, being overwhelmed, and a lack of setting priorities (P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, & P10). P3 stated, “I went to a conference a couple years ago, and it was life altering, one of the best conferences I have ever been to, and I just haven’t made the time to make the changes that I learned.” P2 stated, “I was doing too many trainings and got too overwhelmed with too much on my plate.” Both P4 and P2 agreed that they were too busy at the time and probably should not

have taken that training then. Several participants agreed they can be so busy that they do not allow themselves the time to really focus.

Too Much

Another subtheme was around the idea of too much. Several items fall into this subtheme, such as too much opportunity, which becomes overwhelming to transfer, too complicated training or material, and training spread over too much time (P3, P4, P7, & P9). P4 stated,

We have a lot of opportunity to attend training, and I know I don't transfer and utilize everything for that reason, in fact, I'll go back and think, what did I even attend. Because there is so much opportunity, we jump in, and then it just gets lost.

P9 said, "If it gets too complicated, then I don't care, and I don't bring it with me." P4 acknowledged, "It didn't work well for me to have training and then have a couple days off because I was busy with other things at the same time, and it was hard to remember the information." P3 discussed that sometimes, when we have conferences, they are so long and there's so much involved that you usually end up missing the information you're supposed to be getting because it's just too much. P7 discussed how being gone for training just sets you behind with your other work, and then what you learned becomes too much to go back and think about.

No Connection

A final subtheme under barriers to transfer of training is participants not seeing the application or connection to the material (P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, & P10). P8 stated, "I like to see it in real life before I can apply it." P4 agreed, "I feel like I wasn't able to remember the information and be able to use it in my work or personal life." P2 stated, "I can go into a training and think this is going to be great, and then one little thing doesn't connect, and I'm like, that was not great." P8 said, "I've had times where nothing really hit home with me during training."

Self-Leadership Understanding

In analyzing data from participants on self-leadership, several subthemes emerged, including their view of self-leadership, their definitions, and their use and non-use of self-leadership strategies in the three areas of behavior-focused, natural rewards, and constructive thought patterns. In addition, the subtheme about the importance of self-leadership to Extension work emerged.

Views of Their Own Self-Leadership

Even with a reference guide to self-leadership and the strategies, the group struggled to think about self-leadership as "self" and often referenced "others" in their explanation. P1 said, "I want to be a mentor and support my coworkers." P3 also related it to mentors, saying, "My mentor got me involved in things that I could take back and use and be successful at." P10

was also thinking about others and stated, “You have to bring them alongside when you’re trying to implement something,” and P1 acknowledged self-leadership as “when people follow me.”

In describing self-leadership, other participants mentioned motivation, empowerment, supported not told, initiative, moving things forward, improvement, choice, growth, reflection, discipline, and passion (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, & P10). P3 stated, “I think you have to be motivated; you can either sit and cry or do something about it.” P10 believes, “We are all in charge of our own leadership.” Similarly, P7 said, “You have to have the willingness and the ideas and the drive to do it.”

Behavior-focused Strategies

Another subtheme under self-leadership was participants’ responses to whether they regularly used any of the behavior-focused strategies of self-leadership. The list of strategies was shared with participants for reference. Behavior-focused strategies aim to increase self-awareness and include self-observation, self-cueing, self-goal setting, self-reward, self-correcting feedback, and practice (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

Participants reported the use of many of the behavior-focused strategies. Self-observation, self-cueing, and self-goal setting were all highlighted, and all participants acknowledged using at least one of the strategies (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, & P10). P8 stated, “Self-observation that’s one I do, I walk through what’s happening, what’s not going right, what is going right, and talk myself through it.” P4 agreed, “I like to think about what went well and what we want to add or how we need change so the messages are clearer.” Additionally, P7 shared an example: “Things that take a lot of thought, I need to do those in the morning, so I’ve been starting to schedule more of my meetings for like after lunch afternoon.” P9 also had an example:

Choosing the things that need to get done off my checklist that I really need to get done today that are important and get focused on those because you can kill an entire day just on email and other things.

P6 stated, “My self-cueing are reminders on the calendar, different colors on the calendar, and really being organized on my calendar because that is key.” P5 stated that “keeping a to-do list and checking it off, and thinking, am I on track to meet that goal or not is something I do.” P4 shared, “I’m a list-maker, and I like to track the things that I’m doing.” Several participants reported that using little cards or pieces of information received at training as a reminder was a form of self-cueing (P2, P6, P7, & P9). P2 stated, “I keep things like training materials on my desk where I can see them” for self-cueing. Self-practice was also identified as being a strategy used, and P4 stated, “Practicing and looking at myself talking and saying the words over and over again, just to feel prepared so that other people really do see me as an expert, and then I understand what questions they might throw at me.” P6 agreed and said, “I would definitely practice before going on TV. I would write out my answers and try to memorize just the key points so that I didn’t sound scripted but remember to touch on the key

points.” Self-goal setting was another strategy. P10 shared, “I have your goals that I am wanting to do so I can measure the success that I’ve had, and I have them in writing,” and P5 suggests,

For self-goal setting, I ask myself am I reaching this goal and am I doing what I said I was going to do or am I going to get to December and say on no, because I didn’t check myself along the way.

In the document review of agendas, behavior strategies were found to be included, and self-goal setting was found in several trainings where participants were asked to set some self-direction for moving forward on training material in the future. Participants reported the use of many of the behavior-focused strategies. Self-observation, self-cueing, and self-goal setting were all highlighted, and all participants acknowledged using at least one of the strategies.

Natural Reward Strategies

Another subtheme under self-leadership was participants’ responses to whether they regularly used any natural intrinsic reward-focused strategies. The strategies were shared with participants for reference. Natural intrinsic reward strategies emphasize the enjoyable aspects of given tasks and activities and are when incentives are built into the task and a person is motivated by them, increasing competence, self-control, and purpose (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

All participants reported using natural intrinsic reward strategies, doing something pleasurable for themselves after completing a task was most highly identified (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, & P10). P9 stated, “I might close my eyes for a few minutes; I might go for a walk and look at the ducks and the geese.” P2 shared, “I get up and go for a walk around the building and move to give my eyes a break, and that helps me refresh and is my internal reward for getting the work done.” P4 agreed, “If I can go for a walk while having a discussion with someone, I feel like it’s a natural reward.” P5 stated, “I feel like I reward myself with extra time off, so it kind of makes me check myself and say, have I gotten my stuff done.”

Another intrinsic reward identified by participants is making their environment pleasurable (P3, P7, & P9). P9 stated, “I like to have a nice working atmosphere; I have all kinds of my wife’s cool artwork hanging in my office.” P3 stated, “My office is full of plants; I enjoy watching them grow, and it’s the environment I have set up in my office that makes me feel good and productive.”

Constructive Thought Pattern Strategies

Another subtheme under self-leadership is the use of constructive thought pattern strategies. The strategies were shared with participants for reference. Constructive thought pattern strategies involve the creation and maintenance of functional patterns of habitual thinking (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

Participants could identify strategies they use, especially for visualization (P2, P6, P8, & P10) and positive self-talk (P1, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, & P10). P2 stated, “I always try to visualize what it’s going to look like and kind of map it out in my mind, for the way I see it, being successful.” Additionally, P8 shared, “Looking to the future and evaluating how we do our jobs. I practice this every day by doing a self-assessment and reflections in my head,” and P6 stated, “I step back and try to incorporate positive self-talk.” When thinking about evaluating belief and assumptions as a strategy, P8 shared, “We hear all sorts of assumptions in our communities; it’s about stopping and taking the time to think through it and understand what’s right and wrong and then process it for yourself, I try to do that.” P10 stated, “My goal is to focus on positive self-talk to direct my energy toward meaningful and impactful outcomes.” P8 agreed, “I can tell you, on a daily basis, I self-talk with myself,” and P4 shared, “I talk positively about information I heard that I want to remember and be able to use later.”

Importance of Self-Leadership to the Extension Role

Another subtheme was the importance of self-leadership to an Extension role. Participants agreed that helping Extension Educators learn more about self-leadership and using the strategies is important to success in the role and could be very beneficial to Extension (P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, & P10). P9 believed, “This would be a great educational topic to do a seminar or something on self-leadership.” P10 supported this and said, “There are a lot of great things that are done in Extension, and then we don’t get the growth from it; maybe this would help. P7 and P9 both made similar statements about how important it is that people can lead themselves in Extension. P6 agreed, “If there’s a way to learn more about best practices and strategies in our trainings, I think it’s key, especially for Extension, I think it’s more important than most jobs.”

Discussion and Conclusions

Factors of successful transfer of training emerged as a theme with several connections to the research around training and transfer of training. Baldwin et al. (2017) expressed that the success of employees and the organization depends on how quickly learning from training goes from theory to practice. The longer the participants waited to implement or use the material from training, the less likely they were to transfer the training to practice. Many participants fully agreed that a key to their success in the transfer was approaching training with a plan, developing a plan for implementation, reflection, doing follow-up after training, and putting the training into use immediately. Without this intentional transfer approach, transfer was questionable. It was clear that having a plan, or even thinking about what you want to learn from attending training, made it much easier for participants to implement what they had learned. Aquinis and Kraiger (2009) indicated that training is worth it when the knowledge is put to practice. Extension should help participants think about the implementation of theory to practice in their training programs. Pre- and post-work on plans, intentions, and follow-up would support the idea of quicker transfer and application of training back on the job.

Ultimately, all individuals in the organization are in different places (understanding, commitment, experience, desire, and motivation, to name a few) regarding their ability and desire to transfer training knowledge to their work. Efforts to understand the individual employee and their needs should be a priority. For organizations to address this and be able to try and ensure transfer, it would be a large undertaking, depending on the size of the organization. This supports research that indicates our understanding of real transfer is incomplete (Burke & Baldwin, 1999) and that it remains a challenge to establish a transfer of training theory (Bhatti & Kaur, 2009). Transfer is important for Extension and organizations to keep at the forefront of their planning and implementation of training.

Years of research (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton, 1996; Tracey et al., 1995) have identified three categories of factors that affect training, including trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment. These factors did not emerge as much as expected in the case study. There was no mention of the design of the training or the environment of the training impacting transfer. As the trainees, participants did acknowledge that they influenced transfer, but more in the context of their individual and self-efforts to successfully transfer rather than their own characteristics, as research has indicated. This may be due to the discussion and focus on self-leadership in this study, but it could also support the research that suggests that findings have been inconsistent, and organizations are challenged to pinpoint exactly what factors are most critical to transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011).

The findings of this study support the continuing effort to understand the training process, and transfer is still a primary concern for researchers and practitioners (Velada & Caetano, 2007). A concerted effort by Extension and organizations to follow up with training participants on transfer could provide more data to an organization on the specific factors that assist or help make successful transfers in that organization. Trainers could consistently incorporate questions about what helped trainees transfer the material to their lives or work in the follow-up evaluation. Additionally, follow-up meetings with accountability partners, developing action plans, setting goals, and attending follow-up sessions on the material are suggested to improve the transfer of training. If done routinely, the organization might have a better transfer rate and be able to evaluate more clearly what works and does not work for Extension as it relates to transfer.

Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2014) confirm that the confidence individuals have in the ability to improve job performance likely leads to transfer. This was true in the findings as direct application and connection to the material emerged as a subtheme of factors to successful training. Participants mentioned finding what is most relevant to their circumstances and their work, what they are interested in, what they connect to, and what they can directly use in their job in describing direct application for them. This becomes an important mindset for practitioners to apply, ensuring that participants are aware of how the material improves their job. This is supported by research that indicates that the goal of training is the self-development of employees through continuous learning (Cheng & Hampson, 2008), and the intent of training is to improve knowledge and skills in employees,

thus improving the organization through quality and performance (Mokhtar et al., 2019; Tharenou et al., 2007).

An unexpected finding in the case study was that required training or follow-up was considered a success factor, not a barrier. The word “required” was used specifically in several cases. According to participants, Extension offers a vast amount of training, but it was unclear how they perceived it as “required training.” Some seemed to assume that when there are organization-wide opportunities, there is an expectation to attend and that this was helpful. Assignments, accountability partners, and follow-up were all mentioned as helpful to transfer when it was an expected and planned part of the training. While the research included in this study did not look specifically at required training and transfer, research was found to support the ongoing training opportunities that Extension offers. Successful organizations are believed to invest more in training than others (Tharenou et al., 2007). Zahra et al. (2014) agree that training is a necessary human resource practice that can impact organizational success. Developing our ongoing ability to learn is the single most important human resource issue for meeting the challenges of the future (Hamel & Prahalad, 1995).

Participants frequently acknowledged barriers to the transfer of training. This major theme discussed how training led to no changes being made. Blume et al. (2010) stated that organizations are unsure to what extent changes are made once employees are back on the job after training, and Brown and McCracken (2009) acknowledged that little content is transferred to the workplace. This was a sentiment that participants agreed with and acknowledged, but with some lack of ability to explain why for each of them.

While there was a level of understanding around the transfer of training during the interview process, it was clear that participants did not regularly think about transfer. All participants understood the intention of training and that transfer is the goal, but it was clear that being purposeful about it was hit-and-miss for the participants. They did acknowledge that putting training into action was important when encouraged to describe how and when it works. However, it did not seem automatically at the forefront of their thinking. Previous research found that learners leave training with some intention to transfer, but almost immediately, factors may begin to undermine this motivation and intention (Foxon, 1993).

Time management was a large barrier for the participants. This suggests that time management is a skill that needs some focus in the organization, as a wide array of skills are needed to be effective in Extension work, and time management is a major issue. This is supported by Gonzalez (1982), who stated that Extension employees need competence not only in their discipline area but also in management, programming, communication, human relations, and leadership.

It was also interesting to observe that participants were cognizant of the number of opportunities they get for training through Nebraska Extension but fully unaware of how important transfer is to that process and the other outlying factors of providing the training. This was exposed when discussing barriers to transfer when participants suggested that if they did not connect, they did not like or did not have interest, they did not transfer. No one

ever acknowledged the cost of training or time spent in training as a cost, which may be Extension's fault, as clarity around this topic may not be happening. Beer et al. (2016) asserted that \$365 billion is invested worldwide in employee training. Aquinis and Kraiger (2009) agreed that considerable resources are put into training employees. However, according to Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008), training is only effective to the extent that skills and behaviors learned and practiced are transferred to the workplace. It was clear that dollars have been spent where the return on investment in Nebraska Extension has not happened, and participants did not or were unable to acknowledge that this investment in them did not happen. This reminds us that we should not neglect the role employees play in choosing to either transfer or not, or how much, and suggests there may be some essential hidden variables (Cheng & Hampson, 2008).

As with transfer of training, self-leadership was a concept and theory not fully understood or even known by participants, as it relates to clear understanding, directly applying routinely, and using purposefully. In their definitions (after being provided with some basic information), participants could articulate and describe the idea of self-leadership but were not in total command of the theory. It was a mix of words and understanding. What was evident was the agreement among participants that the idea of self-leadership permeates success in Extension work and in helping each of them do their work. While they did not know they were specifically practicing self-leadership strategies before our conversation, most have applied at least some of them in their work. This directly relates to the work of Browning (2018) asserts that in collaborative, decentralized workplace environments, which describes Extension, "training people to become self-leaders who set priorities, take initiative and solve problems is more important than ever" (p. 15). Parvez and Iqbal (2007) declared that self-leadership is when "people are responsible, capable and able to exercise initiative without the external constraints of bosses, rules or regulations" (p. 43). Therefore, the participants were exhibiting high levels of using self-leadership strategies without knowing it because this is how Extension operates, with autonomy and, for the most part, without external constraints. Thus, to be successful, Educators have had to employ these skills on their own. Participants strongly agreed that helping others understand this theory would enhance their effectiveness in Extension work. This is supported by Neck and Manz (1996), who wrote that people can be trained to adapt and enhance their self-leadership skills.

The discussion of strategies was similar to the overall understanding of self-leadership. None of the participants knew the specific identified strategies of self-leadership. However, when the strategies were presented, they could discuss which ones they practice, either naturally or have learned, that are helpful behaviors or ways of operating over time. All participants could identify at least one, and generally several strategies they have employed. Several connections between the success factors of the transfer theme and self-leadership strategies could be made. For example, reminder items to help keep the training in front of them and fresh in their minds were identified as a subtheme and connected directly to the behavior-focused strategies of self-cueing and self-observation but could also be a form of a natural intrinsic reward for some. Additionally, participants talked about setting goals, self-observation, self-practice, incorporating ways to make a task more enjoyable, visualization,

and positive self-talk as influences and factors to transfer, along with identifying them as strategies they use. They did not always use the self-leadership strategies in exact words, which supports the idea that they did not know them as specific strategies but did know that doing these specific behaviors helped them be more effective in their roles and specifically to transfer. This shows a great opportunity for developing self-leadership training to teach the strategies and use them during other training to help with the transfer. For example, once a skill is taught, a trainer could have participants spend some time doing mental imagery of a successful time in the future when they are using the skill, set a goal for using the skill, or think about a reward they would use to influence themselves to use the skill.

While the goal of this research was to discover what aspects of self-leadership Extension employees feel are necessary for the transfer of training to occur or if it matters, the study concludes that the education of training participants on the model and theory of self-leadership would enhance self-leadership and strengthen the transfer of training. Self-leadership says that people control themselves, their actions, and their behaviors (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Stewart et al., 2011). Parker et al. (2010) and Foxon (1993) agree that when the transfer of training is proactive and self-initiated in nature, it is an integral step towards transfer. Manz and Sims (1989) acknowledged that individuals characterized as self-leaders personally motivate themselves, continually renew their thinking patterns, and direct their efforts. Participants could see the connection between the two and many possibilities for use in their future Extension work. The role employees play in choosing to either transfer or not, or how much, should not be neglected and suggests there may be some essential hidden variables (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). The data supports that self-leadership helps and does not hinder the transfer of training. It may take more training to get there, but self-leadership continues to show potential for application in today's world (Neck & Houghton, 2006), and the benefits would be worth it for the employee and Extension.

Below is a list of recommendations for both practitioners and for future research.

Practitioner Recommendations

- A conversation within organizations about self-leadership as an accepted theory of practice that includes training of strategies, support, and coaching to help employees employ the skills needed to be better leaders of themselves.
- In organizations, acknowledge and discuss transfer as a part of training, allowing participants to consider how they will implement materials. This could also include acknowledging the costs, time, and energy that goes into training for a better understanding of investments and why the transfer of training is important.
- Become more educated in organizations on additional research factors of successful transfer and barriers to transfer to assist in better planning and implementation of training based on research and incorporation of this information consistently in all training.
- Use the self-leadership theory to train new Extension employees, helping them better understand the autonomy of their role and how to be effective in it.

- Use self-leadership strategies with low performers as a tangible way to help them become more effective.
- Redesign the objective and goals of trainings to show better how the training will improve effectiveness/performance on the job.

Research Recommendations

- Further research on self-leadership in Extension across the country and its importance as a leadership theory to the organization.
- Further research using the self-leadership questionnaires to assess an entire organization could be compared to others (this research suggests that Extension would have a higher level of self-leaders). The data could also assist in self-leadership training within organizations, focusing on strategies not being used as ways for growth and improvement.
- Future research on whether self-leadership strategies can help low performers increase their effectiveness on the job.
- Future research on transfer based on the type of training, i.e., personal development, team development, discipline-based training, etc., to determine if the transfer differs based on the topic or area of training and development.
- Further research on self-leadership and transfer of training. Does using the strategies, when they are learned and known, consistently make a difference in transfer?

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Dr. Lisa Kaslon is an Extension Educator and Professional Development Coordinator for Nebraska Extension.

Dr. Nathan W. Conner is a Professor of Agriculture Education focusing on adult education and professional development for teachers and Extension educators. Please direct correspondence about this article to Dr. Conner at nconner2@unl.edu.

Dr. Gina Matkin is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications.

Dr. Mark A. Balschweid is a Professor of Agricultural Education and Head of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. His research focuses on science integration in agricultural education programs.

Dr. Chuck Hibberd is a retired Dean and Director of Nebraska Extension.