

Understanding Training Effectiveness: Perspectives of HRD Corp–Accredited Trainers in Malaysia

Farizan bin Taju Ariffin¹, Juhary bin Hj Ali^{1*}

¹ City Graduate School, City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

ABSTRACT: *This qualitative study examines how HRD Corp-accredited trainers in Malaysia construct and judge training effectiveness within a regulated training ecosystem. Eleven accredited trainers, aged 33-69 with 3-26 years of training experience, participated in one semi-structured online focus group via Zoom. The discussion was transcribed, anonymised, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Analysis generated 165 significant statements and sixteen themes across three research questions. Trainers construed effectiveness as a process that begins with client objectives and training needs, is engineered through contextualised and learner-centred design, becomes visible through engagement, demonstrated understanding, practice and application, and may extend into follow-up and workplace transfer. They constructed their professional role as outcome-accountable, facilitative, adaptive and relational, extending beyond content delivery. Accreditation was experienced as professional legitimacy and quality assurance, while formal evaluation was regarded as necessary but insufficient when separated from trainers' observational and follow-up evidence. The study contributes a trainer-centred account of perceived training effectiveness and identifies an evidentiary boundary: trainers directly observe immediate learning processes, whereas generalisation and maintenance may remain indirect or beyond their direct observation.*

KEYWORDS - *accredited trainers, HRD Corp, Malaysia, training effectiveness, training transfer*

I. INTRODUCTION

Training effectiveness is commonly treated as the extent to which training produces learning, supports workplace application and contributes to intended performance outcomes. Transfer scholarship shows that such outcomes depend on the interaction of trainee characteristics, training design and the work environment rather than on delivery alone [1, 2]. Evaluation frameworks similarly distinguish immediate reactions and learning from later behavioural and organisational outcomes [3]. The practical problem is therefore not simply whether a programme is well received, but whether learning is relevant, demonstrable, transferable and sustained.

Despite a century of research on training and development, the evidence base has been dominated by trainee, organisational and outcome-centred perspectives [4]. Malaysian research has likewise relied substantially on quantitative measures of perceived effectiveness and training outcomes [5]. Trainers are central to needs interpretation, instructional design, facilitation, adaptation and feedback, yet their own professional judgements have received less direct empirical attention. Research on trainers' knowledge and transfer has begun to address this imbalance internationally [6, 7], and qualitative work in Asian training settings illustrates the value of examining trainers as meaning-making practitioners rather than merely as delivery agents [8].

This gap has particular relevance in Malaysia's HRD Corp ecosystem. The system combines levy-funded training, national monitoring, trainer accreditation through the HRD Corp Trainers' Development Framework (HRD-TDF), and formal training-effectiveness evaluation through HRD-TEE [9, 10, 11]. Accredited trainers therefore work at the intersection of client objectives, participant needs, professional standards and institutional accountability. Their position provides direct access to what occurs during training, but only partial access to what happens after participants return to work.

The present study addresses the gap by examining perceived training effectiveness from the standpoint of HRD Corp-accredited trainers. It does not treat trainer perceptions as equivalent to objectively measured

effectiveness. Instead, it asks how trainers recognise effectiveness, how they construct responsibility for training outcomes, and how accreditation and evaluation shape those constructions. This distinction matters because practitioners may possess rich observational evidence while simultaneously facing limits on what they can know about later transfer and organisational results.

Accordingly, the study addressed three research questions: (1) How do HRD Corp-accredited trainers in Malaysia experience and describe perceived training effectiveness in their professional practice? (2) How do they construct the meaning of their professional roles and experience challenges in relation to perceived training effectiveness? and (3) How does the HRD Corp accreditation and evaluation context shape trainers' construction of training effectiveness?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

2.1 Training effectiveness, evaluation, and transfer

Training effectiveness is multidimensional. Kirkpatrick's evaluation framework separates reaction, learning, behaviour and results, while Baldwin and Ford's transfer model distinguishes training inputs, learning and retention, and the generalisation and maintenance of learning at work [1, 3]. Later reviews identify motivation, self-efficacy, practice, feedback, supervisory support and opportunity to perform as important conditions for transfer [12, 13]. These models are not competing definitions so much as complementary ways of locating evidence across the training cycle.

The distinction between immediate and downstream evidence is especially important for trainer-centred inquiry. During delivery, trainers can observe attention, participation, questioning, demonstrated understanding, practice and task performance. They may also receive later indications through participant contact, client feedback or repeat engagement. Generalisation across tasks and maintenance over time, however, occur in the work environment and may be only indirectly visible to the trainer. This creates an evidentiary boundary between what trainers directly witness and what they infer from subsequent signals.

2.2 Learning processes and trainer practice

Several learning traditions help explain why trainers attend to immediate behavioural and interactional cues. Social Learning Theory emphasises observation, modelling, rehearsal, feedback, reinforcement and self-efficacy [14]. Adult-learning and experiential-learning perspectives emphasise relevance, participation, prior experience, practice and reflection [15, 16]. Training Engagement Theory further highlights the allocation of attention and effort during training [17]. Together, these perspectives provide a rationale for treating engagement, practice and demonstrated understanding as meaningful evidence, while stopping short of equating them with sustained transfer.

Training design scholarship similarly places needs analysis and objective alignment before delivery and connects active practice, feedback and contextualisation to stronger learning and transfer [18, 19]. For trainers, this means that perceived effectiveness may be constructed prospectively, through what is known about client needs and participants before the event, as well as retrospectively through what becomes visible during and after delivery.

2.3 Professional role, identity, and regulated practice

Role theory adds a dimension that outcome models do not address directly: what trainers believe they are responsible for. Roles are shaped by expectations sent by relevant actors and interpreted by the role occupant [20, 21]. When expectations are unclear, incompatible or excessive, practitioners may experience role ambiguity, conflict or overload [22]. HRD Corp-accredited trainers occupy a boundary-spanning position because they respond simultaneously to participants, client organisations, training providers and accreditation requirements.

Professional identity theory treats occupational identity as constructed and revised through experience rather than fixed at qualification. Practitioners try out ways of performing a role, read feedback from the environment and refine the professional self over time [23, 24]. Evetts' distinction between organisational professionalism, shaped by external standards and audit, and occupational professionalism, grounded in practitioner judgement, is particularly relevant to accreditation contexts [25]. In this study, role and identity perspectives were used as sensitising lenses rather than as hypotheses to be tested.

Within the HRD Corp setting, accreditation can therefore be read not only as a quality mechanism but also as a source of role expectations. HRD-TDF specifies competencies and renewal expectations, while HRD-TEE formalises parts of the evaluation environment [10, 11]. The analytical interest is not whether trainers comply with these instruments in a binary sense, but how they position their own professional judgement in relation to institutional expectations, client demands and the conditions they encounter during delivery.

2.4 Sensitising conceptual framework

The study's conceptual framework integrates contextual conditions, trainers' roles and practice strategies, immediate indicators observed by trainers, and workplace transfer as perceived or evidenced to trainers. These dimensions sit within the wider HRD Corp ecosystem of accreditation, HRD-TDF, HRD-TEE, levy-funded training, policy and reporting requirements. The framework is deliberately non-causal: it organised the inquiry while leaving the analysis open to meanings not anticipated by the literature.

A central feature of the framework is the separation between immediate indicators and workplace transfer. Trainers are positioned as observers and adaptive practitioners within a wider system rather than as sole causes of outcomes. This permits the analysis to examine what trainers can see, what they can influence and where their evidence becomes indirect, while preserving the role of participant readiness and workplace conditions in the transfer process.

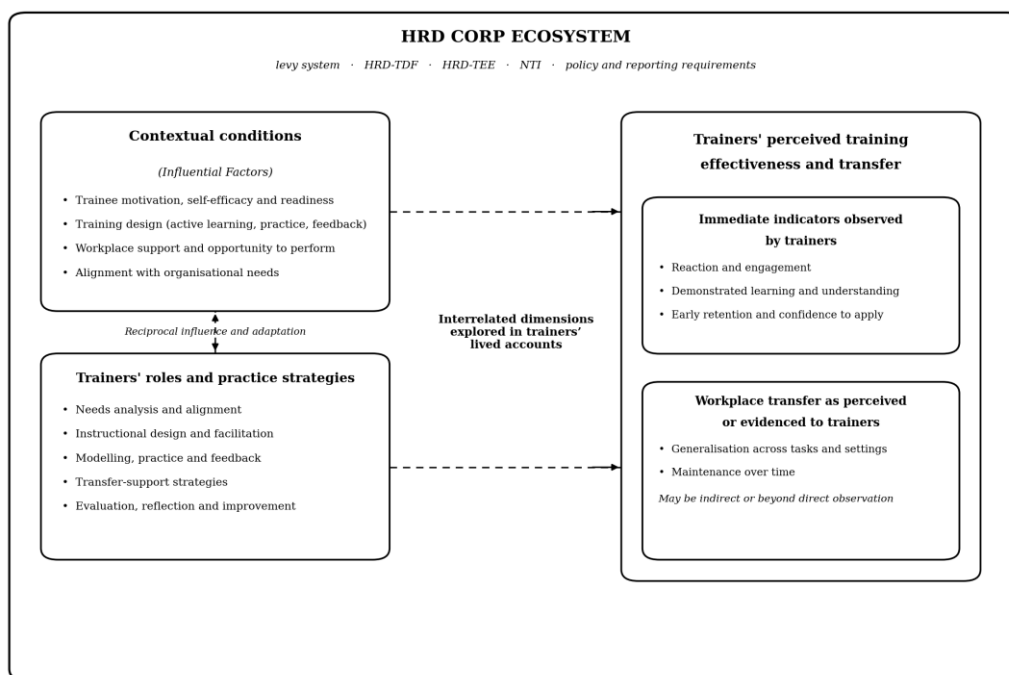


Fig. 1. Sensitising conceptual framework for HRD Corp-accredited trainers' perceived training effectiveness and transfer

Source: *Study conceptual framework, drawing on social learning, transfer and evaluation literature [1, 3, 14].*

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design, participants, and sampling

The study adopted a qualitative interpretive design to examine how accredited trainers make sense of perceived training effectiveness, professional responsibility and the institutional context in which they work. Purposive sampling was used to recruit information-rich participants [26]. Inclusion criteria were current recognition as an HRD Corp-accredited trainer, at least two years of experience delivering HRD Corp-related programmes, and recent experience designing or delivering training for client organisations in Malaysia.

Eleven trainers participated. They ranged from 33 to 69 years of age and from 3 to 26 years of training experience, and represented technical, digital and behavioural specialisations as well as different accreditation pathways. The group was intentionally heterogeneous so that recurring patterns could be examined across contrasting professional backgrounds rather than within a single training niche. Sample adequacy was considered through information power: the study had a focused aim, a specific professional population, experienced participants and a cross-case thematic analytic strategy [27].

Table 1: Demographic profile of focus-group participants

Participant	Age	Training experience (years)	Field of specialisation
T1	55	20	Information technology (Microsoft, Google, Canva, AI)
T2	49	10	TVET (air-conditioning; mechanical, electrical and plumbing)
T3	69	6	Coaching; leadership and soft skills
T4	61	26	Human resources; team building and soft skills
T5	33	6	Applied technology
T6	51	20	Microsoft Office; team building and soft skills
T7	53	23	AI; Microsoft Office
T8	41	8	Communication
T9	51	3	Leadership; SME development
T10	52	10	Human resources; team building
T11	40	12	Sales and marketing; digital marketing

Source: Study data.

3.2 Data collection and ethical procedures

Data were generated through one semi-structured online focus group conducted via Zoom. The group format was selected because it enabled participants to compare experiences, extend or qualify one another's accounts, and make visible areas of convergence and disagreement [28, 29]. The protocol addressed professional background, lived experiences of effective and less-effective programmes, professional roles across the training cycle, accreditation and evaluation, and online or hybrid delivery. The session was scheduled for approximately 180 minutes. With consent, Zoom audio and video were recorded and brief field notes were taken; the use of videoconferencing was consistent with established qualitative data-collection practice [30].

The discussion was conducted mainly in Malay and translated into English for analysis, with efforts to preserve participants' intended meanings. The recording was transcribed verbatim, checked against the source recording, anonymised and coded T1-T11. Identifying details about individuals and organisations were removed or generalised. Ethical clearance was obtained before data collection. Participants received study information, provided informed consent, were told that participation was voluntary, and were reminded of confidentiality and their right to decline questions or withdraw.

3.3 Reflexive thematic analysis and trustworthiness

The verified transcript was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke [31, 32]. Analysis involved repeated familiarisation with the transcript and relevant recording segments, coding meaningful statements, grouping conceptually related codes, developing candidate themes, reviewing the coherence and distinctiveness of themes, and refining theme definitions. The researcher maintained reflexive notes because professional familiarity with the Malaysian training ecosystem supported contextual understanding but also required explicit attention to assumptions.

The analysis identified 165 significant statements and developed sixteen themes across the three research questions. The conceptual framework sensitised attention to effectiveness, transfer and professional role, but it was not used as a fixed coding template. Trustworthiness was strengthened through iterative engagement with the data, documented coding and theme-development decisions, verbatim quotations, reflexive memoing and an audit trail [33]. Because the data came from a focus group, analysis also attended to interactional patterns such as agreement, extension and qualification rather than treating each contribution as an isolated interview response [34].

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Thematic structure

The sixteen themes form three coherent clusters. Research Question 1 concerns how effectiveness is defined, designed, experienced, evidenced, disrupted and reflected upon. Research Question 2 concerns outcome responsibility, facilitation, adaptive practice, transfer support and professional identity. Research Question 3 concerns accreditation, the division of evaluation responsibilities, the limits of formal indicators, professional judgement and the changing delivery environment. Table 2 presents the thematic structure used in the analysis.

Table 2: Consolidated thematic structure by research question

Research question	Themes	Integrative interpretation
RQ1	1. Defining Training Effectiveness 2. Designing Effective Training 3. Experiencing Training Effectiveness 4. Indicators of Effectiveness 5. Experiencing Ineffective Training 6. Trainer Satisfaction and Reflection	Effectiveness is prospective, designed, embodied and evidenced through a graduated set of indicators, while barriers and reflective self-scrutiny qualify trainers' judgements.
RQ2	7. Professional Responsibility for Training Effectiveness 8. Trainer as Facilitator and Participant-Centred Learning 9. Adaptive Practice and the Construction of the Professional Role 10. Facilitating Transfer and Post-Training Engagement 11. Trainer Professional Identity	Trainers construct themselves as outcome-accountable facilitators who adapt continuously and extend responsibility into transfer support and continuing professional relationships.
RQ3	12. Accreditation as Professional Legitimacy and Quality Assurance 13. Division of Responsibilities within the HRD Corp Evaluation System 14. The Limits of Formal Evaluation Indicators 15. Professional Judgement in Negotiating Standards 16. The Changing Delivery Environment and the Construction of Effectiveness	Accreditation confers legitimacy and structure, while trainers perceive separation from formal evaluation evidence and negotiate standards through professional judgement across face-to-face, online and hybrid contexts.

Source: Consolidated from the study's coding matrices and thematic structure.

4.2 Research Question 1: effectiveness as prospective, designed, evidenced, and felt

Participants first located effectiveness before delivery. Client objectives and training needs analysis gave them a reference point for deciding what content mattered and how success could later be judged. T11 expressed this succinctly: "Must know the objective. If we have no objective, direction, that thing will not happen." T4 similarly described asking for the client's objective before preparing content. In this sense, effectiveness was prospective: trainers attempted to establish the conditions for relevance before the training room became the site of evidence.

Effectiveness was then described as something deliberately designed through contextualisation, learner-centred planning, progressive structure, simulation and opportunities to apply learning. Participants repeatedly linked effective programmes with realistic practice rather than information transmission alone. One trainer described satisfaction when role-play reproduced the real situation, while another described moving from foundation to application and mastery. These accounts position active practice as both a learning mechanism and a source of observable evidence.

During delivery, trainers used a layered repertoire of indicators. Engagement, questioning and visible shifts in participation were treated as early signs; the ability to explain ideas in one's own words, perform a task or produce a tangible output represented stronger evidence of learning. T6 illustrated the salience of behavioural cues by recalling that participants who had sat at the back moved to the front and that many stayed to ask questions.

Other participants described immediate workplace-like performance, such as demonstrations and role-play, as more persuasive than satisfaction scores alone.

Participants nevertheless distinguished evidence of learning from evidence of sustained transfer. Behavioural change, organisational impact, client satisfaction and repeat engagement were described as higher-order indications, but these often became visible only through follow-up or later client contact. The same logic appeared in accounts of less-effective training: audience mismatch, programme disruption, technological constraints and weak attention could undermine a well-designed programme. Online delivery made this boundary particularly visible. T10 stated, "I really do not like online actually because I know when online sometimes people just on only but actually they do other work," and linked this to divided attention, unseen reactions and workplace interruption.

Trainer satisfaction was therefore not treated as sufficient proof. Participants valued the emotional fulfilment of seeing an 'aha' moment or successful application, but also described reflection as a discipline against becoming a self-satisfied trainer. Their accounts suggest a hierarchy of evidence: immediate engagement is informative, demonstrated learning is stronger, and later application is more consequential but often less directly observable.

4.3 Research Question 2: outcome-accountable facilitation, adaptation, and transfer support

Participants constructed their professional role as extending across the training cycle. Preparation meant clarifying objectives, gathering information and aligning content with client needs. During delivery, they accepted responsibility for creating conditions in which participants could practise and apply learning. T4 stated: "We transfer as much knowledge as we can, that is our responsibility... We make sure they are able to apply that new knowledge... Not only can apply but they can also make change." The role was therefore framed in outcome terms rather than as completion of content.

At the same time, participants resisted the image of the trainer as a one-way instructor. T5 described his role as: "I do not want to say teaching... Referring to myself as a guide... Supporting them, bringing little by little." T2 expressed the same construction through hands-on, interactive delivery and continuous feedback. Facilitation was not merely a preferred label; it was enacted through demonstration, practice, questioning and adjustment to learners' goals.

Adaptive judgement was central to this professional construction. Trainers reported changing pace, level, content and engagement strategies when the realities of the group differed from pre-programme information or when programmes were disrupted. T5 explained, "We use our judgement whether we want to go higher or lower with the course... For me, my training session becomes dynamic." Adaptation therefore involved discretion within an outcome boundary: the route could change while the intended learning direction remained.

Participants also extended responsibility beyond the event through accessibility, informal follow-up and continuing consultation. Some left contact details so participants could ask for help when applying new skills; others described long-term advisory relationships with HR personnel or clients. These practices were not presented as proof that transfer had occurred, but as ways of supporting transfer and obtaining later signals about application. Professional identity was anchored in accumulated experience, personal standards, credibility, authenticity and continuous learning.

The limits of the role were equally important. Trainers recognised that supervisory support, opportunity to use learning and workplace conditions could determine whether training was sustained after they left. Outcome accountability was therefore aspirational and relational rather than a claim of unilateral control.

4.4 Research Question 3: accreditation legitimacy and evaluation asymmetry

Participants experienced accreditation as both professional recognition and a quality-assurance frame. T11 captured the legitimacy dimension: "When we start teaching without accreditation... people ask who are you, what is your qualification?" Accreditation also provided standards that participants associated with more structured preparation, delivery and objective-outcome alignment. The finding does not imply that accreditation itself produces effectiveness; rather, participants treated it as a source of credibility and professional discipline.

A second theme concerned the division of responsibilities within the evaluation system. Participants described formal evaluation and reporting as being managed primarily through training providers and client organisations, while trainers were positioned mainly around content delivery. They therefore did not routinely receive the full stream of post-programme evaluation evidence. This perceived separation matters because the same trainers described themselves as responsible for outcomes extending beyond delivery.

Participants did not reject formal evaluation. They instead questioned whether basic indicators were sufficient when used alone. T6 stated, "I have stopped looking at evaluation form [to] gauge effective training," and described participant reactions and behaviour during the programme as more meaningful to his own

judgement. Across the group, formal scores were regarded as one evidence source within a broader repertoire that included demonstrated understanding, application, client feedback and follow-up.

The accreditation and evaluation context was consequently negotiated through professional judgement. Standards framed practice, but trainers described using discretion to adapt methods to participants, content and modality. The transition to online and hybrid delivery sharpened this negotiation because engagement, visibility, technical support and workload differed from face-to-face delivery. Participants developed strategies such as naming participants, camera expectations, screen-sharing checks and re-engagement activities, while also reporting the additional demands of sustaining attention online.

Across the three research questions, one cross-cutting pattern is a structural asymmetry in participants' accounts: they defined effectiveness broadly and assigned themselves responsibility across the training cycle, yet perceived the formal evaluation architecture as giving them a narrower delivery position and incomplete access to outcome evidence. They responded through informal observation, relational follow-up and professional judgement. This interpretation reflects participant accounts and should not be read as an institutional audit of HRD Corp.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Training effectiveness as a process across the cycle

The findings support a process view of training effectiveness while adding the trainer's observational standpoint. Participants' emphasis on objectives, needs analysis, contextualised design and practice aligns with established design and transfer literature [1, 2, 18]. Their use of engagement, demonstrated understanding and task performance as immediate indicators is also consistent with social learning, experiential learning and engagement perspectives [14, 16, 17]. The distinctive contribution is not the discovery of new outcome categories, but evidence of how those categories are recognised and sequenced in practitioners' day-to-day judgement.

This perspective also clarifies why immediate evaluation can be useful without being sufficient. Reaction, participation and demonstrated learning help trainers decide whether a programme is working while it is occurring, but they do not establish generalisation or maintenance. Transfer reviews consistently show that workplace support and opportunity to perform shape what happens after training [12, 13, 35]. The trainers' accounts therefore converge with the transfer literature at the point where their own visibility decreases: the more consequential the downstream outcome, the less direct their observation may become.

5.2 Professional role and identity: a self-defined role wider than delivery

The role findings deepen the article beyond an evaluation discussion. Participants constructed themselves as outcome-accountable facilitators who prepare, adapt, support application and remain accessible after delivery. In role-theoretic terms, this resembles a self-defined role that exceeds the narrower role participants perceived as being formally sent through the delivery architecture [20, 21]. The gap creates potential role ambiguity: trainers feel responsible for outcomes whose post-training conditions they do not control and whose formal evidence they may not receive [22].

Professional identity helps explain how trainers manage that gap. Their accounts of becoming more dynamic, selective and reflective with experience are consistent with identity being revised through cycles of practice and feedback [23, 24]. Accreditation adds an organisational-professional standard, whereas participants' own judgements reflect occupational professionalism grounded in experience [25]. The two were not portrayed as inherently contradictory; tension emerged when formal indicators, client expectations and practitioner judgement did not fully align.

5.3 Evaluation evidence and the boundary of trainer observation

The findings suggest that trainer evidence should be understood as complementary rather than substitutive. Critiques of single-level evaluation have long cautioned against inferring transfer or results from reaction data alone [36, 37]. Trainers add a different evidence stream: they directly observe interaction, practice, misunderstanding, adjustment and early application. Their proximity to delivery makes such evidence valuable, but it also creates a boundary around later workplace outcomes.

Trainers directly observe reaction, engagement, understanding, practice and adaptation needs. They may receive later indications of application through follow-up, consultation, client feedback or continuing professional relationships. However, workplace transfer, especially generalisation and maintenance, may remain indirect or beyond direct observation. Trainer accounts are therefore a valuable perspective, but not a substitute for participant, supervisor, employer or organisational evidence. A stronger evaluation architecture would connect these perspectives rather than privilege one as complete.

This interpretation also helps explain why participants developed informal follow-up practices. Training-transfer research has highlighted the importance of post-training support and continuing learning beyond formal events [12, 38]. In the present study, follow-up served both a support function and an epistemic function: it helped participants assist application while also giving them access to evidence otherwise unavailable at programme close.

5.4 Practical and policy implications

For HRD Corp and training providers, the findings support a feedback-to-trainer mechanism. Participant evaluation summaries and any available employer follow-up data could be returned to the accredited trainer who delivered the programme. This would not change accountability relationships; it would provide evidence for professional reflection and close a feedback loop that participants described as incomplete. A lightweight trainer-report component could also capture agreed objectives, participant-programme fit, observed engagement, demonstrated understanding, application witnessed during training and recommended follow-up actions.

The findings also support greater trainer involvement before delivery. A structured pre-programme brief covering objectives, participant profiles, organisational context and expected application would institutionalise the alignment work that experienced participants already perform informally. Within HRD-TDF, professional development could give greater attention to adaptive redesign, online and hybrid facilitation, engagement management and structured transfer support. This is particularly relevant because participants described modality as changing the conditions under which evidence of engagement and learning can be observed. Research on videoconferencing likewise identifies attentional and fatigue demands that differ from face-to-face interaction [39, 40, 41].

For employers and HR functions, the implications lie in conditions the trainer cannot create alone: selecting participants who match programme design, protecting learning time from operational interruption, creating opportunities to use new skills, and providing supervisory follow-through. For trainers, the findings support maintaining a personal effectiveness portfolio that records objectives, observable learning evidence, follow-up outcomes and client feedback while deliberately distinguishing what was directly observed from what was inferred.

5.5 Limitations and future research

The study has several limitations. First, it draws on one focus group with eleven purposively selected participants and therefore does not claim statistical generalisability. Transferability depends on the fit between the study context and other settings [42]. Second, focus-group interaction can encourage elaboration but may also suppress dissent or give more articulate participants greater influence. Third, the evidence consists of trainers' self-reported perceptions; behavioural change and organisational impact were not triangulated with participant, employer or performance data. Fourth, the study captures one point in time during the continuing normalisation of online and hybrid work, so modality concerns may shift as practices mature. Fifth, the discussion occurred mainly in Malay and was translated into English, creating a possibility that some nuance was reduced. Finally, the researcher was an HRD practitioner, making reflexive scrutiny necessary throughout analysis.

Future research can test the breadth of the sixteen themes across the wider accredited-trainer population, triangulate trainer perceptions with matched participant and employer evidence, and follow programmes longitudinally to examine how informal post-training engagement relates to transfer. Comparative studies of face-to-face, online and hybrid delivery can separate perceived observational difficulty from actual outcome differences. Implementation research would also be valuable if feedback-to-trainer or trainer-report mechanisms are introduced.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined perceived training effectiveness from the perspective of HRD Corp-accredited trainers in Malaysia. Across sixteen themes, trainers construed effectiveness as a process beginning with objectives and needs analysis, engineered through contextualised and learner-centred design, recognised through engagement, demonstrated understanding, practice and application, and extended through follow-up into workplace transfer. They constructed their role as facilitative, adaptive, outcome-accountable and relational rather than as content delivery alone.

The study's main analytical contribution is the identification of an evidentiary and role boundary. Trainers are close to the learning event and can provide detailed evidence about what happens before and during training, but later generalisation and maintenance may remain outside their direct observation. Accreditation was experienced as legitimacy and quality assurance, while participants perceived a separation between their broad self-defined responsibility and their access to formal outcome evidence.

The practical implication is therefore not to replace existing evaluation with trainer judgement, but to connect trainer evidence to participant, employer and organisational evidence. Within the limits of one qualitative focus group, the findings provide a grounded basis for improving pre-programme alignment, professional development, post-programme feedback and transfer support in the HRD Corp ecosystem. Future multi-stakeholder and longitudinal research is needed to establish how these trainer-centred constructions relate to measured learning, behaviour and organisational outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the eleven HRD Corp-accredited trainers who participated in the focus-group discussion and shared their professional experiences. The authors also acknowledge the academic guidance and institutional support provided by City University Malaysia and the supervisory team.

REFERENCES

- [1] T.T. Baldwin and J.K. Ford, Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research, *Personnel Psychology*, 41(1), 1988, 63-105.
- [2] E. Salas, S.I. Tannenbaum, K. Kraiger, and K.A. Smith-Jentsch, The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice, *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(2), 2012, 74-101.
- [3] D. Kirkpatrick and J. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating training programs: The four levels* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006).
- [4] B.S. Bell, S.I. Tannenbaum, J.K. Ford, R.A. Noe, and K. Kraiger, 100 years of training and development research: What we know and where we should go, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 2017, 305-323.
- [5] S.F.A. Aziz, Developing general training effectiveness scale for the Malaysian workplace learning, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(4), 2015, 47-56.
- [6] S. Wisshak and S. Hochholdinger, Trainers' knowledge and skills from the perspective of trainers, trainees and human resource development practitioners, *International Journal of Training Research*, 16(3), 2018, 218-231.
- [7] S. Wisshak, A. Naumann, A. Koch, and C. Spener, Trainers' knowledge of training transfer: Exploration of a crucial yet uncharted concept, *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 29(2), 2025, 489-509.
- [8] S. Wu and L.S. Eng, A phenomenological study of national in-service vocational teacher training at a vocational college in China: Voices of trainers and trainees, *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 24(2), 2025, 63-86.
- [9] HRD Corp, *National Training Index (NTI) 2024 report* (Human Resource Development Corporation, 2024).
- [10] HRD Corp, *HRD Corp Trainers' Development Framework (HRD-TDF), Version 2* (Human Resource Development Corporation, 2025).
- [11] HRD Corp, *HRD Training Effectiveness Evaluation (HRD-TEE): Guidelines for employers and training providers* (Human Resource Development Corporation, 2026).
- [12] R. Grossman and E. Salas, The transfer of training: What really matters, *International Journal of Training and Development*, 15(2), 2011, 103-120.
- [13] B.D. Blume, J.K. Ford, T.T. Baldwin, and J.L. Huang, Transfer of training: A meta-analytic review, *Journal of Management*, 36(4), 2010, 1065-1105.
- [14] A. Bandura, *Social learning theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).
- [15] M.S. Knowles, E.F. Holton, R.A. Swanson, and P.A. Robinson, *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*, 9th ed. (Routledge, 2020).
- [16] D.A. Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Prentice-Hall, 1984).
- [17] T. Sitzmann and J.M. Weinhardt, Training engagement theory: A multilevel perspective on the effectiveness of work-related training, *Journal of Management*, 44(2), 2018, 732-756.
- [18] I.L. Goldstein and J.K. Ford, *Training in organizations: Needs assessment, development, and evaluation*, 4th ed. (Wadsworth, 2002).
- [19] C.N. Lacerenza, D.L. Reyes, S.L. Marlow, D.L. Joseph, and E. Salas, Leadership training design, delivery, and implementation: A meta-analysis, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(12), 2017, 1686-1718.
- [20] B.J. Biddle, Recent developments in role theory, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12, 1986, 67-92.
- [21] D. Katz and R.L. Kahn, *The social psychology of organizations*, 2nd ed. (Wiley, 1978).
- [22] J.R. Rizzo, R.J. House, and S.I. Lirtzman, Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15(2), 1970, 150-163.

-
- [23] H. Ibarra, Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 1999, 764-791.
- [24] M.G. Pratt, K.W. Rockmann, and J.B. Kaufmann, Constructing professional identity: The role of work and identity learning cycles in the customization of physician identity, *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(2), 2006, 235-262.
- [25] J. Evetts, Professionalism: Value and ideology, *Current Sociology*, 61(5-6), 2013, 778-796.
- [26] L.A. Palinkas, S.M. Horwitz, C.A. Green, J.P. Wisdom, N. Duan, and K. Hoagwood, Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research, *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 2015, 533-544.
- [27] K. Malterud, V.D. Siersma, and A.D. Guassora, Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power, *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 2016, 1753-1760.
- [28] R.A. Krueger, *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (Sage Publications, 2014).
- [29] D.L. Morgan, *Basic and advanced focus groups* (Sage Publications, 2018).
- [30] M.M. Archibald, R.C. Ambagtsheer, M.G. Casey, and M. Lawless, Using Zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 2019, 1609406919874596.
- [31] V. Braun and V. Clarke, Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 2006, 77-101.
- [32] V. Braun and V. Clarke, Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 2019, 589-597.
- [33] L.S. Nowell, J.M. Norris, D.E. White, and N.J. Moules, Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 2017, 1-13.
- [34] C. O'Connor and H. Joffe, Intercoder reliability in qualitative research: Debates and practical guidelines, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 2020, 1609406919899220.
- [35] J.K. Ford, T.T. Baldwin, and J. Prasad, Transfer of training: The known and the unknown, *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5, 2018, 201-225.
- [36] T.G. Reio, T.S. Rocco, D.H. Smith, and E. Chang, A critique of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 29(2), 2017, 35-53.
- [37] S. Paul, R.R. Burman, and R. Singh, Training effectiveness evaluation: Advancing a Kirkpatrick model based composite framework, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 107, 2024, 102494.
- [38] S.I. Tannenbaum and M.A. Wolfson, Informal (field-based) learning, *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 9, 2022, 391-419.
- [39] J.N. Bailenson, Nonverbal overload: A theoretical argument for the causes of Zoom fatigue, *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*, 2(1), 2021.
- [40] A. Gegenfurtner and C. Ebner, Webinars in higher education and professional training: A meta-analysis and systematic review of randomized controlled trials, *Educational Research Review*, 28, 2019, 100293.
- [41] K.M. Shockley, A.S. Gabriel, D. Robertson, C.C. Rosen, N. Chawla, M.L. Ganster, and M.E. Ezerins, The fatiguing effects of camera use in virtual meetings: A within-person field experiment, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(8), 2021, 1137-1155.
- [42] Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (Sage, 1985).