

High Potentials – Parenting skills are still unrecognized by the company

Report 4/10 Survey “Parenting skills & work“, 20.05.2018

Joachim E. Lask WorkFamily-Institut Darmstadt
Dr. Nina M. Junker Goethe-Universität Frankfurt



High Potentials – Parenting skills are still unrecognized by the company “Parenting skills & work“ – Report 4/10

By Joachim E. Lask & Dr. Nina M. Junker

“My employers and colleagues don’t care about it. In contrary, they are gossiping without end.”

Mother of 3 children, employed by the police

“Communication, empathy (My employer knows these competences, but doesn’t necessarily appreciate them; for him the disadvantages are outweighing – like not being as flexible as full-time employees, missing accessibility, alleged work loss due to the child’s sickness).”

Mother of one child, leadership in public service

Written comments of parents regarding their experiences for the item „My employer/supervisor knows my competences applied at work, which I developed in my family.”

Background

In the first three reports we showed that employed parents with or without leading responsibilities develop interdisciplinary competences within their family setting. They also expect to be better employees or supervisors due to these competences. This is what we call “spillover expectation”. As with company training, the main question is whether these interdisciplinary competences are recognized and actually take effect in the work place.

Previous research on managing family and work often focused on the conflict between these roles. In these conflicts parents are caught between two fronts: family and work, in terms of time, work load or behavior. Results from this tradition of research focus upon the negative side of combining family and work, including less job satisfaction, higher intentions to leave and more vulnerability to burnout (cf. Greenhaus et al., 2006).

In contrast (see Report 2/10) parents can experience gain, because of the roles they have: parenthood and employment. This is what we call work-family enrichment. For example, skills learned at home can be beneficial at work. This is comparable with a positive training transfer from company training, but with the difference that family competences are learned informally while in company training, formal learning takes place.

Greenhaus et al. (2006) mentioned three characteristics which *increase* the spillover. (1) Appreciation & expectation: if the employer/supervisor appreciates and expects the interdisciplinary competences of parents to be applied in the workplace, a positive spillover takes place. (2) Relevance & benefit: The spillover goes well, if the meaning and the benefit of the developed competences of the parents regarding the work place are high. (3) Fit: The

spillover works better, the more the developed competences of parents fit to the work group and the company culture/standards.

The research about training transfer after company training (Weinbauer-Heidel, 2016) also provides good guidance for our issue. According to that research the training transfer is defined as knowledge, ability and attitude, which is acquired within the training and successfully applied at work (Baldwin et al. 1988). Estimations indicate that the training success is very low, around 10-15% (Khasawneh et al. 2006; Kauffeld et al. 2008), meaning that only a fraction of what is learnt is also used in the daily work life. For our issue we selected the following characteristics from the training transfer research:

- Characteristics of the working environment:
The working environment, as well as the relationships with employers or colleagues, can make an essential contribution to the transfer success/failure (Hatala et al., 2007).
 - The influence of the supervisor is a central criterion for successful training transfer (Blume et al., 2010). Before the training, this influence already starts and extends to the time after the training. As a representative of values, attitudes and expectations of the company, the supervisor influences the training transfer. Thereby through his/her behavior s/he functions as a model (Sonntag et al., 2005).
 - The support of colleagues becomes more important for the training transfer in the context of self-controlling teams. For example, colleagues are supporting the training transfer by giving feedback or being willing to discuss training content and its application (Hawley et al., 2005).
 - The transfer climate should be the general influences of the working environment, which also influences the training transfer. Rouiller et al. (1993) showed in their study that the transfer climate explains 54% of the variance of the training transfer. Key words in this topic are “management support”, “job support” and “organizational support”.
 - The application possibilities of the individual who completed the training are a further important influencing factor to transfer. Moreover, missing possibilities to apply the knowledge, can be a primary barrier to training transfer (Lim et al., 2002).
- Characteristics of the trainees:
 - Organizational values and standards. Gilpin-Jackson et al. (2007) recognized that one of the biggest barriers of transfer is the fear of violation of cultural standards by applying what you have learned. This fear also influences the extent to which colleagues or employers are giving social support.
 - The trainee learning motivation (pre-training motivation) and transfer motivation (post-training motivation) are distinct (Mathieu et al., 1997). For example, you have a great motivation to learn something new, but then only a low motivation to apply what you have learned (or the other way around).
 - Personality traits: For example, it was shown that the level of the trainees’ self-efficacy belief/expectation is positively related to the training transfer (Burke et al., 2007). Self-efficacy is understood as belief in your capabilities to organize and perform a certain action to reach certain goals. So, it has been shown that a high self-efficacy predicts a higher learning and transfer motivation (Tai, 2006) and with that also a higher training transfer (Blume et al., 2010).
 - Expectations and experiences are also related with the training transfer. Are the invested efforts in the training for competence development (action-result expectation) worth it? Do good training results lead to desirable consequences

like a promotion or respect (results-consequences expectation)? Positive expectations correlate with a higher learning motivation (Cannon-Bowers, 1995). Moreover, training successes depend on previous expectations of the trainee (Santos, 2003). These expectations of the trainee may be with the training itself, as well as expectations regarding his/her training transfer in his/her work environment (see "Characteristics of the work environment").

- The training density of the organization also has an influence on the training transfer. It is supported, if a higher number of employees (critical mass) are trained within the company.
- Characteristics of the training design
 - Information and expectation clarity. The perceived benefit of the training depends on
 - (1) the conviction of the trainer that the new capabilities are leading to a performance improvement,
 - (2) the perception of the trainee that a performance improvement is necessary,
 - (3) the conviction that the application of the new capabilities will lead to performance improvement (Hutchins, 2009).

The Survey

As it was presented in Reports 1-3, most employed parents recognize their developed interdisciplinary competences. They also expect a high spillover or training transfer, such that they are better employees or supervisors due to their parenting skills.

Within the next investigation section, we want to know from the parents to what extent they believe that their trained interdisciplinary competences are recognized or used at the work place. For this purpose, we asked the participants to estimate:

- (1) whether their supervisor knows their developed competences
- (2) whether the parents already spoke with their supervisor about their competences
- (3) to which extent parents had advantages at their workplace due to these competences.

In this report we are going to discuss the parents' estimations to whether their supervisor is aware of these developed competences. For the estimation parents use a scale between „0 disagree“ and „10 strongly agree“. Again, we asked the parents to give written reasons for their estimations.

So far, 364 parents participated in our survey. 305 complete datasets are available. On average, the participating 197 mothers were 42.50 years old, had 2.62 children and 72.85 percentage of employment. The average descriptive values of the 108 participating fathers were an age of 45.28, number of 2.62 children and an employment of 96.91 percent.

Results

As presented in figure 1, 80% of employed parents indicated they have developed interdisciplinary competences within their family. 73.11% regarded the spillover/training transfer to being better employees or supervisors due to their parenting skills with „absolutely agree“. However, if parents with this estimation were asked whether their supervisor is aware of their competences, only 22.30% responded with „strongly agree“.

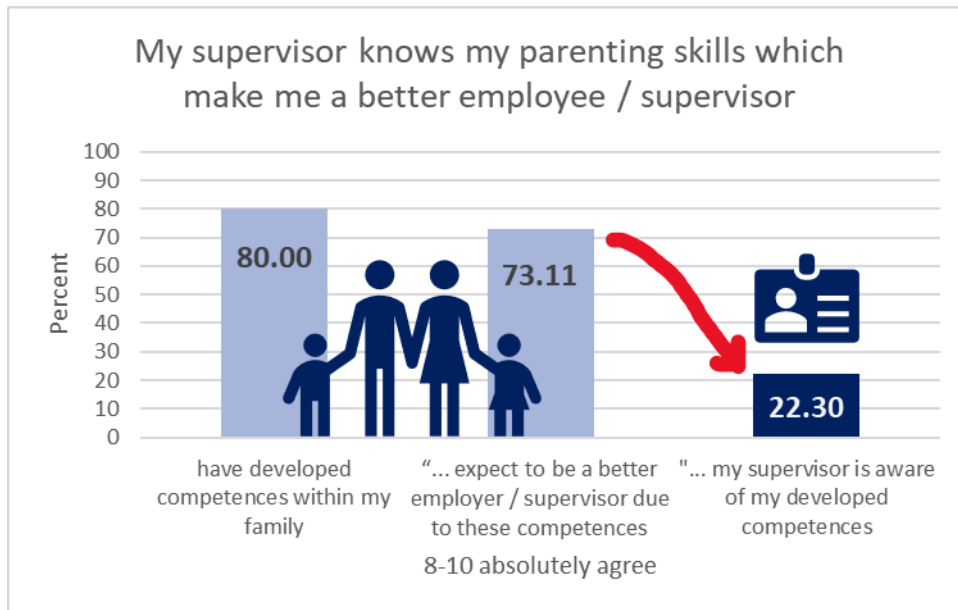


Figure 1: Estimation of employed parents (N=305) on a scale between 0 “disagree” and 10 “absolutely agree” regarding the statements “have developed competences within my family”, “... expect to be a better employer / supervisor due to these competences” and “... my supervisor is aware of my developed competences”.

This 50% gap is unfortunate for both parents and supervisors. Let’s assume you are taking part in an intensive further training, but afterwards nobody notices that you developed new competences within this training. We expect a motivation loss of parents at the workplace if capabilities like conflict resolution, negotiation, agile management, organizational capabilities or stress management are neither recognized nor appreciated. Furthermore, the supervisor cannot access possible parents’ competences, although they might be strongly needed for the target achievement of the work tasks. For this we assume concrete loss of production in the company.

This is as if a deal with a Vietnamese customer cannot be closed because of language barriers, even though one of the employees is able to speak Vietnamese, but the supervisor is not aware.

How is the supervisor’s recognition of the parenting skills influenced by the results that were presented in Report 1-3? How great is the influence of the parents’ developed interdisciplinary competences and their spillover expectation?

We assume the following relationships:

- (1) The more interdisciplinary competences parents develop within their family, the more often the supervisors will recognize these competences.
- (2) The higher the spillover expectation of the parents being a better employee due to their parenting skills, the sooner supervisors recognize these family developed competences.

Our analyses confirm our assumptions. The correlation turned out to be significant but weak for both assumptions:

- (1) Developed parenting skills – supervisor recognizes parenting skills: $r=0.23$; $p<0.001$.
- (2) Spillover expectation – supervisor recognizes parenting skills: $r=0.25$; $p<0.001$.

So far, with our presented results, we soberly discovered: Considering that only 10-15% of training transfer of other operational trainings can be expected, at least 22% of the employed parents estimate their parenting skills to be recognized by their supervisor. Having said this, it is to be noted that those competences the supervisor knows about, are not necessarily competences which parents productively apply at the work place. Only after the process of fitting (what kind of parents' developed competences match with the action-competence model) and its successful application in the working practice will the real training transfer will be presented.

In the following Reports 5 + 6 we are going to discuss this issue, when we ask the parents whether they already spoke about their developed interdisciplinary competences with their supervisor (Report 5) and to which extent they already had advantages at their work place due to their parenting skills (Report 6).

Explanatory approaches for the 50%-gap

How can the great gap between the high parents' spillover expectation and the low spillover effect – that the supervisor does not recognize parenting skills which are relevant for work – be explained?

On the one hand **characteristics of the work environment** could be responsible for that. It could be possible that the supervisor's low level of recognition of the parenting skills correlates with the supervisor him-/herself, who does not expect a competence improvement through the family at all. This consideration corresponds with the fact that 2/3 of the German supervisors live without children in their household and thereby know the family reality only a little.

Also, the acceptance from colleagues of informally developed interdisciplinary competences within the family can be low, so that feedback or support for the recognition of work relevant parenting skills rarely happen.

Let's look at the transfer climate in the company, which plays an important role for the spillover effect / training transfer. Most of the companies describe themselves as "family-friendly", but often this label does not make the company culture a family oriented one. Like this, reliefs for employed parents are provided, for example with flexible working hours, company kindergarten or mobile labor supplies. But still the high potential of the informal learning within the family is not (yet) recognized or used strategical or systematical for the human resources development.

On the other hand, **characteristics of the employed parents** could also be responsible for the low spillover effect. Possibly, the parents' transfer motivation is low, because they

- (a) Do not/cannot identify or describe their informal developed competences (yet),
- (b) did not have an understanding of how to transfer their parenting skills into work,
- (c) worry about violating the employers' cultural standards, if they define their parenting skills as a "plus" for the work process,
- (d) do not use their developed competences, because they do not want to take more responsibility within the company,
- (e) do not identify an advantage for themselves within the company, if they use their developed competences.

Finally, another reason for the low spillover effect could be the company's attitude towards the "competence center family", from which a possibility for competence development is not expected. Family is rather regarded as a "disturbance" and an evil to accept, which you now want to make the best of.

In our investigation we asked the participants to indicate, which competences their supervisors recognized. Within this question, 21 parents wrote down their estimations about the reason why supervisors do not recognize work relevant parenting skills. Here are some selected examples:

"Unfortunately, these competences are not yet accepted in the work life."

Mother of 4 children, finance sector

"Social competency, assertiveness, capability to admit failures, involvement of the team in your own ideas/wishes/decisions. It is questionable, whether my supervisor relates this to my family experiences."

Father of 2 children, supervisor in public service

"I don't know, whether and to which extent it is seen in this way; is rather not ascribed to the family."

Father of 2 children, association work

"I can hardly believe that my supervisor sees a relationship here, maybe he senses it."

Father of 2 children, finance sector

Further Results

What other correlations arise between the parents' estimated spillover characteristic, the statement "My supervisor recognizes my interdisciplinary competences which I developed within my family", and the following characteristics:

- mothers vs. fathers
- number of children
- age of the youngest child
- parents' age
- employment
- with or without leadership responsibilities
- position in the company

That parenting skills are not recognized by the supervisor is not influenced by the gender of the parents. We did not find a significant mean difference for employed parents with or without leading responsibilities or for their different positions in the company. Further, our correlation analyses point to no significant relation of the spillover characteristic to the parents' age, degree of employment as well as the youngest child's age.

Again, as well as in our Reports 1-3, our analyses show a significant but weak correlation between the number of children and the supervisor's recognition of parenting skills ($r=0.16$; $p<0.01$). In the first instance, that means: the more children you have at home, the more parents experience that their supervisors recognize their parenting skills. We analyzed this more precisely and can show that, due to the estimation whether the supervisor recognizes

the parenting skills, parents with one to three children can be described as a homogeneous group. Regarding this item, as presented in figure 2, 20.31% of the total 261 parents rate the statement with „absolutely agree”. Whereas the 44 parents with four or more children are rating the same way with 34.09%, which is 14% higher than the parents with one to three children. A variance analysis confirms the mean difference between the two groups as significant ($p=0,012$; see appendix).

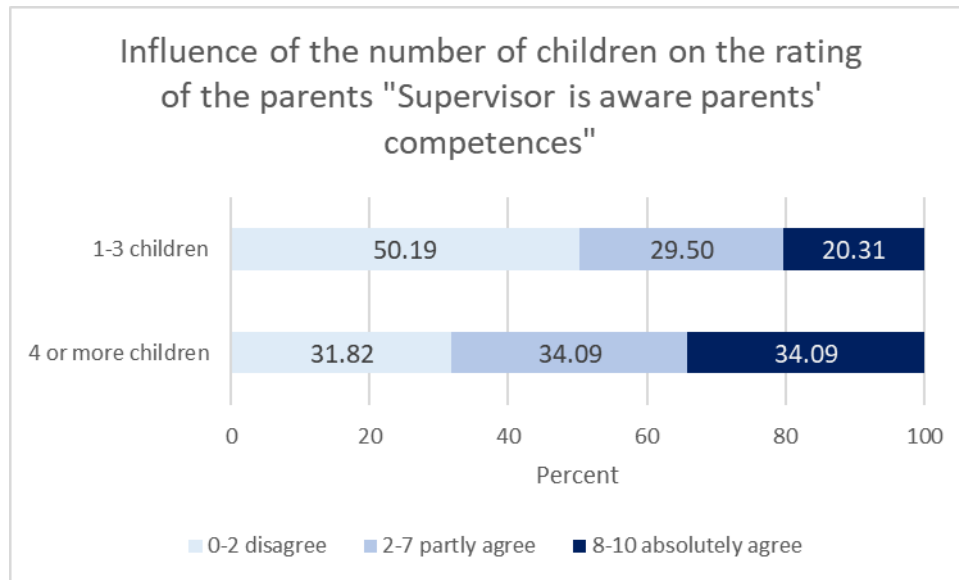


Figure 2: Estimation of employed parents (N=305) on a scale between 0 “disagree“ and 10 “absolutely agree“, that their own supervisor recognizes work relevant interdisciplinary competences. Comparing parents with 1-3 children and parents with 4 or more children.

What can this difference be attributed to?

We assume that in public perception families with four or more children, compared to families with one to three children, are perceived as an especially challenging situation for parents. Parents with four or more children do not uniformly report about this greater challenge, but about feedback related to it, by the social environment such as: “Four (or more) children are a great challenge! How do you manage that?” Regarding these kinds of responses, we assume that these parents perceive their supervisor’s recognition of their developed parenting skills more consciously.

Thereby our explanatory approach up to now is complemented. So far, we assumed that due to the increasing complexity of parental challenges with more children, developing interdisciplinary competences is taking place more frequently and more intensively. Following this reasoning, it is also possible that supervisors sooner recognize this “more” of parenting skills.

Questions for you

1. What is the reason for the 50% gap between developed parenting skills and the estimation of “supervisor recognizes the parenting skills”?
2. Where do you see as possible causes and influences for the issue that interdisciplinary competences of parents with many children are recognized sooner?

We would be happy to receive your opinions on this on LinkedIn, as well as if you would like to comment on other entries. You can reach the discussion by following this [Link](#). You may also send your contribution as an email to lask@workfamily-institut.de.

Conclusion:

For employed parents, as well as for companies we see the following conclusions:

1. As an employer, manager or director show the parents your openness regarding to informal developed interdisciplinary competences. This can happen through considering informal competences within application letters.
2. Sensitize supervisors about the issue of informal learning within parenthood, nursing, sports or voluntary work. Also give specific examples.
3. As an employed parent dare to address your developed competences. Give a specific example. If you do not know how to formulate this professionally, the free webinar www.kompetenzexpert.de provides you with help.
4. Speak with other parents in your work environment about informal learning.

Authors:



Joachim E. Lask, graduate psychologist, founder and manager of the WorkFamily-Institut. Since 2004, he works with the enrichment concept for balancing work and family. Development of instruments for the spillover effect for human resources development. Summarized presentation in „Gute Eltern sind bessere Mitarbeiter“ (“Good parents are the better employees“, Springer-Verlag, 2017).



Dr. Nina Mareen Junker studied psychology at the Universität Mannheim and wrote her PhD at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main about implicit leadership and followership theories. Since 2016 she has been employed in the department of social psychology at the Goethe-Universität. Her current focus of research is on managing work and family roles, group processes and the development of burnout. Further, she has been working as a coach and consultant within the field of occupational health management for several years.

References:

- Baldwin, T. T., & Ford, J. K. 1988. Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel psychology*, 41(1): 63-105.
- Blume, B. D., Ford, J. K., Baldwin, T. T., & Huang, J. L. 2010. Transfer of Training: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Management*, 36(4): 1065-1105.
- Burke, L. A., & Hutchins, H. M. 2007. Training Transfer: An Integrative Literature Review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6(3): 263-296.
- Cannon-Bowers, J. A., Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S. I., & Mathieu, J. E. 1995. Toward theoretically based principles of training effectiveness: A model and initial empirical investigation. *Military Psychology*, 7(3): 141-164.
- Clarke, N. 2002. Job/Work Environment Factors Influencing Training Transfer Within a Human Service Agency: Some Indicative Support for Baldwin and Ford's Transfer Climate Construct. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 6: 146-162.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Powell, G. N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work-family enrichment. *Academy of Management Review*, 31, 72–92. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.2006.19379625
- Gilpin-Jackson, Y., & Bushe, G. R. 2007. Leadership development training transfer: a case study of posttraining determinants. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(10): 980-1004.
- Hatala, J. P., & Fleming, P. R. 2007. Making transfer climate visible: Utilizing social network analysis to facilitate the transfer of training. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6(1): 33-63.
- Hawley, J. D., & Barnard, J. K. 2005. Work environment characteristics and implications for training transfer: A case study of the nuclear power industry. *Human Resource Development International*, 8(1): 65-80.
- Hutchins, H. M. 2009. In the trainer's voice: A study of training transfer practices. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 22(1): 69-93.
- Kauffeld, S., Bates, R., Holton, E. F., III, & Müller, A. C. 2008. Das deutsche Lerntransfer-Systeminventar (GLTSI): Psychometrische Überprüfung der deutschsprachigen Version. *Zeitschrift für Personalpsychologie*, 7(2): 50-69.
- Khasawneh, S., Bates, R., & Holton, E. F., III. 2006. Construct validation of an Arabic version of the Learning Transfer System Inventory for use in Jordan. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 10(3): 180-194.
- Lim, D. H., & Johnson, S. D. 2002. Trainee perceptions of factors that influence learning transfer. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 6(1): 36-48.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Martineau, J. W. 1997. Individual and situational influences on training motivation. In J. K. Ford, S. W. J. Kozlowski, K. Kraiger, E. Salas, & M. S. Teachout (Eds.), *Improving Training Effectiveness in Work Organizations*: 193-221. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah.
- Rouiller, J. Z., & Goldstein, I. L. 1993. The Relationship between Organizational Transfer Climate and Positive Transfer of Training. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 4(4): 377-390.
- Santos, A., & Stuart, M. 2003. Employee perceptions and their influence on training effectiveness. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 13(1): 27-45.
- Sonntag, K., & Stegmaier, R. 2005. Lernkulturen verstehen, gestalten und messen. Das „Lernkulturinventar“ als organisationsdiagnostisches Verfahren zur Messung von Lernkultur. *Personalführung*, 1/2005: 22-29.

Tai, W. T. 2006. Effects of training framing, general self-efficacy and training motivation on trainees' training effectiveness. *Personnel Review*, 35(1): 51-65.

Weinbauer-Heindel (2016). *Transferförderung in der betrieblichen Weiterbildungspraxis*. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. DOI 10.1007/978-3-658-11920-1

The following Reports are in preparation and will be published soon

- Report 5/10: Parenting skills under discussion with the supervisor
- Report 6/10: Effective advantages of parenting skills at the work place
- Report 7/10: Importance of parent networking within the company for the integration of parenting skills in the employee development
- Report 8/10: Fathers use the „competence center family“ differently – mothers as well!
- Report 9/10: What do supervisors need for the systematic application of the parenting skills in the employee development?
- Report 10/10: The top 20 parenting skills and their benefits for the company

Special Reports in preparation

- Leadership - Learning by Family
- Development of resilience through parenthood
- Internal role models of parents and supervisors about parenthood and personnel

Picture credits:

Seite 1: © pololia-fotolia

Seite 8: © Elisabeth Gärtner, © Moritz Sirowatka

Appendix:

Varianzanalyse

Variable: AG kennt EK
 gruppiert nach: Nkinder

	Quadrat- summe	Freiheits- grade	mittlere QS	F	P
Zwischen	71,06501105	1	71,06501105	6,319792908	0,012458003
Innerhalb	3407,184169	303	11,24483224		
Gesamt	3478,24918	304	11,44160915		

Bartlett-Test zur Varianzgleichheit

Chi-Quadrat	Freiheits- grade	P
0,479747283	1	0,488536811

Multiple Vergleiche

Method: Significance (p):

Kritische Mittelwert-Differenzen zwischen Gruppenpaaren (rechts oben)
 und Signifikanzwertung (links unten):

	(Mittelwert)	1-3 Kinder	4 und mehr Kinder
1-3 Kinder	4,103448276	----	1,075390247
4 und mehr Kinder	5,477272727	ja	----

Homogene Untermengen

	1	2
1-3 Kinder	*	
4 und mehr Kinder		*