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Perceptions of Employees and Supervisors of a Skills Training Program

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Abstract

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Lincoln Todd Calcavecchi

MA, Webster University, 2012

BA, Regis University, 1994

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Organizational leaders know that training improves worker performance, but training is often initiated without considering employees' work task requirements. This instrumental case study was conducted to understand the perceptions of employees who completed a skills training program and those of supervisors. The conceptual framework was andragogy, emphasizing self-efficacy and self-direction, motivation, and goal setting for adult learners. The guiding questions addressed the perceptions of employees about their self-directed participation in the skills training program and its relationship to work tasks and supervisors' perceptions of employees' participation in that program. Semi-structured interviews with 8 individual employees and a focus group with 5 supervisors were conducted to discover those perceptions. All study participants found the training program to be generally beneficial, but some findings were unexpected. Employees expressed disappointment that anticipated promotion opportunities did not result from completing the program. Supervisors stressed that the high organizational operations tempo prevented employees from performing what they learned in the program. The findings led to the proposal of an instructor development program for the study site with the intent of improving instructor abilities to create more effective training. Through the program, instructors would increase knowledge and skills in instructional and design skills. Through a performance-based mindset that focuses on whether the training participant has improved in trained work tasks, instructors would be enabled to better prepare employees to succeed in work tasks and career goals and provide leaders with the information and products that they require.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Training is often seen as the problem or the cure when a question arises regarding whether employees can perform what is expected of them on the job (Mager, 1997). However, training alone cannot ensure employees perform on work tasks what they should have learned in the classroom (Haskell, 2001). In order for employees to change work task behaviors after participating in training events, they must apply consistent effort after training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005, p. 14). However, what is received in the classroom is often unused when employees return to work after attending formal training (Gottfredson & Mosher, 2001, p. 5), even though managers presume that training improves performance (Aragon & Valle, 2013).

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of employees whose work responsibilities include information processing and written report production and who completed a skills training program. Additionally, the intent of the study was to understand those experiences and perceptions of supervisors regarding employees' work performance after completion of the program. This section includes a description of the problem and the rationale for conducting the study, significant study definitions, the guiding research questions, the literature review, the potential implications of the study, and a summary.

The literature review in this section builds on the significant study definitions through a discovery of recent scholarship. Seminal literature on andragogy, self-direction, motivation, goal setting, and individual mindsets of adult learners as well as younger

learners sets the stage for understanding the foundations of the study. Recent scholarship includes discoveries within the previous 5 years regarding self-efficacy, self-direction, motivation to learn and to transfer, goal setting, and perceptions of adults who participated in training.

Definition of the Problem

Employees in a federal defense government organization (the study site) in the United States voluntarily attended courses in a skills training program since mid-2008 in which they learned information analysis techniques and written communications strategies. The attending employees may have had military experience or come from families of military members, and possibly have had various postsecondary degrees of education. The study site hired some employees directly from the civilian sector with college degrees but no military experience, and these employees may have attended the program as well. The program contained 11 individual training courses, and not all employees who completed some courses completed the entire program. The program's trained techniques and strategies require employees to conceptualize and make judgments to better research for and then communicate required information to organizational leadership (Gottfredson & Mosher, 2011). Therefore, the content of the courses in the program may have focused on knowledge attainment alongside job skills training. The study site recently instituted a new training program that was designed to supplant the original program, but the original program was not evaluated before being replaced (D. J. Pfaff, personal communication, 22 May 2015). The original training program was not mandated by policy; therefore, employees' participation suggested that they engaged in

the training for personal reasons and managed their participation through self-direction, self-motivation, and personal goal setting. The content of the training courses in the original training program may still be valid for the study site, but employees and supervisors had not been studied regarding their perceptions of and experiences with the program. Therefore, it was unknown whether they perceived it to have met organizational needs. Discovering their perspectives could have aided the study site in its decision to either retain the content of the former program, make changes through instructional design technologies and training measures, or replace the program completely with different, newer training.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The study site recently instituted a new skills training program for information analysis and written communications work tasks, but did not direct that a program evaluation be conducted regarding the original skills training program (D. J. Pfaff, personal communication, 22 May 2015). The study site also did not direct that the original program be discontinued, as aspects of the original program are still in the study site's training catalog. It is common practice that when adult learners complete training events, they complete course reaction surveys, commonly known as Level One surveys (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005), which measure initial satisfaction once a training event has finished. At the study site, learners are requested to complete these surveys, but it is not mandated; therefore, those surveys had not been used in an active way to measure the effectiveness of the original skills training program or as a performance

consultation platform. A program evaluation could have added a layer of depth to study site understanding, providing information the reaction surveys may have not.

Leadership at the study site must be assured its employees are able to use on the job what they should have learned in formal training, as noted in a study by Mayer, Moss, Fraccastoro, & Giles (2011). Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor (2010) observed while in Afghanistan that federal defense employees were not consistently able to perform their work tasks, and these authors suggested changes to how those employees should be trained. In order for organizations to use resources efficiently and employees to provide useful and relevant work products, it is helpful to know what attending employees and their supervisors perceive about training programs (Brown, McCracken, & O'Kane, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2013; Nielsen, Randall, & Christensen, 2010). Such program evaluations can alert organizations if there are perceived deficiencies (Mager, 1997; Mager & Pipe, 1997), and this could also apply to the study site.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Organizations invest in training for competitive advantage and to ensure continuous employee employability, learning, and skills development (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012; Smith, Dymock & Billett, 2013). Researching employees in two industries in Australia, Smith et al. (2013) discovered that workplace training was undertaken because of a mandate or regulation, a specific need or requirement, such as equipment or job tasks, or for personal reasons. After the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, congressional leaders determined the skill sets of government employees for information analysis and written communications work

tasks were inadequate and would require improvement for the United States to regain competitive advantage (Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, 2004). As a result, new government agencies promulgated standards to address the observed inadequacies (Clapper, 2015; Fravel, 2010). To meet organizational leadership decision-making needs, employees within specified government organizations, including the present study site, are to follow these new standards to perform their information analysis and written communications work tasks (Clapper, 2015; Flynn et al., 2010). These standards were enacted after the original training program was created and enacted.

Lam (2014) echoed Salas et al. (2012) that organizations invest significant resources in training and explained that training program evaluations are often conducted too late to offer meaningful results. Regarding training programs, Lam (2014) stated the increasing focus of program evaluations is on the results of training and benefits to the organization. Working with the US Department of Labor in the 1970s, Ashenfelter (2014) stated that conducting program evaluations is difficult due to the problems of data collection, external factor effects on training results, and the acceptance by employers that a program exists simply because training is happening. He questioned whether it can be inferred that other training programs would work as well when it is difficult to make inferences about an existing program, in light of these three issues. Given that the study site had invested since 2008 in the original training program, the study site would benefit from knowing the perceptions of those who completed the original program to decide whether to continue using the original program content to train its personnel. As the

original program was no longer the training program of record, a program evaluation was inappropriate at this time, suggesting a qualitative case study be conducted instead.

Regarding the Level One reaction surveys completed by trainees immediately after training is finished, Holton (1996) stated that those surveys do not indicate the true value of training because they only record the trainees' initial level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the training. These surveys do not actually suggest trainees learned anything in the courses or programs. The after-training reaction surveys completed at the study site would only have suggested satisfaction as a mediator of learning from the training, as described by Holton (1996). However, a qualitative case study could enhance the study site's understanding of the experiences and perceptions of those employees who attended the original skills training program beyond what may have been reported in those original training reaction surveys.

Many factors affect the quality of training and training attendees' perceptions of that training. Currie and Davidson (2015) reported that educational psychologists who attended training rated that the impact of the training depended on factors such as facilitation style, balance of activities, discussions, and quality of resources. In contrast, Escoffery et al. (2015), surveyed training needs of grantees for a Centers for Disease Control program, and reported that barriers to participation in training would be the perception by potential attendees that training content would not match work tasks and that content may be too basic in relation to work tasks. Furthermore, both Currie and Davidson (2015) and Lau and McLean (2013) found that whether training is mandatory or voluntary has an effect on trainee perceptions and outcomes. Last, incompetence of

training staff is a reality in educational programs, and it wastes trainees' time and puts training at peril (Al-Ahaideb et al., 2014).

Definitions

The following definitions will aid the reader to better understand the concepts discussed herein.

Goals: Signals that provide a sense of direction (Brown, McCracken, and Hillier, 2013). Goals involve setting standards against which to evaluate the ensuing actions (Bandura, 1977).

Motivation: The process of directing energy toward a goal, which is inferred by observation of effort (Wlodkowski, 2008).

Self-directed learning: The learner's process of determining a learning need, planning a learning goal, identifying resources to fulfill that need, fulfilling that need, and evaluating the outcome (Knowles, 1975).

Self-efficacy: The personal belief that one has the required behavioral abilities to produce an expected outcome (Bandura, 1977).

Significance

Questioning the value of training is common in organizations (Aragon & Valle, 2013), but the study site had not followed through from questioning to determining a lack of value with an evaluation to discover the experiences of the employees and their supervisors regarding their perceptions of and experiences with the original skills training program before replacing it. When employees are better prepared for work tasks, such as cognitive tasks, through formal training, organizational leadership can be more certain

that their decisions are based on sound thinking (Zacharakis & Van Der Werff, 2012). At the study site, better employee preparedness to perform work tasks could have resulted if the study site had known the perceptions of employees and their supervisors regarding the training. Therefore, a qualitative case study was appropriate to provide information to the study site so that its instructional designers, trainers, and management can better prepare employees to perform work task requirements. I anticipated that completion of the study could have led to policy implications to improve organizational return on investment.

Guiding Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the perceptions of employees whose work responsibilities include information processing and written report production and who completed the original training program and to discover the perceptions of supervisors about the relationship between the training and work tasks at the site. As these individuals had not been studied regarding the training program and since the program is no longer a training program of record, discovering their perspectives could have aided the study site in its decision to either retain the content from the current program, make changes through instructional systems design and training measures, or replace the program completely with different, newer training.

Two guiding research questions were posed for this study:

1. What are the perceptions of employees who completed the training program about their self-directed participation in that program and its relationship to work tasks?
2. What are the perceptions of supervisors of employees who completed the program

about the relationship between the employees' training experience and work tasks at the study site?

Review of the Literature

This synthesis of literature focused on five main topics: the conceptual framework, self-directed learning and self-efficacy, motivation, goals and goal setting, support to the trainee, and trainee perceptions. The review of the literature consisted of journal articles and professional books using Walden University Library databases and Google Scholar. The primary databases I used were ERIC, Education Research Complete, PsycINFO, and SAGE Premier. I searched other Walden University Library databases, such as Communication and Mass Media Complete, to discover a potential breadth of training research that may have been published in non-educational or psychological research journals. From search results, I also chose research that had been completed by authors from non-Western countries, such as Brazil or Malaysia, to demonstrate that the study elements I would discuss were not restricted to research by English-speaking authors. The search terms used include *andragogy*, *self-directed learning*, *self-efficacy*, *motivation*, *goal setting*, *training*, *trainee perceptions*, *program evaluation*, *transfer of learning*, and *transfer of training*, because participation and completion required employees to be self-directed and to demonstrate self-efficacy, motivation, and goal setting. These qualities would likely also have affected employees' perceptions of the training they completed. The literature used was collected from scholarly research conducted over the past 5 years with the exception of information from professional books and seminal literature regarding the conceptual framework and topics.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on andragogy and self-directed learning. Knowles (1975) used andragogy to mean activities that helps adults learn, as distinguished from teaching children, or pedagogy. These two models of teaching distinguish between the degrees of direction provided to the learner, with the teacher providing more direction to the learner in a pedagogical setting. Educators must determine which model teaching model, either andragogical or pedagogical, is appropriate for particular situations of adult education (Peterson & Ray, 2013). The difference between the models is the locus of control of the learning event, which is content and learner specific (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (1975) suggested that adults, being generally less dependent and more in control of their own lives, are self-directed in their learning. Knowles (1975) lamented, however, that most adults only know how to be taught, which is pedagogical, having not learned how to learn, but that those who could learn on their own and took initiative learned more, learned better, and retained more of what they learned. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011) recognized an evolution in thinking about self-directed learning from Knowles' earlier theory (1975), explaining that even adults could have learning experiences in which they prefer more pedagogical learning approaches, or more direction from the teacher or instructor. Researchers have suggested new terms that combine seemingly the best of both teaching approaches as techniques from each model apply to the instruction of learners of all ages (Peterson & Ray, 2013; Samaroo, Cooper, & Green, 2013).

Andragogy is based on assumptions of adult learners, which form the adult learning principles of andragogy: that adults need to know why they are learning, what they are learning, and how they will learn; that people move from dependency to greater degrees of self-direction as they grow into adulthood and more psychological maturity, though sometimes they will fall into dependency according to the need or situation; that people accumulate greater reservoirs of experience that they can use as a resource; that adults learn when there is a need, and because adults are performance centered, adult education is a process of increasing competency to fulfill specific potentials given those situations of need; and that adults are motivated to learn by internal incentives and curiosity (Knowles et al., 2011).

When adults enter a training event, such as in an organization's classroom, they bring with them both quantity and quality of experience, which is demonstrated by a wide range of personal histories, learning styles, and motivations and goals for learning (Knowles et al., 2011). Adults derive their identity from their experience, the volume and diversity of which defines them (Knowles, 1980; 1990). Due to life experiences, adults are themselves a resource for learning, because their experience provides the foundation from which to relate new experiences (Dewey, 1997; Knowles, 1980). However, because of these experiences, some of which are likely to be miseducative (Dewey, 1997), adults become fixed in behaviors and thought patterns (Dweck, 2006), which cause them to be less open minded and more susceptible to cognitive biases that affect their work (Heuer, 1999; Knowles, 1990). Bias will be evident in learning because prior knowledge, as

experience, affects memory through the process of attention and selection that acts as a filter on new learning (Knowles et al., 2011).

Bandura (1989) explained that a person's perceived self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to put into practice what has been learned, affects thinking processes, drawing on prior knowledge to solve problems and think analytically to make decisions. Strong self-efficacy beliefs influence the way a learner anticipates expected outcomes, which direct their thinking processes, resulting in actions and emotional arousal that then further strengthen self-efficacy perceptions or beliefs (Bandura, 1977; 1989). Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) found differences in self-efficacy beliefs between teenaged boys and girls, with boys having higher perceptions of their self-efficacy in areas normally associated with boys and girls having similar self-efficacy beliefs in areas associated with them, whether those beliefs were about academic work or social activities, which may suggest other causes for differences in self-efficacy beliefs. Academic achievement and aspirations play a role in academic self-efficacy beliefs, and social functioning, and emotional well-being played a role in social self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura et al., 1996).

Knowles (1975) stated that learners should exploit every experience as a learning experience, reflecting ideas from Lindeman and Dewey. Jarvis (2009) explained that experiential learning situates the learning within a social context, and Thompson (2013) stated that learning does not occur but within a social context. Lindeman (1970) stated that adult learning curricula should be built around the learner, in familiar situations rather than subjects, and that the learners' experience should be central. In the adult

learner's life, these experiences can be seen as changes in social roles or contexts, changing work situations, or the changes of employee functions as the instigation for the need and the orientation to learn (Knowles, 1980). The learning associated with these situations has also been called real-life learning (Bear, 2012) and serves as a motivational force. Thus, learning events must be appropriately timed to coincide with these real-life changing roles, because the adult learner enters the learning event oriented with a mindset to immediately apply what is learned (Knowles, 1980; 1990). Wlodkowski (2008) suggested that because adults have such a breadth of experience and greater goal orientation. they are more inclined to judge the worth of learning content to foster their motivation to learn. However, motivation to participate in adult learning is complex and subject to change (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Learner goals for learning shape the learning experience, and those goals are individual, institutional, or societal (Knowles et al., 2011). Becoming a member of a group entails taking on the goals of that group, but there are usually tensions between group and individual goals (Knowles & Bradford, 1952). Knowles and Bradford (1952) suggested the more effective groups are likely to be those that are self-directing. Conversely, Bandura (1989) stated that one's ability to self-appraise is related to the ability to set goals, whether as a group member or an individual. Wexley and Baldwin (1986) found that in setting goals, having those assigned by training personnel, rather than as a participatory relationship between the trainer and the learner, increased both learning of the training content and behavioral changes in the learner, suggesting the focus of the goal is an important factor in outcomes.

Dweck (2000) proposed that different learners have different goals in situations and these goals help to determine the responses they give to the situation. She identified two goals: the performance goal, such as wanting to get a good grade, to look smart, or to not fail; and the learning goal, such as wanting to increase competence and mastery, achieve greater understanding, or even have a willingness to fail. These goal orientations are also related to individual mindsets (Dweck, 2006), with the performance goal relating to the fixed or entity mindset of achievement and the learning goal relating to the growth or incremental mindset of achievement.

Self-Efficacy and Self-Directed Learning

Self-efficacy is specific to learning domains and relevant to learning contexts, but it is not an all-purpose quality (Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Sumbrunn, 2013). Perceived self-efficacy is an individual's belief in the capacity to put into practice what he or she is learning (Lauzier & Haccoun, 2014; Singh et al., 2013), for example, in a classroom or other training event. When researching the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers of health professions in India and South Africa, Singh et al. (2013) found that participation in training programs to learn self-efficacy increased the trainees' perceived ability to put knowledge and skills into practice, and that long-term training programs increase and sustain this perception. Bausch, Michel, & Sonntag (2014) found that it is the self-efficacy displayed after training that indicates training success, but it does not increase over the course of the training. However, this finding is in contrast to Hong and Park (2012), who found that self-efficacy did increase over time during the course of their research study of factors that affected general studies middle school students,

suggesting that self-efficacy is not only relevant to adult learners, but also to younger learners. Patrick, Smy, Tombs, and Shelton (2012) noted that although study participants being in their chosen job affected pre-training self-efficacy, this status did not affect post training self-efficacy. Researching self-efficacy as it relates to writing, Bruning et al. (2013) discovered that liking writing more strongly correlated with self-efficacy to manage the demands of writing and that this self-efficacy related to more positive affective arousal, or learning-related emotions.

Bausch et al. (2014) studied the differences between older and younger learners, and determined that older workers have different education and work experiences than younger workers. Although older men have been socialized to have stronger initial self-efficacy beliefs, older women showed greater progress on tasks, greater training success increases, and more development of self-efficacy during training (Bausch et al., 2014). Testing whether stereotype threats regarding women affect women's beliefs about their ability to perform training tasks, Mangels, Good, Whiteman, Maniscalco, and Dweck (2011) found that those women in the study who were under greater negative affective arousal made fewer or less meaningful attempts to continue to learn. The more the women in the study attended to this negative feedback about their abilities, such as internal dialogue or environmental cues, the earlier they gave up on study tasks and were unable to regulate this negative self-talk and benefit from strategies to improve on learning tasks (Mangels et al., 2011).

People have implicit theories or mindsets about their human characteristics, such as whether learning capabilities are unchanging (fixed or entity) or whether those

capabilities are malleable and changeable (growth or incremental), and these orientations affect how they approach difficult tasks, form goals, apply effort, and implement learning strategies (Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Singh et al. (2013) showed that attending training changed study participants' beliefs regarding transferring training to work tasks. Miller et al. (2012) showed that beliefs about whether will power is limitless or not act as self-fulfilling prophesy. Similarly, Patrick et al. (2012) showed that an employee being in his or her chosen job enabled greater belief that he or she could master performing that job, which is associated with self-efficacy. Kim, Oh, Chiaburu, and Brown (2012) studied these beliefs in United States young adult college students as core self-evaluations that encompass self-efficacy, self-esteem, and control. They found these core self-evaluations mediated self-efficacy beliefs as a linkage to performance outcomes, but they stated that further study should be conducted to determine if the findings are generalizable to full time employees or if the findings would relate to job performance (Kim et al., 2012).

Adults take initiative to decide on learning needs, formulate learning goals, and choose and implement learning strategies. Learners with an orientation toward self-directed learning will seek learning opportunities and persevere even in the face of challenges (Raemdonck, Gijbels, & van Groen, 2014). Although self-directed learning and requisite self-efficacy is normally attributed to adult learners, Hong and Park (2012) found a strong and significant impact of self-efficacy on the self-study habits of middle school students, leading to an increase in self-directed learning that was otherwise hampered by the structure and lack of learner control during private tutoring. Greater

self-efficacy in study skills brings about better academic performance that predicts more pleasant affective arousal, or learning related emotions (Putwain, Sander, & Larkin, 2013), which becomes a virtuous cycle of self-efficacy, self-direction, and academic performance.

In a study of self-directed learning of adult community college students in an intensive foreign language program for government linguists, Du (2013) discovered that self-efficacy affected learners' approach to and comfort with self-directed learning in a traditional learning setting, suggesting that self-efficacy may need to be evident in the learner if self-direction is to ensue. Learning style also seemed to affect self-directed learning, as those who took the initiative demonstrated common characteristics, such as being reflective and intuitive toward discovering new possibilities and relationships, preferring to receive new information from reading and writing, and being global in thinking strategies by preferring to receive information through a top-down approach (Du, 2013). These characteristics are similar for those who learn by remembering rules and who use more working memory to support increased reasoning processes by seeking the abstract in learning content from which to draw rules, as distinguished from exemplar learners, who prefer exemplars as the right answer to follow (McDaniel, Cahill, Robbins, & Wiener, 2014).

Motivation to Learn and Motivation to Transfer

Employees attend training events for a variety of reasons, sometimes volunteering to attend or being mandated to attend by leadership. The latter may negatively affect motivation to learn during a training event and affect training outcomes (Currie &

Davidson, 2015; Lau & McLean, 2013). Having doubts about current job task capabilities can motivate employees to seek training as long as the employee believes that the expected outcome would be positive (Singh et al., 2013). Employees' beliefs about themselves and training can affect their motivation to learn and the training outcomes (Kim et al., 2012; Sogunro, 2015). For instance, expressing beliefs, such as whether will power is limited or limitless, can affect their motivation to learn, especially when learning tasks become more difficult (Miller et al., 2012). Furthermore, emotional responses to learning tasks can influence motivation to learn depending on the threat levels posed either by the task or the learning environment (Mangels et al., 2012). Mangels et al. (2012) found that those under greater emotional duress during learning events may be more likely to attend to negative feedback, such as in the form of negative self-talk, and therefore lose motivation to continue with difficult or challenging learning tasks. Participants' inability to regulate these processes led to their loss of motivation, all due to the researchers priming study participants with the belief that their will power would give out at some point.

Learner satisfaction with learning seems to have an impact on motivation to transfer learning to the workplace. Patrick et al. (2012) found that motivation during training did not predict motivation to transfer learning after training. Seeking to discover the role satisfaction with training played on motivation to transfer learning from online learning in Pakistan to the participants' workplace, Zia-ur-Rehman and Shahzadi (2014) found that learner internal values, usefulness of learning the content, and the learning environment corresponded to learner satisfaction. However, they also found that these

elements did not individually relate to motivation to transfer online learning to the workplace, but that each was mediated by learner satisfaction, which if high was related to motivation to transfer learning to work tasks (Zia-ur-Rehman & Shahzadi, 2014). Malaysian banking industry employees' perception of training content validity helped to increase satisfaction, leading to increased motivation to retain and transfer what was learned (Bhatti, Ali, Isa, & Battour, 2014). Lau and McLean (2013) also found that the perception of high content validity of training, as well as training that is designed with transfer in mind, affected learners' performance self-efficacy beliefs, leading to increased motivation to learn and to transfer learning.

Lack of learner confidence can decrease motivation to learn, but learner perceptions of external support can increase that motivation (Jaidev & Chirayath, 2012; Winstead, 2013). Two examples of external environmental support are peer and supervisor support, which also includes mentoring or coaching. Positive trainee experiences after training from supervisor mentoring or coaching influence trainees' motivation to transfer what they have learned (Schindler and Burkholder, 2014). Bhatti et al. (2014) divided peer and supervisor support into before, during, and after training support, each affecting trainee motivation differently. Although trainees' internal motivation to apply what they learn to work tasks moderates transferring learning, peer and supervisor support directly influenced trainees' motivation to transfer (Bhatti et al., 2014), suggesting a circular relationship between trainee internal motivation and peer and supervisor external support. Motivation at work before training was found to be correlated with motivation at work after training, but that motivation can be modified

positively or negatively by trainees' perceptions of support from peers and supervisors, the role of whom is considered critical (Pilati & Borges-Andrade, 2012).

Determinants for motivation to transfer, conceived in Sanjeevkumar and Yanan's (2012) study as training effectiveness for human resources employees in a small government office in Malaysia, were the training environment and the work environment. Ng (2013) found peer support significantly positively influenced trainees' transferring learning to work tasks. The authors did not find this for supervisors' support, likely due to supervisors' inconsistent interactions with the employee participants in the study, which may or not be a cultural tendency or specific to the organization under study. In contrast to Ng, regarding environmental support after training MBA students who were also working managers in Vietnam, Pham, Segers, and Gijselaers (2012) found supervisor support to the trainee to be most significant to applying learning to work tasks.

Employees' satisfaction with their jobs is an important factor that can affect motivation to learn and transfer. Jodlbauer, Selenko, Batinic, and Stiglbauer (2011) found that when Austrian trainees employed in a variety of professional jobs had positive outcome expectations of their training, their job dissatisfaction was mediated to encourage them to attempt to transfer their learning, thus implying that perceived outcome expectations can affect motivation to learn and transfer learning. This is similar to the findings of Pilati and Borges-Andrade (2012) of banking employees. In contrast to job dissatisfaction and its effect on motivation to learn, being in one's chosen job correlated positively with motivation to learn, because trainees will engage with the

learning content and have greater belief that they can master content that is related to that chosen job (Patrick et al., 2012).

Goal Setting

Setting goals provides a person with a sense of direction, which can be motivational. Brown et al. (2013) discussed goal setting in relation to self-efficacy and the transfer of learning from the classroom to the work place, explaining that while previous studies asserted that setting specific and difficult goals was preferable to not setting goals, they discovered setting these types of goals did not increase or enhance self-efficacy or transfer of learning. Rather, setting do-your-best type goals caused the highest rate of transfer of training (Brown et al., 2013), possibly due to motivational factors and the ability to have more control over the results (Du, 2013). In relation to the number of goals set after a training event, Johnson, Garrison, Broome, Fleenor, and Steed (2012) found that while setting one goal for improvement was more noticeable to others than no goals set, setting multiple goals led observers to perceive that greater change had occurred after training.

Goal orientation in trainees can explain how they approach learning tasks (Lauzier & Haccoun, 2014). McDaniel et al. (2014) studied this phenomenon of goal orientation as the orientations of exemplar learners versus rule learners. They discovered that the former sought to follow examples in order to achieve the goal of having the right answer, while the latter sought the goal of deriving a rule they could use to discern the right answer. Lauzier and Haccoun (2014) addressed these two goal orientations, along with the avoidance goal, in their study of the relation of the type of training delivery-

modeling strategies to learner goal orientation. They discovered that different trainee goal orientations interacted differently with the different training delivery strategies. McDaniel et al. (2014) found the exemplar or rule orientation as being a relatively stable characteristic and that having a learning goal orientation relates to higher self-efficacy and the ability to perform better in training when presented with a mixed modeling of right and wrong exemplars. Conversely, Lauzier and Haccoun (2014) showed that those with a performance orientation performed well only if the right answer was provided, as the exemplar to follow, leading to the conclusion that trainee goal orientations should guide training delivery strategies to maximize trainee reactions, self-efficacy, and motivation.

Scielzo, Neeper, and Smith-Jentsch (2012) sought to discover if being trained in learning goal orientation would have a positive effect on learning performance. Using the learning goal orientation of the need for achievement and the avoid goal orientation of the need to avoid failure to determine the effects of being trained in goal orientation on the success of mentoring relationships, they discovered that mentees who received training in learning goal orientation reported higher levels of the learning goal orientation in themselves; whereas by contrast mentors reported higher levels of avoid goal orientation in themselves. Therefore, what is considered a stable learning condition could be modified by training, but it may be context and individual dependent (Brown et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2012).

Perceptions of Training

Organizations invest in the training of employees to ensure competitive advantage (Salas et al., 2012). Those that direct more resources toward training have employees with better skills and more positively affect employee performance, which increases performance (Aragon & Valle, 2013). Educational psychologists in training in Scotland stated that key strengths of training programs they attended were the facilitation style, a balance of activities in the training classroom, peer discussion and time to reflect on content, and relevant, high quality resources provided to trainees (Currie & Davidson, 2015). Sanjeevkumar and Yanan (2012) noted that while the type of training was not significant to the effectiveness of that training, training environment, similar to facilitation style, and the work environment, denoting supervisor and peer support, were significant in their effects on training, which was also noted by Henrikson, Polonyi, Bornsheuer-Boswell, Greger, and Watts (2015).

Training needs to be relevant to the job and participating learners. Studying the perceived benefits of optometry students completing a residency program, Quinn, Keppol, Bligdon, and Lyons (2015) reported that those who completed the program perceived their completion to have improved their confidence in job skills related to their field, expanded their employment opportunities, and established a professional identity within their field. Those who did not participate in the residency program did not due to either financial hardship or perceived lack of advantage. Quinn et al. (2012) stated that optometrists who completed the residency program believed that doing so had helped them complete their goals. Preservice music teachers reported on their perceptions of

their training program, stating that the training was best that directly related to doing the job and addressed what works, provided better ways to link the training to the job, and had what they considered better materials selection (Henrikson et al., 2015; Legette & McCord, 2014), which was also found by Currie and Davidson (2015). A problem faced by many who are already working and in need of training is that only limited numbers of employees can attend training due to busy schedules, lack of motivation, or lack of devotion to training programs (Zhang, Zhan, Li, Hu, & Yan, 2015). Perceptions of school psychologists who participated in a graduate training program are that training should have the right coursework, activities, and materials, emphasize core values or philosophies, and facilitate self-discovery and self-awareness in those attending the training (Miranda, Radliff, Cooper, & Eschenbrenner, 2014).

Implications

Leaders of organizations, whether business, education, or government, need to know if the training they are investing in is helping their workforce perform the skills required for those organizations to keep the competitive edge (Aragon & Valle, 2013; Mayer et al., 2011). The leadership at the study site represented in this study would likely have those same concerns. The implications of this study could suggest that the study site's leadership would decide on the future scope of its training programs. The results of the study could impact whether the study site would retain that original training program as it is, modify it through instructional systems design or training modality measures, or eliminate it altogether from its training programs portfolio to adopt new training.

After presentation of the results of this study to the site leadership, I could potentially collaborate with the site's instructional design technology staff. The study results could serve as a foundation for active, purposeful action research of the courses in the program that are still in the training catalog for a program redesign or modification. Should the study site leadership instead decide not to retain the program, the results of this study could inform the creation of new training programs. Finally, the study site leadership could use the results not to make decisions about training programs or program design, but because the study seeks participant perceptions and experiences, I could collaborate with the study site's training instructor staff on an instructor development program to improve future training participant experiences for the study site and its multiple subordinate organizations.

Summary

This section discussed the problem and the rationale for conducting a study at the study site for this particular problem. Through the literature review, seminal authors and researchers within the previous 5 years were discovered to place the current study within the context of a conceptual framework and current research findings. Since organizations must maintain a competitive edge to ensure their viability and continued success, training their workforces is critical, as a well-trained workforce that has the belief it can put into practice what it has learned and is motivated to do so is more likely to be more productive and better able to meet organizational demands and requirements.

Section 2 explains and describes the research methodology that was used to study this problem at the study site. A qualitative case study was used to discover the

perceptions of those who completed a training program and those of their supervisors. This method was best to gather data that are richly descriptive to analyze for finding themes that best present the participants' experiences. The results will be presented to the study site's leadership for decision-making.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

For this project study, I used a qualitative instrumental case study approach to explore the experiences of those employees who completed a skills training program to discover their perceptions of that program as well as those of their supervisors. Discovering meaning is the aim for qualitative designs in research, so this design to uncover how people make sense of the experiences in their lives (Bogdan & Bikler, 2007). The participants in this study work at an organization in the United States that has a high operations tempo and demand for information products, and thus their perceptions of the program they completed could add value for the organization in its future decisions regarding training as it relates to that production. These individuals are called participants in a qualitative study to describe their willing cooperation in the study, and their participation requires the provision for ethical concerns (Merriam, 2009). As the researcher, I was an integral part of the study, wherein I attempted to discover, through a more controlled reception of information, the participants' perceptions of their experiences with the training program and put those discoveries into rich descriptions, rather than numerical data, to potentially be used by the study site.

This section begins with a description of the qualitative case study design and then discusses the participants and how they were chosen for the study. Ethical concerns and my role as the researcher are also addressed. Finally, the data collection and analysis methods are presented. Data collection began after the study site's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Walden University IRB both granted approval.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

To answer the research questions, a qualitative research case study design was used to gain insight into the central phenomenon of the perceptions of employees who completed a skills training program and those of their supervisors (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Merriam, 2009) at an organization (the study site) in the United States. Qualitative research methods are used to understand how people perceive and interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009). These methods rely on a particular setting for data collection and the use of participant descriptions to present that information. Qualitative research is concerned with the processes of the participants studied and is inductive, allowing for abstractions to grow from the collected data, and specifically strives to discover meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The case study is an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). An instrumental case study is conducted to discover perspectives about a particular issue or phenomena (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009), and that was the purpose of the case study for this study site.

The personnel who work at the study site are a mixture of military members and civilian personnel with a variety of responsibilities, according to a hierarchical organizational structure. The personnel are also of varying levels and degrees of education, from high school graduates to undergraduate and graduate degree earners, with a smaller percentage of doctors in different, applicable fields.

Qualitative methods of research in general allow the researcher to conduct interviews in which participants describe their perceptions and perspectives in their own personal words, even though there is the possibility that interview data are filtered

through the perspectives of the interviewer in the field notes, coding, and analysis processes (Creswell, 2012). When the interviewer poses open-ended questions to a study participant, the participant is able to answer in the way that best describes the details of his or her lived experience (Creswell, 2012) to provide what Lodico et al. (2010) defined as "richly detailed descriptions" (p. 268). The types of questions most suitable to an instrumental case study at this site are those Merriam (2009) defined as opinion and value questions, because this study sought to discover the participants' experiences, defined as their perceptions or perspectives, with the training program.

The qualitative approach was more appropriate than the quantitative approach for this study site to discover the meaning employees who completed the skills training program and their supervisors ascribe to that program. The qualitative approach with the case study design enabled me to study the problem within a specific timeframe and place. The ethnographic design, with its emphasis on culture-sharing within a sample and the need for observation during data collection, and the narrative design, with its emphasis on personal stories or histories, were not relevant for this study as each was not as well suited to study participants' perceptions as the case study (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

Quantitative research measures the quality of collected data by reliability, which means that the collection instrument produces similar results across uses; and validity, which indicates if the instrument measures what it purports to measure. However, qualitative research instead uses different, multiple data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations, documents, multiple sources of collection, or multiple

investigators (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). I collected data using two methods to obtain information verification: individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview, providing a degree of triangulation through crosschecks of collected data by comparing the individual interview data with the focus group data (Merriam, 2009). I attempted to ensure validity of the collected data through the use of participant debriefs to check accuracy of interview transcriptions and member checks of initial analysis. I used self-created interview protocols taken from the topics in the literature review for all interviews to ensure dependability and accurately portray all study procedures to aid potential replication (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009; Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson, & Carlson, 2014).

The study proposal was presented to the study site IRB and Walden University IRB with evidence of intent to provide informed consent, protect participants from harm, and ensure participant confidentiality, as suggested by Creswell (2012), Lodico et al. (2010), and Merriam (2009). The study site IRB granted permission on 23 March 2015 (Protocol Number: 0316.1) to collect data using the site's employees as participants. Walden University IRB granted permission on 14 April 2016 (Approval Number: 04-14-16-0413074).

Participants

I selected participants for the study from two populations at the study site: those whose work tasks are information analysis and written communications and who completed the training program, and their supervisors. Those who completed the training program were sought to conduct individual interviews. It was expected that due to the

effort these employees would have exerted to complete the training program, they would likely have provided the most useful descriptions and perceptions of the program. Supervisors were sought to participate in a focus group interview as an additional source of data.

Criteria for selecting participants. I used two purposeful, homogenous participant samplings for this case study. Homogenous sampling is drawn from a population with similar attributes (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). Aragon and Valle (2013) stated that shared job tasks and work task competencies should be the focus of participant selection, making this sampling a bounded case (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010) and the proper strategy for this site. The training program under study was only in operation from 2008 to the summer of 2014, and the program could not have been completed any sooner than 3 years from enrollment as a requirement from the program. Therefore, the earliest completions would have been in likely 2011 or early 2012. Selecting those who completed the program closer to that time would enable the discovery of a more stable perspective than those who completed the program more recently, due to having a longer time to develop their perspectives of the program.

The employee participant primary attributes were that they performed information analysis and product writing work tasks and had completed the skills training program. The employees at the study site ranged in age from early twenties to retirement age. Those who completed the program had attained a program requisite of 4-10 years of work experience prior to attending program courses; therefore, their age range was likely from late twenties to late forties. These employees also represented a variety of those with

military experience, and likely differing levels of college education. The study site is a federal agency that must adhere to equal employment opportunity policies, so there was likely little variation in the opportunity for either gender to complete the program. However, it was likely the population for the participant sample would have been largely Caucasian, with a fewer number from minority racial populations. Potential participants from both populations were asked to respond to an email invitation to participate. Initially, the intention was to choose lower numbers of participants for this study, and to use the discriminating factors of completion of the program closer to 2011 and gender.

The supervisors may or may not have participated in or completed training from this program, but their perceptions of the program, via subordinates' performance after completing the program, was hoped to add an extra layer of credibility to this study. They were likely to have been performing the job of information analysis and written communications production for at least 10 years in some capacity in order to gain the job grade to supervise, which should have given them a longer perspective from before and after the study site instituted the original training program.

Procedure for gaining access to participants. Upon gaining approval of the study site's IRB and review by Walden University IRB, I derived the employee interview target population by requesting the study site to search their local learning management system (LMS) database for those who had completed the training program. I derived the supervisor population from the pool of supervisors at the study site in the same manner. Using my Walden University email account, I invited prospective employee interview participants using an invitation to participate through email, and I sent them a study

participation consent form as well. The invitation included an overview of the project study, interview procedures, an explanation that study participation is voluntary, and my contact information. The final element of the invitation email was the procedures for contacting me for agreeing or declining to participate in the study and demonstration of consent.

After individual employee participant interviews were completed, I requested the study site to provide a list of supervisors, and I sent to them by email the invitation to participate in a focus group interview and participation consent form. The invitation included an overview of the project study, focus group interview procedures, an explanation that study participation is voluntary, the purpose of the focus group interview, and my contact information. The final element of the invitation email was the procedures for contacting me for agreeing or declining to participate in the study and demonstration of consent. I provided focus group participants with a promise of confidentiality form, which they signed and gave to me at the focus group interview indicating their agreement not to share the contents of the discussion after the focus group interview was completed.

No participants' names or work centers are used in this writing or the reporting of the study, and only a pseudonym was used if necessary; e.g., *Employee A* or *Supervisor A*. Individual interviews were conducted during participants' workday by the request of study site leadership, but at a time convenient to participants and in a manner to guarantee their privacy. I recorded the interviews only using computer typed note taking (Merriam, 2009) during the interview. Even though this method is not recommended

because it is very difficult to capture everything an interviewee might say (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009), the study site proscription against audio recording at the site and its requirement that the interviews be conducted on site was unalterable. While not as reliable as audio recording, by typing the interviewees' statements directly into the computer during the interview, I was able to read back to the interviewees their statements while we were conducting the interview. This interview activity enabled me to conduct an initial member check (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009).

The focus group interview was conducted in person at the study site. Due to the study site's proscription against audio recording, I used hand note-taking for the focus group. After each of the individual interviews and the focus group interview had been completed and the participants departed the interview locations, I took field notes within the individual interview computer typed transcriptions and the focus group hand-written notes to reflect upon the participants' descriptions and recover impressions and thoughts not annotated during the interview (Lodico et al., 2010).

I emailed a copy of the transcripts of all individual interviews and the focus group interview to participants who wished to read them to enable them to review for accuracy and correct any misstatements (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). All but one individual interviewee and only one focus group interviewee availed themselves of this opportunity, but responses were helpful.

The initial interview computer typed notes and field notes and all transcripts are stored on a flash drive, password protected, and will be maintained at my home for at

least 10 years, per the rules of the study site IRB. The hand-written focus group interview notes will be maintained in a locked box at my home for at least 10 years.

Methods for establishing the researcher-participant working relationship.

The most important elements in the qualitative study are the relationship that develops between the researcher and the participants and the measures that must be taken to safeguard the safety of the participants (Lodico et al., 2010). Case studies are participatory in nature, and as such ethical issues are prominent and related to the relationship between the researcher and participants (Merriam, 2009). To present a study that is credible and trustworthy, I maintained neutrality with participants so as not to give the impression of swaying the descriptions of their perceptions and experiences of the training program, but this was not difficult, as I had no or limited prior experience with the participants. I guarded against expectancy and confirmation bias during interactions with participants and in data analysis and presentation. I explained to participants that my intentions for the study were only to report a truthful representation of participants' perceptions of their experiences with the training program.

To give the interview participants a sense of control and joint participation in the creation of the study, I gave them a choice of times and days to conduct their interviews; however, study site leadership requested interviews be conducted at the site in a manner to protect participants' privacy. Timeframes for the individual employee interviews and the supervisor focus group interview were not more than one hour to respect the participants' time, unless they chose to extend the interview. I used an interview protocol (Appendix B; Appendix C) that provided a brief description of the purpose of the study

and the manner in which the individual interview or focus group interview was to be conducted (Lodico et al., 2010). I ensured that all participants knew of my utmost concern for their safety and protection and that I would strive to earn their trust to safeguard their participation in the study and faithfully present their experiences.

Measures for ethical protection of participants. I attended to all guidelines learned in the courses on ethical treatment and protection of human subjects from both the study site and the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research. I kept the identity and responses of all participants confidential from all other participants. All individual interview participants gave informed consent by replying "I Consent" to their informed consent email, and that email has been saved with all other documentation for this study. Supervisor participants signed the informed consent form in person, as well as a confidentiality form, and gave those to me at the time of the focus group interview. Those signed forms were scanned and are stored with all other documentation for this study. At the beginning of all interviews, I explained again the voluntary nature of the study; how participants could withdraw at any time, even after interviews were completed and data had been analyzed; potential risks and lack of benefits to them from the study; and how their privacy would be protected. All participants have my contact information and that of the study site's IRB manager should they have any questions. The study site's IRB approved all forms that would be provided to participants, as well as the interview protocols and questions.

The interviews did not present any risks to participants' safety and anonymity, unless they themselves informed others of their participation. No benefits in the form of

compensation were provided to any participants. Participants' names were replaced by pseudonyms in all working documents while conducting coding and analysis. All documentation and flash drives will be destroyed after 10 years, per the study site's IRB.

Data Collection

I collected data using two methods: one-on-one, semi-structured interviews of employees who completed the skills training program and then a focus group interview of supervisors. The one-on-one interview is the most common form of interview and data collection in qualitative research and is necessary when the researcher cannot observe behavior (Merriam, 2009). The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the participants' own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) from only one individual at a time (Creswell, 2012). By contrast, the focus group interview is used to encourage discussion between members of the group about a specific topic about which they have shared knowledge or experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Du, 2013; George, 2012). The focus group type was a scoping focus group, having an individualistic social psychology perspective, to gain participant basic opinions regarding the training program, rather than to gain expertise or to generate theories (Ryan et al., 2014). My stance as the researcher was one of objectivity, enabled by using protocols, to ensure the control of bias (Ryan et al. 3014). Creswell (2012) suggested a group of typically four to six participants, while Merriam (2009) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) each suggested six or seven to 10 participants.

Instrumentation. In order to bring about a positive interview experience, a skilled study interviewer should be non-threatening, respectful, and without judgment

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009), and with this mindset I collected the study data beginning with the individual employee interviews. Using a semi-structured format for the individual interviews, I conducted the individual interviews with each employee participant, asking questions from a prepared list in an interview protocol (Appendix B) that I created aligned with the elements (Merriam, 2009) discussed in this study's literature review. I also asked questions about the training program in general. The interview protocol assured an orderly and successful interview (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010) that was standardized among all interviewees (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I asked open-ended questions, because that is ideal for participants who are willing to share their experiences (Creswell, 2012). I used probes as I was able in the interview to help interviewees expand answers about their experiences and to adjust course or make corrections during the interview (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010, Merriam, 2009) while I was recording responses in the computer. Sample questions were "What are the reasons you participated in training?" and "What is your perception of the training program?"

Upon completion of all individual employee interviews, I scheduled one supervisors' content-oriented, information gathering focus group interview to collect the supervisors' perceptions of their subordinate employees who completed the skills training program (Ryan et al., 2014). Focus groups are typically four to six individuals gathered for a group interview on a shared topic that offers the advantage of group members interacting with each other during the interview process (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). I followed a focus group interview protocol (Appendix C) during the focus group

data collection to ensure the best collection effort for the study (Merriam, 2009). Before beginning the focus group, the supervisors individually signed and gave to me a promise of confidentiality statement indicating their willingness and agreement not to share any information from the discussion with anyone other than group participants.

Procedures and processes for data collection. I used the one-on-one individual interview of employees who completed the training program first and then the focus group interview of their supervisors to collect data for this study. Most importantly, good questions are the key to getting the most meaningful data from participants, and that having fewer, broader questions allows the interviewer to really listen to the interviewee (Merriam, 2009).

I began the individual interviews with an introduction of who I am, given that I did not have had any prior experience with the participants (Lodico et al., 2010), and my history and bona fides as it relates to my intentions for the study. I reminded all participants of the confidentiality and protection of their responses and that I would strive for neutrality as I conducted their interviews and transcribed their words. For the eight individual employee interviews, I first collected some preliminary descriptive data, such as job position background data, and length of time at the study site to ease into the interview process and help interviewees feel comfortable. I used the interview protocol questions and effective probes to enhance interviewee responses to help them provide the most descriptive data (Merriam, 2009). I avoided asking leading or loaded questions that could reveal a bias toward a predetermined interviewee response (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010).

The data collection during the focus group interview was less structured than the employee individual interviews, since the focus group interview is used for participants to play off each other's responses, instigating thoughts in other participants in a socially constructive manner (Merriam, 2009). At the beginning, all participants introduced themselves, and one of the supervisors requested I give a brief reminder and explanation of the former skills training program. I used the focus group interview protocol (Appendix C) to guide the session and to enable flexibility for the supervisors to construct the interview, though I concentrated on the content of the participants' answers to questions and responses to other participants, rather than on their interactions (Ryan et al., 2014).

The role of the researcher. I was a training instructor from 2005 – 2015, during which time I instructed parts of this skills training program, though to a different audience than those at the study site. Participants were not learners in any of my training classes, nor did I supervise, manage, or lead them or have any input into their daily work tasks.

I wanted to conduct this study because my educational and work experiences have strengthened my passion and resolve for adult education. These personal experiences led me to the desire to empower the workforce with training that serves them and the organization. I maintained neutrality at all times during this study, because my interest was to provide the most accurate, useful information that would help the study site in its decision-making processes regarding the training and improvement of its personnel. As the qualitative researcher's goal is to add knowledge to the field, not to make judgments

of what is collected as data (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007), I guarded vigilantly against cognitive or personal bias that would limit me in presenting the most bias-free study report to the study site when the study is complete. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested the researcher record detailed field notes after the interview and reflect on the researcher's subjective experience, which I did within the computer typed individual and hand written focus group interview notes to aid me in maintaining awareness of my participation in the study. Other activities to account for and mitigate against bias were to look for potential alternate interpretations of data, possibly through the use member checks of participants to ensure the data collection, transcription, and interpretation is credible and dependable, and accurately relays their experiences (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of working with the data, organizing it using coding methods, synthesizing those codes into categories, and searching for patterns within the categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Merriam (2009) suggested the researcher should begin analyzing the data after the first collection event and continue during the entire process of collecting the data, because new ideas can emerge that could aid new collection efforts. Creswell (2012) stated this initial analysis is a preliminary exploratory analysis to get a general sense of what is present in the data and how it might be organized. Moreover, this process of collecting and transcribing data, annotating interview field notes, and coding for themes and categories is both a simultaneous and an iterative activity (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). However, I chose

not to conduct simultaneous data collection and analysis, because I did not want to become biased by the existing data and ask probing, follow-up, or clarifying questions that could lead the interviewee to answer similarly as previous interviewees. Because most of the individual interviews occurred fairly closely together within a couple months' timeframe, as I was taking notes and transcribing interviewees' statements into the computer, previous answers came to mind. I had to be careful not to become too reflective during this part of the interview process or I would miss an interviewee's statements. Since I conducted an initial review of all individual interview data before the supervisors' focus group interview, I did follow Creswell's (2012) suggestions at this point, which enabled me to add questions to further explore with the supervisors concepts the employees discussed.

The data analysis is the attempt by the qualitative researcher to make sense of the data and to ensure the data that is collected corresponds to the purpose of the study and answers the study's research question (Merriam, 2009). Immediately after each individual employee interview was completed, I transcribed the interviews from the computer-written notes, adding field notes. I sent the transcriptions and notes to the interviewees for debriefing reviews to add any clarifying information they felt was required. After I received all the returned transcriptions, I began the iterative process of reading the transcripts and field notes to discover repeating ideas, underlining the statements, and manually coding them in the margins of the printed transcripts. Merriam (2009) suggested that the categories of codes, as themes within the data that are responsive to the study purpose and research question, should be mutually exclusive and collectively

exhaustive. Creswell (2012) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested four to six and five to seven categories, respectively. I completed initial open data coding and analysis by hand (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

After the manual coding revealed obvious themes, I loaded the interview transcripts into the NVivo version 11.4.0 (2065) software (QSR International, Inc.) to more fully code the transcripts, which I found to be an invaluable tool. I performed the following functions:

1. Query for frequent words & create word clouds (Figure 1 & Figure 2)
2. Create code nodes through the manual thematic coding process
3. Code the manual themes into each transcript as nodes
4. Further subdivide major nodes into subnodes (Table 1)
5. Create a node matrix to show how often participants' statements were coded

The process of coding is the identification of segments, or units, of information that are responsive to the research question in that they are relevant and are easily interpreted as responding to the research question (Merriam, 2009). I looked for these regularities in the range of collected data and placed those, as codes, into categories or themes until I reached saturation in which no more new themes were revealed in the data. Creswell (2012) stated the initial coding activity is open coding in which I would simply discover the codes by being open to any revelation the data may present, but then as I grouped codes together into categories I would conduct more analysis coding, again in an iterative, simultaneous process. This was the flow of my coding processes.

After the completion of the supervisor focus group interview, I again sent the transcript to the participants. After receiving back debrief confirmation from those who wished to, I conducted the same process of reading the transcript, performing manual coding, and then putting the transcript into NVivo for software coding.

Credibility. Qualitative case studies do not have the same threats to validity as quantitative methodologies; therefore, measures to ensure the trustworthiness are different (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) presented a list of questions that address challenges to the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Some of those relate to the researcher as the instrument of collection, the question of generalizability of data from small samples, and whether another researcher would arrive at the same conclusions with the same data. While most threats addressed by Creswell (2012) and Lodico, et al. (2010) do not apply to this study, one may: construct validity. The constructs used for this study were pulled from the literature of scholarly research, such as goal setting and motivation, and these constructs were used to create the questions on the interview protocols, allowing other researchers to trust in the study's dependability (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 275).

The primary element of validity for qualitative research that I focused on was credibility, or the accurate presentation of the participants' words, thoughts, and feelings (Creswell, 2009; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). To ensure the credibility of the study and my acting as the instrument of collection, I invited all participants to conduct member checks through transcript debriefing to ensure I accurately recorded the participants' understanding and interpretation of their experience (Lodico et al., 2010;

Merriam, 2009). Seven out of eight of the individual interviewees availed themselves of the opportunity to verify my transcription of their interview responses, with most stating I had captured their words very accurately and a few adding comments or corrections. While all focus group participants stated they would like to review the interview transcript, one was able to report back that the transcription was accurate.

Discrepant Cases. Discrepant data that were not applicable to the study, such as participants' revealing private information or discussing topics outside the scope of the interview, were discarded, in that it was not typed into the computer document during the interview or noted on paper. Because I used interview protocols strictly derived from the topics discovered in the literature, study participants answered accordingly. However, there is data that were unexpected. Individual interview participants offered perspectives on two topics that were not derived from literature review topics. That information pertained to participants' perceptions of training, and specifically addressed instructors of the courses participants experienced in the program and about the organization, meaning the study site. The perspectives regarding the instructors are presented in the data analysis theme for perceptions of training, but the perspectives about the organization were not relevant as those did not answer the research questions.

Limitations. This study contained several items that would be considered limitations or potential weaknesses, which when enumerated could be useful to other researchers, thus enhancing possible transferability of the study methodology (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). First, the study site required a specific manner of conducting the individual interviews, due to the nature of the work tasks performed by participants,

which made it difficult to obtain participants. Second, following these requirements, the sample size for the individual interviews, while in keeping with provisions for adequate numbers in a case study, was smaller than it might have been had collection procedures not be as restrictive. Last, even though the Invitation to Participate letter clearly explained that participants' responses would be kept confidential between the participants and me and would be anonymous in the dissertation and in the report to the study site, the fact that all participants were self-selecting points to potentially either a fear among those who did not respond to the invitation or to the inclination of those who did respond to do so regardless of a sense of consequences. Furthermore, the low response rate could solely have been due to the technology that was required for conducting the individual interviews.

Data Analysis Results

Although it is suggested to perform analysis on interview data while still collecting from subsequent participants (Merriam, 2009), I chose not to do so. I wanted each participant to have as close to the same interview experience as all others and the collected data would be as standardized as possible. I did, however, conduct an initial hand-coding of all individual interview transcripts and then used that as the basis for probing or clarifying questions in the supervisors' focus group.

Data Collection, Analysis Procedures, and Emerging Themes

Data collection was conducted over the late summer and fall of 2016, as it was difficult to acquire participants. Analysis occurred after all data collection, beginning in December of 2016 and concluding in early 2017.

Data Collection. I began data collection with the individual semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with eight study site employees who had completed the former skills training program. Each was invited to participate in the study by email, as all were in locations distant from the researcher. The interview participants were six men and two women. Although I had hoped to obtain a balance of men and women participants, these eight were the only employees who responded to the invitation and who met the participation requirements. The focus group participants consisted of five employees who were supervisors at one of the study site's locations. The supervisors had not completed the skills training program but were familiar with the work of those employees who did.

Data Analysis Procedures. The analysis proceeded in the following manner. After the focus group was completed and individual interview and focus group participants each provided debriefings and member checks on their respective transcripts, I read through all transcripts several times to get a sense of the totality of the collected data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), taking notes and mind-mapping relationships between emerging commonalities. I then loaded all transcripts into the NVivo software for computer-assisted coding. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that using the word assisted when referring to computer software and data analysis is important because the software does not do the analysis for the researcher, but is only used to facilitate the data's accessibility.

Coding. Because interview questions were derived from the concepts within the literature review and bounded by the specific case, I used those concepts, as initial

assigned categories (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007), to spot key words and phrasing in the transcripts that I turned into the major codes. This did not fit into Merriam's (2009) suggestion to have only five or six categories, because the literature review concepts were derived according to the study purpose statement and aligned to the research questions. Using this method of beginning the coding of the data enabled me to mitigate confirmation, expectancy, and even hindsight bias based on my own mindset and perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

After noticing similar key words and phrasing in several transcripts, I standardized the codes for all interviews, including the supervisors' focus group; though, several important ideas emerged from the supervisors that never came up in the individual interviews. In a form of reverse axial or analytic coding (Merriam, 2009), I began the analysis process noting the major codes and then subdivided those as I continued to interpret and reflect on what the participants shared from their lived experiences, thereby creating more detailed groupings for some of the major codes. Although I did not purposefully use this strategy, codes within the data illustrate some of the categories, or families, offered by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). Information about interviewees' reasons for participating in training would fall into a definition of the situation category, describing what participants hope to get out of their experience with the training program. Another example of this family categorizing is that of the subject's way of thinking, wherein interviewees expressed their perceptions of instructors of the program or of whether the program was worthwhile. The following are the codes for the

collected data. The NVivo software refers to these as nodes, which will be evident in the following data analysis results.

Table 1

Coding Categories and Themes, as Major Nodes and SubNodes

Major Nodes	SubNodes
Environment Influences	
Goal Setting	Improve Abilities
	Not Met
	Recognition
	To Finish
Instructors	Determine Value to The Learner
	Lack of Qualifications
	No Expertise
	Quality
Mindset	Eager to Learn
	Eager to Practice
	Empowered
	Expand Knowledge
	Explore
Motivation	Motivation by Negative Consequences
	Motivation Fades
	Motivation for Promotion
	Motivation to Do the Program
	Motivation to Improve
	Motivation to Put Into Practice
Promotion & Recognition	Credentials
	No Effect on Promotion
	Nothing Out of It (The Program)
	Recognition
Self-Direction & Self-Efficacy	
Support: Supervisors	
The Organization	
The Skills Training Program	Baseline or Foundational Knowledge
	No Impact
	Putting Training Material into Practice
	Structure of The Program
	Training Helps the Inexperienced More

Prior to uploading the transcripts into the NVivo software, I removed all questions from the transcripts and used only numbers and letters to indicate interviewees' answers, because I wanted the software to present only the key words as they were present in the interviewees' responses. Continuing with the computer-assisted analysis upon finishing coding activities, I used the program to conduct a query for word frequency of those words that occurred most often in the interviews, one for the individual interviews and one for the focus group. The word frequency function is found on the query tab. The top three words to occur in both types of interviews were training, program, and courses, which is expected as the study is about these three topics. Frequency of words would occur more often with the eight individual employee interviewees and lesser for the supervisor group participants. For example, in the individual interviews, program occurred 143 times, training occurred 130 times, and courses occurred 53 times. The next most frequently occurring words were motivation (34 times) and organization (19 times), the latter referring to when individual interviewees spoke of the training program in relation to how the organization was managing and administering the program. Career, instructor, and apply (as in applying what was learned) each occurred 17 times. Promotion, supervisors, and support each occurred 12 times in the individual interviews. For the supervisors, the other top words were apply, supervisor(s), seniors (as in senior in organizational rank or grade), tools, and writers.

I used the software program to create a word cloud of those words for the individual interviews (Figure 1) and for the focus group (Figure 2). These each gave me a visual representation of the occurrence of key words in the interviews, as the size of the

word in the image correlates to the number of times it occurred in the text. The word cloud also enabled me to get a sense of possible relationships of words and ideas as they occurred in the interview transcripts. The word cloud is created in the NVivo software from the Query Tab by establishing the column and row attributes and then choosing the code values to tabulate and display.

Figure 1

Word Cloud of Most Frequent Words in Individual Interviews

Figure 2

Word Cloud of Most Frequent Words in Focus Group Interview

Last, I used the program to create a code matrix that is a table of all the codes I used to identify elements within the data, both by category (major code) and the group subdivisions, and it displayed how many times individual interviewees and supervisors spoke of a coded idea during their interviews. For example, the interview protocol (Appendix B) did not have a specific question about putting learned content into practice, but all but one of the participants spoke of this, in various portions of their interviews or the focus group. This matrix is especially useful as one chart, because it also displays

those codes and interview instances that do not conform to the literature review concepts, and therefore are emergent in the collected data.

The themes that arose from the analysis of the collected data are presented in the order of the literature review topics. This section will discuss the major themes of the ability to learn and to direct one's own learning, the multiple motivators for completing the training program, and the perceptions that the training program served multiple purposes that led employees to perceive their participation in the program to be unsuccessful. Each major theme is further sub-divided to more specifically present each theme.

Ability to learn and to direct one's own learning. Participants discussed the idea of having a mindset that affected their participation in the training program, as mindset was connected to the themes of self-efficacy and self-direction. Collectively, the participants believe that they can learn new things and expand their knowledge. They like to explore and expand areas of interest. Employee E stated, "I think everyone has the potential to learn things. I do have the mindset to learn things, and I do learn things, and I want to learn things." Employee C stated, "I would like to think I am open to learning new things, and I am able to do that…I'm intellectually curious." Similarly, Employee G explained,

> I approached the training with the mindset of being a blank slate; I knew I was likely not the most current in my job career field; [however, I] had a very open mind that I would learn, and I felt empowered by the 'something new' aspect of the content.

This belief in their ability to learn is the definition of self-efficacy, and the propensity for exploration and the discovery of new ideas and skills is at the heart of self-directed learning.

When supervisors in the focus group were asked about mindset, they answered that it was a function of personality. One supervisor explained, using time management as an example, that even if a participant took program courses, if he or she could not manage time before, going through the program would not help that employee. This suggests an understanding that one must have a mindset for self-improvement for participation in the program to have had a benefit.

Ability and desire to learn. Participants each elaborated positively regarding their overall sentiments of self-efficacy, or their belief in their ability to learn. "I'm more of a self-learner and so I want to try new things that are enriching to me" (Employee G). Participants reported in varying ways that they were doing the program for themselves, that it was their decision to participate in the program or at their discretion. Employee D summarized the general sense as "I tend to lean toward wanting to discover the information on my own." Connected to the belief in being able to learn what an individual wants to learn is the idea of also being able to determine the direction of that learning.

Appreciating a flexible structure to guide one's learning. There was disagreement about whether the program was actually designed for those with an orientation toward self-direction. Participants expressed varying degrees of desire to be self-directing and of appreciation for having a structure to follow. Employee F stated that

the program "was more geared toward those who needed to be told every step, because [there was] not a lot of wiggle room." In contrast, of those who believed that the program was for the self-directing and self-initiating, Employee B stated that the program was "certainly geared toward those who could direct their own participation; [in a] 'choose your own adventure' course layout." Employee D explained, "When self-directed, it points out gaps in my understanding," and Employee G believed that the program was "more designed for those who are comfortable with discovery," relating discovery with self-efficacy. Employee H felt "it was geared more toward people who could do it on their own." These statements suggest an individual quality that participants drew on to begin and to finish the program. The program had a structure that provided a guideline, but participants could take classes in any order and at any time within the timeframe for completion, which these participants all expressed as attractive to them. Therefore, individual self-efficacy and self-direction were indicators for these learners to complete this program.

Multiple motivators to complete the program. Participants stated variously that their motivation to participate in and complete the program was for promotion opportunities, enhancing future job prospects, or meeting requirements for those promotions and prospects. Their motivations were expressions of personal and professional development. They wanted to be a better employee; to gain a certification of training, such as a credential "commensurate with my position" (Employee E); to learn new job skills and legitimize bona fides or credibility; to maintain currency in the job field; and to demonstrate a "desire to be a more effective employee, to do my job more

efficiently" (Employee G). Employee H relayed "having found the motivation to do it myself without being told to, there is more a sense of ownership on my career path," and in this vein participants stated that they were doing the program for their own reasons and generally remained motivated throughout the program.

Motivation to put into practice what they had learned. Motivation to transfer learning from the classroom to the workplace was expressed by participants as putting the training into practice on work tasks. Participants were generally motivated to put training into practice. However, they often had to later discover how to apply what they had learned in training classes, which may indicate that what was presented to them in the classroom was not presented in a way that was clearly related to work tasks. Although motivated to put training into practice, Employee A stated that "most of the formal practices taught are not applicable at my location", continuing that many other participants known to the employee could not put training into practice because they lacked other basic skills. Employee B stated that the program "didn't help me produce more products, [but] helped my language more in terms of interacting with others." Despite motivation to put training into practice, Employee F stated, "I've looked for any and all opportunities to apply what I learned." Employee D expressed a seeming frustration with motivation to put learned skills into practice because "It's been situational." On a positive note and as an additional possible reason for put the training into practice, Employee E offered that the training program "helped me to mentor other employees…provides building blocks for the foundations for other employees." These statements demonstrate that at least four of the eight participants were either unable to or

had difficulties putting the training from either part of or the entire program into practice, even with the desire to do so.

Supervisors in the focus group acknowledged that if they could not give enough time to participants to practice what they were learning, then the training would not yield results. Supervisor C shared that participants were making a "conscious effort to put those things learned into practice" but that some program attendees might not apply what they learned due to a possible fear of advocating for a different way of doing things.

Supervisor support affected motivation. The participants in this study had positive perceptions about support from supervisors. Participants stated variously the office chief or supervisor was generally to very supportive, demonstrated by verbalizing that support or by providing travel funding to attend training off-site. Employee A stated a supervisor had program participation put into that employee's annual performance objectives to formalize the participation. Employee D stated that the supervisor "could see that it was making me better, and he was getting better products out of it." Employee G stated that the supervisor "asked a lot about progress and would check in to provide motivation for completion, which helped to set and satisfy goals." Because program completion was not mandatory, employees explained that supervisors did not require them to participate in the program, but that they encouraged it. Agreeing that the supervisor was supportive, Employee D expressed that peer and supervisor support "did not play a role. I don't think these two matter…in the grand scheme. Supervisors encouraged…but didn't tell me I had to [participate in the program]." Providing a larger context for supervisor support to training, Employee H explained that it is

> more important to have supervisor support: having a boss not wedded to the idea of having someone tied to their workstation, but having a perception of letting people go to training sets the climate. If supervisors are supportive, then peers are likely to be supportive.

Thus, all eight interview participants relayed the general experience that supervisor support was helpful to them and more important than peer support, but that the support was not the reason for participation in or completion of the program. For their part, the supervisors in the focus group interview stated they were "absolutely supportive" (Supervisor B), with one explaining that a spreadsheet was kept to balance the workload between program participants and non-participants.

Program length and durability effected motivation to complete the program. Due to the 3-5-year length of the program and programmatic impediments to taking courses, such as that some locations of the study site did not have a ready and stable access to courses, three participants stated their motivation became simply to get the program done. For some, motivation increased with the fewer classes that there were to complete the program, adding to the motivation to get the program completed. Noting that training programs come and go, multiple participants explained their motivations in terms similar to just getting the program completed. Employee D was motivated by the wonder of whether the program was worth completing. Employee G stated, "I wanted to finish it while it was still intact," and Employee H expressed the desire "to get it done before the program would be changed." Therefore, program length, sporadic or

untrustworthy availability of courses, and precedent of eliminating training programs all affected participant motivation.

Environmental factors effected motivation. The supervisors in the focus group more directly and purposefully, without instigation, addressed the aspect of environmental influences on employees' motivation to learn and to transfer that learning to work tasks, describing the environment as a negative and dampening factor. Given the high operational tempo at the study site's multiple locations, Supervisor D noted that program participants would "come back frustrated after classes when things are not being done right," an indication that program participants were being taught different skill sets and methodologies than had been previously learned and used by those in leadership positions. Supervisors were aware of these influences, and Supervisor E acknowledged that without continued practice, training "will not stick." Further, even after training would end and participant motivation was high, the environment would cause that motivation to fade, because, as the supervisors explained, supervisors could not always allot enough time for employees to practice the newly trained skills on job tasks. This environmental rush of production requirements was the rationale for many missed opportunities for program participants to transfer training to work skills.

Perceptions that the program served different purposes. Employees all expressed multiple perspectives on the purpose of the training program, stating it was designed to develop employees and their managers, to calibrate mid-level employees to mid-level skills, to enhance job prospects and opportunities, or to prepare for promotions. Employee F explained that the program was a "good start of trying to codify what is a

'person doing this line of work'." Employee F further explained that the program did teach some new concepts, and it was good "to come back through training to reinforce and expand upon skills," but although Employee G stated some courses were fun, most were "not overly challenging."

Although participants were motivated to learn, and they had goals related to attending and completing the program, multiple factors led most of them to have a negative perception of the program as a whole. Employee D stated,

> I don't think the program met those objectives [of enhancing skills for future job prospects and opportunities]. The benefit for me was intrinsic. I don't see the benefit for others. The program has been oversold. Stop tinkering with it. Don't sell a fake bill of goods – don't tell people it will have some sort of great effect on them, when other factors go into [things like] promotion. Quit moving the goal posts.

Describing the mixed value of the program, Employee E reflected, "I can think of maybe two courses I really learned a lot [from] and others I didn't learn much, because I already had the background." Similarly, Employee C reported, "Honestly, I didn't go into the program expecting to be impressed, and I really wasn't." Perhaps the starkest indication of negative perception of the program in contrast to stated motivations for participating in the program, employees stated variously that they got nothing out of the program or that it had no impact on their performance or their career.

Disagreement on whether the program was too basic or too advanced.

Employees further explained the program as of mixed value to them depending on the

longevity of their careers, what storehouse of knowledge they already possessed, and what previous training they may have had to prepare them for undertaking this skills training program. Several employees expressed that, in general, they wished there had been a baseline of knowledge provided before their participation in this program, but this contrasts with other participants' statements that it would have been better to take the program earlier in their careers, rather than at the four to 10-year mark, because it would have made them better at their job tasks. Further, some participants stated they already had the knowledge or skills presented in the program, suggesting that the program courses were not providing the advertised advanced knowledge and skills. This sentiment indicates that several participants believed the program was better for new employees. These mixed views demonstrate a disagreement about whether the program was too basic or too advanced.

Supervisors perceived the program to be of mixed value. The focus group supervisors believed the program taught employees a different way to do things and that the program was useful in giving tools for employees to practice. However, supervisors agreed with Supervisor E, who stated that it would have been valuable for the program to be have been explained to them, "because they don't understand what employees are supposed to do." The supervisors in the focus group agreed with Supervisor A, who stated that "The greatest value is to those who don't have long careers. More of value to juniors than to seniors. [But] it was good for resources." Supervisor C thought that the whole program was simply a "block-checking" mechanism for some employees, which, in a way, conforms to some participants' statements of taking the program for reasons

such as promotion or credentials, wherein completing the program is a check-box to add to promotion factors.

Differing perceptions of the program structure. Participants expressed differing views on the program structure. Positive views included that the length and structure enabled participants to fit the training into their work schedules, due to the flexibility designed into the program, as well as the choice of a variety of classes. This reflects back to participants' ideas of self-directed learning. However, the majority of participants had a negative perception of this design aspect. They complained of courses not being available at all locations of the study site's sub-organizations where participants worked; that there were too many courses required over the 3-5 years, causing a lag in completions; and that the program being designed as separate, disparate courses gave the program a lack of synergy.

Instructors' skills effected employees' perceptions. Perceptions about instructors were unsolicited, but are revealing, given that the program was composed of 11 courses, each with likely a different instructor. Three participants expressed generally negative and specific perceptions of instructors. Employee C explained,

> I don't know what the requirements were of the trainers, what were their skills or qualifications, what they were looking for when they were hiring these trainers, not whether this was a subject they had developed over their careers like a scholar; I don't think the instructors were experts.

Expressing the value of the instructor to the learning of the participant, Employee D stated that "It depends on how well trained the instructor is and on how enthusiastic they

are," suggesting instructors who were not well trained might have affected the learning outcomes for the participant. Employee H related that being able to learn and maintain motivation in the classroom "depends on the topic and the quality of the instructor; It's not always what you know, but how you teach it; Some really interesting course topics, but instruction was poorly given." Although shared by only three of the eight participants and given that the participants shared similar perspectives without knowing one another, these unsolicited statements about those who instructed courses in the program suggest these participants were aware of the multiple factors that affect their perceptions of training experiences and the value they placed in the training overall.

Discussion

Results generally conformed among individual interviewees even though all interviewees were from different study site locations and were likely to have never interacted with one another. The collected data answered the two study research questions about participants' perceptions of a skills training program and supervisors' perceptions of that program. Given the literature review topics, the data added context and expanded on the general questions of perceptions of the program. The general analysis is that the participants had a mixed perspective of the value of the program and leaned toward the belief that the program lacked value for their stated objectives of credibility, credentials, and professional development that would lead toward promotion. Specifically addressing the project study research question, participants all reported the general sentiment that the program had no effect on their work tasks. Supervisors generally believed that the program provided employees with some good tools, but given

the fast pace of work centers, they could not give enough time to participants to practice what they had learned in the program courses, thereby diminishing the supervisors' perspective of the value of the program to work tasks.

When training in an organization is not required, employees are likely to complete such training based on perceptions of their own need or capabilities. Self-efficacy is the personal belief that one has the required behavioral abilities to produce an expected outcome (Bandura, 1977). Employees in this study all expressed a belief in their ability to learn what they set out to learn and to complete what they set out to complete. If these employees represent a small slice of the total workforce and a small percentage of those completed the program, it remains to be discovered how many others in the organization, who did not complete or never participated in the program, may lack such self-efficacy and what can be done to nurture more self-efficacy in the workforce.

The major conceptual framework for the study is self-directed learning conducted by adult learners. Self-direction is the learner's process of determining a learning need, planning a learning goal, identifying resources to fulfill that need, fulfilling that need and evaluating the outcome (Knowles, 1975). The skills training program was not mandated for any employees at the study site; therefore, any participation and completion would have been fully at the self-direction of the employees and based on their ability to plan their participation over a multi-year period, to set goals, and to remain motivated. All employees expressed a degree of having the ability to direct their participation in the program. Some appreciated the loose structure of the program but also the ability to determine when and which courses to complete. Learners with an orientation toward self-

directed learning will seek learning opportunities and persevere even in the face of challenges (Raemdonck et al., 2014). Perseverance was a motivation strategy the employees had to actively engage to reach the end of the program.

Motivation is the process of directing energy toward a goal, the process of which is inferred by observation of effort (Wlodkowski, 2008). Participants expressed that they had the motivation to complete the goal of the program, but that toward the end of the multi-year period they were motivated simply to get the program completed, that the fewer courses remained in the program they had to complete the more motivated they became. Having doubts about current job task capabilities can motivate employees to seek training as long as the employee believes the expected outcome would be positive (Singh et al., 2013). This aspect of professional development motivated the participants, and they reported participating in the program for self-improvement, credibility, and promotion opportunities.

Perceived outcome expectations can affect motivation to learn and to transfer learning. Jodlbauer et al. (2011) found that trainees who had positive outcome expectations of their training were encouraged to attempt to transfer their learning. The participants explained that transferring learning from the classroom to work tasks was difficult for them, either because existing practices and work flows disallowed incorporating new ideas or that the pace of production disabled participants from practicing skills they received in the classroom. Supervisors in the study emphasized that often the urgency and number of work tasks preempted program participants from actually using skills they were supposed to have learned in the program.

Employees reported that supervisors were generally supportive during the multiple years they were participating in the program. In their research on motivation, Bhatti et al. (2014) divided peer and supervisor support into before, during, and after training support, each affecting trainee motivation. Employees related that sometimes peer support was helpful, in a competitive spirit way, but given the long period of the training program, it was the supervisor support during the training that was most helpful.

The employees each had a goal, such as promotion, recognition, or credentials, as their reason and purpose for taking the skills training program, but because the completion of that goal seems not to have helped the employees, their perception of the program is that it has not impacted them, either on improvement to their work tasks or for future job and promotion opportunities. Their perceptions of the program were mixed, but mostly negative. They did not agree on whether the multi-year, multi-course structure was helpful or harmful. The employees also disagreed on the level of knowledge presented in the program, on whether the program was too basic or too advanced. Herein was a point of convergence: all participants stated the program should have been provided to new employees, not to those who had been on the job for 4-10 years and had either learned the knowledge and skills before or had figured it out for themselves. Lastly, given the perceptions of the employees that the program was ultimately not worthwhile, skills training programs should be researched, designed, developed, and delivered with business goals and requirements in mind; thereby, learners might more often leave a learning event with a sense of completing something that is going to benefit them and their work centers or organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the qualitative case study design enabled an inquiry of the study site's employees regarding their perceptions of their completion of a skills training program and those of their supervisors. Ethical concerns and my role as the researcher were strictly observed to ensure confidentiality and protection of the participants. The semi-structured interviews of the employees and the focus group interview of the supervisors provided a richly descriptive data collection of themes to present to the study site's leadership as an illustration of employees' perceptions of institutional training programs and reasons for their engagement in those programs.

Following is Section 3, which describes the project that will be outlined for proposal in Appendix A. The section will provide goals and a rationale for the project, a literature review related to the results of the data collection as those results suggested or pointed to the project, and potential barriers to and existing study site supports for the project. Last to be addressed in the section is how the project would be evaluated.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This instrumental case study was conducted to understand the experiences and perceptions of employees who completed a skills training program and those experiences and perceptions of supervisors regarding employees' work performance after completion of the program. When employees are better prepared for work tasks through formal training, organizational leadership can be more certain that their decisions are based on sound thinking (Zacharakis & Van Der Werff, 2012). This result of sound decisions could not be fostered if the study site did not know the perceptions of employees and supervisors of the training. While the two interview protocols implied a data collection centering on the skills training program and therefore potential for changes to other training programs, the data collected and subsequent analysis pointed more toward a skills training program for instructors in order that learners' experiences in learning events would be more rewarding, productive, transferrable, and ultimately enabling them to progress within the organization. This section will describe a proposed project for the study site, the goals of that project, and its rationale. The literature review in this section will introduce the topics of teacher and student qualities, organization and types of instruction, and finish with a discussion of student evaluations of teaching.

Description and Goals

The project to be proposed to the study site is a skills training program for the study site's instructors, and as such it is intended to increase their professionalism, which it is then hoped will improve their learners' experience in learning events. The project

will contain two phases: an evaluation of current instructor development activities through a data collection activity that will be the main effort of the project, and a suggested program for development to follow the data collection.

It must be determined if the study site has a program for instructor development, which Spaulding (2014) described as "a set of specific activities designed for an intended purpose" (p. 5). My intent will be to discover how the study site uses instructor development activities and determine if those processes are sufficient (Spaulding, 2014). The evaluation of those activities would serve to help discover if development objectives are met by the instructors and therefore if the activities are effective. Phillips and Stone (2002) further explained that this type of evaluation provides leadership with the programmatic information needed to determine what adjustments may be required. The evaluation will be decision-based, rather than objectives-based, as it will be guided by questions to study site stakeholders, rather than by a list of objectives (Spaulding, 2014). The stakeholders who will be contacted are leadership and key senior managers, supervisors of instructors, and the instructors themselves (Phillips & Stone, 2002).

Rationale

Leaders of organizations need to know if the training they are investing in is helping their workforce (Aragon & Valle, 2013; Mayer et al., 2011), and leadership at the study site represented in this research study likely has those same concerns. As the study site has eliminated the former skills training program altogether and already redesigned some courses within that program since the beginning of this research study, presenting a project related to that program is no longer necessary, neither in making training

programs more attractive to employees or in framing those programs in the context of self-directed learning, motivating learners, or for learner goal setting. In light of this, a white paper or policy paper would not best help the study site. Those could be considered for future projects at the study site.

Regardless, the analysis of the data from this study points less toward the former skills training program for the general employee and more toward a skills training program for the study site's instructor staff, given the unexpected perceptions and perspectives collected from the study participants. Collaborating with the study site's training leadership on an instructor development program to improve future training participant experiences at the study site and at its multiple subordinate organizations would use existing resources and encourage buy-in from the major change agents at the study site.

The purpose of this project to professionalize the instructor staff at the study site through an instructor development program is ultimately to improve the employees' training experiences by concentrating on instructors' behaviors as the primary set of factors the study site can influence. Therefore, the literature review focuses primarily on the instructor and organization and on instruction techniques. The final subsection of the literature review will discuss the bias of those taking end-of-course satisfaction surveys that are often used as the evaluation of instructors.

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature consisted of journal articles using the Walden University online library. The databases I used were ERIC, Education Source, Business

Source Complete, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, and ProQuest. From search results, I also chose research that had been completed by authors from nonwestern countries, such as Turkey and South Korea, to demonstrate that the study elements I would discuss are not restricted to research by English-speaking authors nor from databases not strictly education oriented because the study site is not specifically an educational institution. The search terms used to discover research and citations include: *Instructors*, *instructor evaluation*, *student evaluation*, *training evaluation*, *student perceptions*, *training programs*, and *instructor characteristics*. I chose these search terms because the data collection and analysis implied a project that would be an instructor development program; therefore, I searched the literature for scholarly work on evaluations of instructors. The literature was collected from scholarly research conducted over the previous 5 years.

The search results and culled scholarly articles are divided into four primary categories: Instructor qualities, organization and type of instruction, training programs, and student evaluation of training (SET) and bias, and the review will proceed in this order. These categories reflect the themes in the study data collection and imply the direction of the project for the study site, which is an instructor development program.

Instructor Qualities

Multiple factors have an impact on a learner's experience in the learning event, usually a face-to-face classroom environment, from the learner him or herself, to the environment, to the instructor. As learners cannot normally be purposefully manipulated and the learning environment is usually a result of existing resources, the factors that

seem more easily altered in a learning event are those characteristics of the instructor. Regardless of the reality that a learning experience may be solely due to the learner, the instructor is held accountable, because the instructor has direct influence on the learning experience and how it is translated into the learner's life and work center. Therefore, it would benefit a learning organization to know which instructor characteristics are valued as helpful to the learning experience.

Authoritative instructors manage learning events through credibility, trust, and authenticity, which is manifested through critical competence or expertise (Brookfield, 2006). Obermiller, Ruppert, and Atwood (2012) discovered that instructors were rated more harshly in skills they are supposed to teach when those skills are what they should be expected to demonstrate in their fields. Further, they found mistakes are more harshly judged when instructors are expected to be experts in the field they are instructing. This speaks to a level of subject matter expertise instructors are expected to have attained in order to be viewed as credible, and therefore trustworthy, for the courses they are instructing. Regarding subject matter expertise and its possible relation to how long an instructor has been teaching and in what capacity, Johnson, Narayanan, and Sawaya (2013) found that length of time being an instructor often causes instructors to be viewed less favorably. They suggested this may be due to instructors being over-comfortable with content and conducting less preparation for classes. In contrast, Narayanan, Sawaya, and Johnson (2014) found that when studying learners in business and engineering courses, length of teaching time does not always relate to instructor ratings. These

contrasting observations may indicate that learners view instructors differently depending on the subjects being instructed.

Brookfield (1986) stated that for educating adults to be good, instructors must set a "certain emotional climate" (p. 135). Instructors perceived to be more approachable and who demonstrate more accepting attitudes toward learners are perceived more highly. Studying general education program student course survey responses over a seven-year period, Pepe and Wang (2012) stated that caring and respectful instructors are rated more highly. Dachner and Saxton (2015) found that supportive teachers, who care about the students and value their contributions, are rated as also being more committed to the learner, which has a positive relation to student satisfaction. Mori and Tanabe (2015) studied how ratings of instructor personalities of Japanese instructors varied with ratings of courses overall and found that those instructors who were rated as having nice personality traits also rated more highly in the class, though class management was a better predictor of the latter. Aydin (2012) studied the effects of weekly videoconference courses in a distance education program, wherein learners in a country that was not the origin country of Turkey rated their perceptions of the instructors. In this study, instructors who were perceived as being socially attractive, meaning being nice and being someone students can work with, were rated more highly. This perception of an instructor being someone with whom students can work may be similar to Dachner and Saxton's (2015) findings regarding commitment, wherein they found that an instructor's commitment both operated on and related to a student's commitment in significant effects, though small and medium respectively.

Knowles (1980) listed a number of principles of teaching that lead to superior conditions of learning, including accepting learners as persons of worth, respecting learners' ideas, and building trust. These behaviors, presumably, would derive from within the instructor, with his or her own thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. Conducting a study at a university in Turkey, Kazu and Demiralp (2016) interviewed professors for a teacher training program (TTP) who described pre-service teachers as lacking a number of life-long learning characteristics, including curiosity, being open to learning, and being intrinsically motivated. Brown (2016), studying a TTP at a mid-western US university, found that while those participants, as teaching assistants (TA), who had a good experience rated the instructor highly, a cohort of students demonstrated a number of different resistance behaviors. Brown labeled these in categories as pedagogical, rhetorical, epistemological, and oppositional. Regardless of the category into which a TA fell, Brown (2016) concluded it was because of the mindset of the individual TA instructor as a result of the personal construct of personal experiences, relationships with others, and other cultural and environmental factors. Although Kazu and Demiralp (2016) did not present information on why professors judged pre-service teacher students in the way they did, the question about individual mindsets could be posed to shed light on the mindsets of both these pre-service teacher students and the professors in the study. Similar to asking questions about instructor mindsets and how those inform and affect one's teaching, so too can the aspect of an instructor's emotional intelligence inform and affect teaching.

One's emotional transmissions affect others, and this is equally true in the classroom as an extension of social interaction and social relatedness. On a trip to Brazil, Goleman (2006) noted that Brazilians became nicer and more engaging as he became more relaxed and open to his experiences, as if his emotional tension caused them to react to him in a similar, reflecting way. Evaluating a TTP for Israeli teachers, Dolev and Leshem (2017) discovered that teachers found the training in emotional intelligence to be valuable, but most importantly to their daily teaching practices. Teachers modified their own behaviors through self-awareness and thus became more aware of students' emotions and the emotional climate of the classroom, more able to manage the classroom, and more confident, all of which moderated and improved their relationships with students.

Organization and Type of Delivery

Organization and fluent delivery of content are two elements that may impact student ratings of instructors. Dean (2004) argued for the use of instructional design, citing a response to objections of difficulty and design being time consuming, that planning a learning event is the key to success. One does not have to design a learning event to plan for its success. Pepe and Wang (2012) found that an instructor's organization and then the ability to fluently communicate content are the two most important aspects of teaching from their study of 15 characteristics, wherein an instructor who is well organized can overcome lower ratings in other qualities or behaviors, such as respect and concern for students. Similarly, Carpenter, Mickes, Rahman, and Fernandez (2016) found that instructor fluency affected the ratings for organization, knowledge,

preparedness, and effectiveness. However, they also reported that while fluency may ease initial processing of information and make learners feel as if they have learned, fluency is not a sole factor in better scores or grades. Related to instructor organization or organization of content, Kidder and Bowes-Sperry (2012) found that design decisions for undergraduate and graduate business degree courses team projects impacted instructor ratings. These studies might suggest that the presentation of the content is more important than personal qualities of an instructor, such as caring, supportiveness, and fluency.

Online learning and face-to-face learning will likely pose different challenges depending on the learner. Studying the training effectiveness of online versus face-to-face training for over-the-road truckers to potentially participate in a voluntary road incident reporting program, Huang, Strawderman, Babski-Reeves, Ahmed, and Salehi (2014) found that for this group of employees from three different work sectors requests for retraining depended on the work sector. Government employees and those who were self-employed and who participated in face-to-face training requested more retraining, while company employees, who found web-based training more effective, still requested some retraining, but this group who underwent web-based training also performed significantly better in tasks surveyed by the authors. These authors also speculated that employee traits may play a part in this result of company employees performing better than government employees or the self-employed, but did not examine what those traits may be.

Multiple factors could also play a role in the negative ratings, for example in online learning course, such as self-efficacy, age, and recent educational culture. Brocato, Bonanno, and Ulbig (2015) sought to discover university student bias in evaluations

comparing face-to-face and online courses by introducing a variable into the study to discover factors that bias students' perceptions. They found that online courses rated more negatively than face-to-face courses, both in instructor and in course ratings. Comparing online to face-to-face learning, Charoensap-Kelly, Broussard, Lindsly, and Troy (2016) evaluated a soft skills training program for employees in the southern US to determine if delivery methods affected willingness to learn and training outcomes. They found no significant differences in content comprehension for either group of learners. However, they did find significant differences in behavioral changes, as learners who took the face-to-face training more notably incorporated soft skills learned from training. Willingness to learn seems to have had a larger effect on learners who sat in class together. Not addressed by the authors, it could be suggested that other factors are at play when adults participate with other adults in a training course, whether those factors are personal, such as reputational, or environmental, such as peers or supervisors.

Training Programs

Employee training, costs of evaluating that training, and characteristics of training events must be seen as having value and being time worth spent away from normal work activities. Exploring perceptions of those who evaluate training effectiveness in hotel industry in the US Midwest, Ho, Arendt, Zheng, and Hanisch (2016) discovered there was among supervisors and managers no standard for evaluating the effectiveness of training of employees. Supervisors expressed that they did not all have the tools necessary to evaluate training, nor did they all evaluate training with business objectives in mind, though many did connect employee behaviors learned from training to business

results. Ultimately, these study participants indicated that conducting training evaluations should be timely, easy to conduct, and cost effective.

Evaluating a training program for secondary school principals in Jamaica, Hutton (2013) found that participants appreciated that training instructors were supportive and treated the participants as adults; however, as the program occurred over an extended period of time, the lack of time to devote to the program impacted the participants because there was too much course work, and real world work encroached on time to devote to program studies. These participants did, however, express appreciation for being in a cohort of other principals in which they could share experiences with peers.

Evaluating an in-service education program for teachers in Turkey, Uysal (2012) found the execution of the program was problematic, because it did not inform the teachers of the aims – objectives – of the course beforehand and the course content was not relevant to the teachers' needs. Further, there was a lack of post session follow up and feedback, each of which was rated negatively, and which are activities highlighted by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2010) who have written extensively on the Kirkpatrick Four Levels. Similar to Uysal's (2012) finding of the lack of attention paid to teachers' training needs in Turkey, Kazu and Demiralp (2016), also in Turkey, found in interviewing professors of teacher training programs that programs were not sufficient to teachers' needs, not updated, not basic enough, and not practical. Considering these setbacks, Uysal (2012) still found that teachers liked being shown new models and modes of teaching, liked being treated as participants in the training, and liked the collaborative atmosphere created by the instructor. These teachers also liked the time to be able to

reflect on course content during classes. This time for reflection was also pointed to as an important feature in teacher education and training programs, such as Brown (2016), who listed helpful activities as being writing in personal journals, having face-to-face reflections in mentoring-type sessions, and having semi-structured small group dialogues. Brookfield (2006) listed critical reflection as one of his three core assumptions of skillful teaching.

Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET) and Student Bias

If the purpose of education and training is to encourage growth and development, provide means for solving problems, and prepare people for work opportunities (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013), Kirkpatrick Level 1 surveys used most often for learners to express their satisfaction with a course do not elicit the right kind of information if they do not ask the right question. For that matter, learners more often express a bias toward certain instructor characteristics as a means to evaluate the worth and value of a course (Brocato et al., 2013; Cho, Baek, & Cho, 2015; Clayson, 2013; McGann & Gardner, 2014; Mori & Tanabe, 2015; Narayanan et al., 2014). This may also vary with their own mindsets and personal biases.

In a study of SET given at the beginning of a 16-week term business introductory course compared to those given at the end term, Clayson (2013) found that initial measures of instructor personality and of the course varied directly with those perceptions at the end of the term. Although the perceptions of personality seem not to be related to the final SET in this study, the author intimated that the instructor, unrelated to the teaching, was causing students to be biased about course SET. Investigating learner bias,

when learners had to complete SET again due to a mistake at the institution, after knowing their grades, Cho et al. (2015) found that SET ratings now related directly with the grades learners received. Learners who received higher grades now awarded higher SET ratings to the course and instructor, suggesting a bias in learners' evaluations of each. Addressing the potential for learners to be biased toward instructor personality traits that are nicer or agreeable versus stressed or neurotic in a law university in Japan, Mori and Tanabe (2015), while suggesting learners are biased toward nicer instructors, concluded that class management was a stronger indicator of higher SET ratings. As with the previous studies in this literature review discussing instructor mindsets, the possibility of cultural mindset, obviously not accounted for in these studies, cannot be dismissed as a cause for or related to these findings.

Other SET biasing factors might be the gender of the instructor. Exploring factors that affect SET ratings in business and engineering courses, Narayanan et al. (2014) found that the gender of the instructor matters depending on the course being taught, with male instructors rating more highly in engineering courses than female instructors. The authors did caveat the finding with information that there are more male instructors in the engineering school than in the business school, which could factor into learners' SET, because SET ratings differences were insignificant between male and female instructors in the business school. Brocato et al. (2015), seeking specifically to determine learner bias, also found that female instructors are rated differently in a study comparing face-to-face and online learning events. Regardless of the type of delivery, female instructors were rated significantly more highly at building rapport, involving students, challenging

and stimulating them, and providing feedback. Legg and Wilson (2013) conducted a study to determine if touching students would affect how they responded on SET, and the results are likely attributable to learner bias, specifically a bias regarding women. The authors sought to determine if touching students in the context of a classroom task would bias them to respond differently in SET ratings. They discovered that for those whom the authors touched very briefly on the wrist in an exercise on taking one's pulse the SET ratings were higher than for those students not touched during the exercise. The touched students rated the authors as being more excellent teachers, and that they were more motivated by the teacher, more likely to recommend the teacher, and they had a more positive attitude toward the teacher. The authors acknowledged more study on this topic is required, such as whether the gender of the teacher has an effect and on what types of touching of the teacher to the student are appropriate.

A learner's personal bias could affect SET. McCann and Gardner (2014) sought to discover if learner personality differences in a university in Canada are related to how they rate on SET, using the Big 5 as their theoretical model. They found that learners with higher scores for agreeableness and higher core self-evaluations were more likely to rate instructors more highly or positively on SET, and those with lower scores in these two and higher in neuroticism or stress rated instructors more negatively on SET. The authors discussed that they should expect higher SET ratings from those students who have higher self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. This relates to self-efficacy, as one's belief in the ability to accomplish a task, which they did not study, and to the growth mindset theory proposed by Dweck (2006).

Though not directly related to SET ratings of instructors but to self-efficacy and training effectiveness, the latter which can be related to the instructor if studied applicably, Yahya, Noor, Othman, Isa, and Manaf (2017) found in a study of youth at a public training institution that the self-efficacy of the participants was related positively to ratings of training effectiveness. Furthermore, Matos-Diaz (2012) also found that in a study of learner bias related to taking a course with a difficult instructor, learners with higher optimism are more willing to take courses with professors who grade harder. Though not addressed by this author, an individual bias of being willing to put forth considerable effort to achieve a higher grade with a more challenging instructor could be seen as an element of self-efficacy and the growth mindset.

Conclusion

Through this literature review I attempted to discover studies in topics relating to the proposed project. Instructor qualities, the organizational capabilities of the instructor or the organization of content, and the type of delivery are all important factors affecting or related to training effectiveness. However, of particular interest is how the learners implicitly reward or punish an instructor or a course based often on mindset and biases that color perceptions, which then skew their SET ratings. Continued review of the scholarly literature may reveal whether learner bias is as easily evident in SET that are more focused on performance than on instructor qualities.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Existing study site personnel will be recruited for the project to form an investigative team for the project, called a Tiger Team. The Tiger Team will finalize

project survey instruments and questionnaires, conduct the evaluative data collection and analyze results, and draft a program development decision proposal based on the perceptions of the workforce. Support will be requested from the study site's learning organizational leadership for direction and initial requirements, and key managers and senior instructional staff to act as subject matter experts and advisors. Further support will be required from my current supervisory chain to offset normal work tasks in order for me to devote time and expertise to the project. Upon approval of the program proposal, existing instructional design technologists and systems designers (IDT/ISD) at the study site will be required for design of new courseware, instructional staff to act as subject matter experts, and IT personnel for any web-based programmatic administration requirements.

Potential Barriers

The ultimate barrier to the project will be the rejection by the study site of the prospectus to conduct the project from the beginning. Normal barriers to success range from the study site not being able to allow its personnel to form the Tiger Team for the initial evaluative investigation, to not being able to allow its IDT/ISD personnel to leave off from current work tasks to create new courseware in keeping with the proposal, to instructors not being willing to participate once the program is created. Here is where the work of Brown (2016) will be particularly instructive. Brown categorized teaching assistants' resistance to training programs as pedagogical, rhetorical, epistemological, and oppositional (disruptive or political in nature) and gave the following descriptions. The pedagogical resistor is one who rejects new teaching strategies. The rhetorical resistor is

he who rejects any type of instruction that is not lecture or traditional in nature. The epistemological resistor is she who rejects new educational psychology theory, and likely cognitive science findings, about such things as learning, motivation, and likely goal-setting and self-efficacy. The oppositional resistors are they who reject authority, are generally disruptive because they disbelieve in the course content, or have other reasons to disavow programmatic instruction. Given that the study site has well over 100 individuals on its instructional staff along with non-instructor management and leadership, it is potential that these four categories of resistors will be evident in this population. This potential opposition based on Brown's (2016) categories may be the largest potential barrier to both phases of the project. It will be incumbent on me as the primary change agent to present a proposal based within the data collected from as many of the study site's staff members as possible and to frame the proposal in a constructive and team-oriented message, seeking to collaborate with the staff, rather than to impose a program upon them.

Project Evaluation Plan

The first phase of project evaluation will be the scrutiny of the instructor development program proposal by the study site's leadership. The proposal will need to contain specific timelines for milestone completion, achievable and measurable objectives, and obvious mission, goal, and vision statements to demonstrate solid direction. As the evaluative investigation design will be decision based, I will have to provide in the proposal the questions asked in the form of surveys and questionnaires and

each category of stakeholder interviewed to illustrate a broad approach to data collection from the study site's personnel.

The second phase of the project, which will be the development of the program, will be evaluated in stages: crafting of policy documents, forming a team of IDT/ISD and subject matter experts to design and develop new courseware, and testing of any programmatic administration web sites. Though not part of the project, creating new, updated SET surveys that are performance based and devoid of instructor personality-oriented questions that invite bias may be the ultimate evaluation of the value and success of an instructor development program to professionalize the study site's instructor staff.

Conclusion

This section briefly described the project that flows from the data collected from the project study, its goal, and the rationale for such a project. Resources, supports or supporters, and barriers were identified. Of most importance is the potential barrier that the study site might decline the proposal for the project. Suggestions were also offered for how to evaluate the two phases of the project. The bulk of this section was devoted to a short literature review of scholarly research presenting results of studies on teacher or instructor characteristics from the viewpoint of learners and other teachers, the effects of the organization and type of instruction on learners, and student evaluations of teaching. Each of these categories or themes flowed from the unexpected data collection results from the study described in Section 2. Project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches along with project development, reflections on the scholarly journey, and possible directions for future research will be discussed in Section 4.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusion

Project Strengths and Limitations

This section will present reflections on the doctoral study process as well as the social change aspect of the proposed project. Also discussed will be project strengths and limitations and alternative approaches to accomplish the project. The section will provide the conclusion for the entire doctoral study.

Project Strengths

The strength of this project is that the instructor development program will be developed collaboratively using the perceptions of those who must accept it, implement it, and grow by it; yes, even by those who would help to create it. A more professionalized instructor staff would be better positioned to assure the workforce is able to perform the tasks required of leadership to enable their timely decision making. Such a program would raise the standard of instructor capabilities regardless of prior experience or education, in that all instructors, new and established, would share a common baseline knowledge.

Project Limitations

The primary limitation of the project might be the willingness of the study site's current management to institute the project and instructor staff to buy into the project, thereby maintaining the status quo that may not be productive to the study site. Secondary limitations are whether the study site can release some of its current IDT/ISD personnel to develop programmatic course materials and senior instructors and senior managers to create the program in the project. If senior instructors and senior managers

do not buy into the project, more junior staff would likely not buy into it either. It will be paramount for craft actionable mission, vision, and goal statements to inspire their participation and guide design, development, and implementation. A change management plan must be incorporated into the project proposal as part of the communication plan to all stakeholders, eliminating confusion that could surround the project and cause change fatigue.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Even if the project is accepted and the instructor development program is created, and even if instructors complete courses within the program, it is not assured that enough instructors will be able to or agree to change behaviors in and out of the classroom that will result in improved learner experiences. The implied change underlying the project is in the mindset of the individual instructor, in that instructors will become excited to improve their abilities. If the study site is not able to approve a full program development, alternative approaches for generating this change of instructors' mindset are available. The study site can improve its existing standard operating procedures in its instructor certification processes. It could also institute informal learning requirements through its annual performance evaluation system, such as mandating a required reading list.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Having begun the doctoral degree process immediately after completing graduate studies and being an older adult learner, I believe I have been well-suited to the scholarly

journey. Discovering new ways of thinking, new strategies, and new practices is exciting to me and this journey did not let me down in those respects. I began thinking about the dissertation immediately during my residency attendance, which was after my first doctoral course. I believe the repetition of educational topics throughout course studies and during the dissertation writing has been beneficial to clarifying my thinking as an educator and the continued reading of new thought has broadened my perspective. I discovered that conducting research is much more difficult than imagined when collecting information from people is required, as it took considerably longer than I anticipated to do so for my study. This showed me how important it is to carefully consider IRB procedures and data collection strategies and descriptions.

Project Development and Evaluation

Conducting this project study honed my thinking on discovering answers to questions arising from observations and on research strategies leading to those discoveries. The development of the project allowed me to fine tune my ideas on the importance of instructor development and on developing procedures to gather the correct information that would lead to the development of a program to professionalize instructors at the study site. Continued study of scholarly research will aid me in conducting a thorough, research-based evaluation of programs at the study site in the future.

Leadership and Change

Serving in the US Army for 14 years and being an employee in various business positions has given me ample opportunity to lead others, either informally or formally by

position. Leadership, for me, has been a form of ergonomics, of seeing a need and improving existing practices. This project study has enabled me to see a developmental need and devise a means to affect that development to improve work conditions of employees at the study site.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

It is hoped the study site instructors will be positively impacted through professionalization in facilitating adult learning, curriculum design strategies, and evaluation techniques; however, the greatest impact would be to the learner. Improved instructor knowledge, skills, and abilities would buoy learner experiences and more likely translate to transfer of learning in the work centers. The two literature reviews for the study showed that good teaching is more than following a lesson plan, reading graphic slide presentations, or expecting learners to somehow grasp content poorly presented in the learning event. While learner characteristics of self-efficacy, motivation, mindset, and goal-setting are helpful to training attendees' learning and must be engaged, equally important are instructor characteristics coupled with their behaviors.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The project will require a considerable commitment from the study site at all stakeholder levels, from highest leadership through senior management to the instructor staff. The implications for success are that over time the organization's workforce will view training as more beneficial to them and will help empower them with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the organization's requirements. Future research could center on the evaluation of the instructor development program after its implementation to

determine if the data collected for the project proposal, in a manner similar to Knowles's (1980) elicitation of adult learners to plan their own training, will have been appropriate to creating the program. Further research could scrutinize SET ratings after instructors have been through the program for a period of time to determine if learner perceptions of instructor behaviors vary positively with their evaluations of training courses.

Conclusion

This section has provided the opportunity to reflect on the doctoral journey and the project to be proposed to the study site. Conducting this project study provided many challenges and yielded worthwhile results. The perspectives of employees who participated in the former skills training program and supervisors of the relation of program completion to work tasks indicated that there were many aspects that reduced the value of the program. Major conceptual topics of self-directed learning, self-efficacy, and motivation were discussed and used to create the interview protocols for the semi-structured interviews for the data collection. Each of these topics is vital to adult learners who actively seek self-improvement through employer-sponsored training programs.

Training programs are designed to instruct skills that are required in the work centers and ample time must be afforded to employees to practice new knowledge and skills on work tasks. If this practice time is not allowed, especially in high-context or abstract skills, the value of the training is diminished to both the employee and the employer. Apart from learner motivations and goals, instruction during training and support after training are key for training transfer to the work center. Herein is the important role of the instructor. Whether an instructor is exciting in the classroom or not,

more important to learner success is the organization of content and activities in the training event and whether or not the instructor is a subject matter expert in the content being instructed. This project study highlighted that, for training programs to be successful, two key elements must not be overlooked: instructor capabilities in facilitation of learning and the structure of content in one course or of courses within a program.

The project to be proposed to the study site will address these two deficiencies discovered through the perceptions of employees who participated in the original skills training program. Engaging all levels of the study site stakeholders will be a significant component to the proposal and its completion, for without their consent, support, and participation, the proposed instructor development program (Appendix A) could not be developed. To ensure project success, it will be necessary to manage the site's expectations to create change by attending to the elements of leadership, social change and impact, and to focus on the importance of the work.

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Appendix A: The Project

Proposal For An Instructor Development Program

From The Project Study:

The Perceptions Of Employees And Supervisors Of A Training Program

Prepared by Lincoln T. Calcavecchi, Doctoral Candidate
June 2017

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Executive Summary

A formal skills training program formerly used to instruct specific employees in the workforce from 2008-2104 has been replaced with a new training program without the benefit of a program evaluation. As such an evaluation is no longer necessary, conducting a qualitative case study on employees who completed that former program, as well as on supervisors of those employees, would have provided site leadership with potentially valuable information on employee qualities of those who determined to complete the program and on their perceptions of the program itself. Conducting that study did indeed provide valuable information. Data collection instruments, as protocols for semi-structured interviews with predetermined question, were designed using the qualitative study's literature review topics, and participants provided applicable perspectives in line with those themes. It was the unexpected perceptions on instructors and programmatic design that are most valuable. Given this information, herein is a proposal to research and then create an instructor development program.

The research would require two phases to complete. Phase 1 would be about 3 months using confidential data collection from instructors, supervisors of instructors, and senior managers to draft a program structure. Phase 2 would take at least 6 months initially, with the possibility of extending the phase, and would focus on creating a program that redesigns instructor certification and train the trainer practices, creates courses on facilitation, instruction systems design, and instructor observation, and drafts applicable guiding policy documents for staffing through approval channels. This document serves as a proposal to introduce the project and to seek your decision.

Background & Study Overview

Employees in a federal defense government organization (the study site) in the United States voluntarily attended courses in a formal training program since mid-2008 through mid-2014 in which they learned information analysis techniques and written communications strategies. The program contained 11 individual training courses, and not all employees who completed some courses completed the entire program. Employees are required to conceptualize and make judgments in work tasks to better communicate required information to organizational leadership, and the training program was conceived to aid in these work tasks. The study site recently instituted a new training program that was designed to supplant the original program, but the original program was not evaluated before being replaced. The original program was not mandated by policy, which suggested employees engaged in the training for personal reasons and managed their participation by self-direction, self-motivation, and personal goal setting. However, it was unknown whether participants perceived it to have met organizational needs, and it is important to know what contributions or impacts training adds to the organization (Phillips & Stone, 2002).

As a doctoral candidate, with the approval of the study site I conducted a qualitative case study the purpose of which was to discover the perceptions of employees who completed that program and the perceptions of supervisors about the relationship of the training and work tasks at the site. Leadership at the study site must have confidence that employees can perform work tasks more efficiently when returning from training.

The purpose for conducting the study was to alert the study site if there was a perceived deficiency that the original program did not meet. There were perceived deficiencies.

Two guiding research questions were posed for the study. What are the perceptions of employees who completed the training program about their self-directed participation in that program and its relationship to work tasks? What are the perceptions of supervisors of employees who completed the program about the relationship of the employees' training experience and work tasks at the study site? The initial literature review for the study discovered scholarly research on perceptions of training programs, self-directed learning and self-efficacy, motivation to learn and to transfer learning, and on goals and goal-setting. These themes were used to create interview protocols for study site employees who would be invited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews and for supervisors for a single focus group interview.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought by the IRB for the study site and then a secondary approval was granted from Walden University. Participants were then invited to voluntarily participate in the study after the study site retrieved the population from which to derive the sample, which for both data collection strategies became a matter of those who agreed to volunteer and had the ability to participate given the study site proscriptions for data collection. The samples were small, but each was an appropriate size according to research theorists and practitioners (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009) to successfully gather study data.

The data collected was expected and generally in line with the interview protocols that showed employee interview participants undertook the program for reasons of

getting promoted or becoming more credible in their work field, and that they participated through mostly their own self-direction but persisted due to their own sense of self-efficacy. Supervisors shared that as they viewed employees who had completed the program, those employees had received new techniques to practice, but it seemed that the pressure to produce work products often left those employees with little time to fully transfer training knowledge to the workplace. Supervisors also wished they could have had some sort of overview of what the total program was teaching employees so they would have been better able to support the employees. Overall, the individual employee study participants held a negative view of the program, primarily because knowledge provided and skills taught in the program were not required or requested on the job, and because their main goal of completing the program to position themselves for promotions had not been realized.

Many individual participants stated that because they knew the organization was likely to discontinue the program as a matter of precedence, they only completed the program out of a sense of self-worth. Many more never completed. The most surprising and unexpected perspectives shared, however, were about the program's instructors, who were described as not having requisite skills or knowledge and expertise to teach the courses they presented or as lacking facilitation skills to make the information worthwhile. This observation by study interview participants showed a severe judgment on instructor credibility. As the data collection for the study became an unexpected student evaluation of training (SET) coupled with a report of the traits of individuals who completed the program, this information on the perception of the program and of the

instructors was enlightening and is what led to the second literature review and thinking on the project being proposed.

Current Instructor Development Activities

As the study site is a federal government organization, it is governed by federal policies. The required policy for this project would be the DoD Manual on Security and Intelligence Training, 3115.11 (2015). The program for developing instructors currently in use at many federal government organizations derives from this policy to award instructors a certification for having completed a short training instructor course and having demonstrated a capability of instructing at minimum a couple hours of course content. Those who observe candidates to receive this certification may be skilled at observing and providing feedback or they may not, thereby introducing an element of uncertainty as to the inferential strength on the qualifications of each *certified* instructor. Furthermore, the current activity uses a standard of the number of hours instructing in the classroom as a measure for considering instructor as *advancing* in skill. However, if leadership believes that instructors are not being developed appropriately and don't have the knowledge and skills to deliver training (my assumption), for example in newly acquired instructional technologies, then instructor development may be a house of cards. If that is the case, the implication would be that the extrication of one element could cause the house to fall and fail. If leadership holds this belief, then there has not been an adequate instructor development program at the study site, which the data collected in the study may have borne out. A data collection activity in the first phase of the project, in the form of an evaluative climate survey or sensing of the instructor staff and leaders and

supervisors at the study site, is required to discover the breadth and depth of these development activities.

Issues And Assumptions Considered

The following are issues and assumptions considered in the development of this project. The data collection activities will determine if these are actionable inferences. Study site instructors are not being developed as facilitators of adult learning and they lack necessary skills in technologies that could be used for the learning event. Rather they are being ushered through a certification program, whereby completion of the program steps and award of a certificate attests candidates as qualified to be instructors for the study site. DoD Manual 3115.11, Enclosure 5 (2015) states in reference to instructor certification that a program should address, "Instructor qualification criteria leading to certification…." (p. 18). This makes categorical that certification does not develop instructors into facilitators of adult learning, but rather it provides them a stepped process and guideline for developing the qualities necessary to receive a certificate. The study site may have many quality-creating elements already, fully or partially used, yet these elements may not be a cohesive and comprehensive program.

Leaders and supervisors do not have what they need to devote to the development of instructors. This development includes informal skills training and knowledge acquisition in adult learning principles after an instructor has completed a formal training program. Leaders and supervisors of instructors must also have this kind of knowledge. It includes observing the instructor in the classroom for more than a few brief moments and more than once or twice per year for performance appraisals. Leaders and supervisors of

instructors must have a list of approved resources, an instructor training budget, knowledge of training, seminar, conference, and educational activities at locations outside the study site, and adequate time to devote to leader and supervisory duties above and beyond administrative management functions.

All personnel who act in the capacity at the study site as an instructor must receive instructor development to ensure employees receive training that meets client and leadership requirements and that also fulfills learning objectives. If there are different types of instructors at the study site, such as the full-time instructor and the guest or adjunct instructor, what kind of development program should be considered for these different types of instructors? Should the same rigorous program for full-time instructors be mandated for these other types?

Often "train-the-trainer (T3)" has been viewed as the instructor development activity, as if an individual hired to instruct or volunteering as a guest instructor is demonstrating sufficient skills and knowledge of helping adults to learn, assessing the fulfillment of objectives, or managing a classroom simply by attending a class as a learner, auditing the class once, and then teaching it with another instructor sitting in the back of the room. Should instructor development be viewed as a career endeavor, separate from certification measures and train-the-trainer efforts?

Project Proposed Courses Of Action (COA)

The purpose of proposing this project is to assist in responding to practical problems at the study site, to provide a means for the instructor staff to continue life-long

learning and prepare for future work opportunities, and to provide a means to achieve organizational results (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013).

COA 1. Continue using the current Instructor Certification activities as the Instructor Development Program, without modifications, because it follows DoD Manual 3115.11, Enclosure 5. Furthermore, it is a system the study site and subordinate organizations are used to and currently practicing to varying degrees.

COA 2. Continue using the current Instructor Certification activities as the Instructor Development Program, because it follows DoD Manual 3115.11, Enclosure 5, and it is a system the study site and subordinate organizations are used to and currently practicing to varying degrees. However, strengthen the multiple levels of certification by adding courses on technologies used in learning events, coaching, and observation.

COA 3. Discontinue using the current Instructor Certification activities as the Instructor Development Program. Design, develop, and implement an Instructor Development Program drawing from existing programs, adding new elements, and continue using DoD Manual 3115.11, Enclosure 5 as the standard and guideline for program courses to insure quality toward certification. Re-market instructor certification as an administrative function within the Instructor Development Program, calling it only *Instructor Certification.* Follow recommendations within this proposal on the levels for certification. Add courses on Instructional Systems Design, technologies used in learning events, coaching, instructor observations, how to supervise instructors, and any other content deemed appropriate by leaders and SMEs. Follow remainder of recommendations in this proposal.

Caution

Care should be taken that, whichever course of action is taken, the full and policy-driven implementation of an Instructor Development Program at the study site is overseen by the highest leadership and mandated by authority, using those with the best subject matter expertise and experience in helping adults to learn to design, develop, implement and evaluate the program regularly. Otherwise, the program will eventually decay into a *casserole,* due to competing interests and *big personalities* and *I read an article over the weekend* input demands.

Steps To Achieving Proposed COA 3

COA 3 is that which is proposed as the project for which study site approval is requested. It is a two-phase project that will require at least two teams performing activities sequentially, with Phase 1 needing to be accomplished first before Phase 2. The following are the major activities that will need to be undertaken to accomplish the implementation of an instructor development program for the study site, in keeping with the findings of the referenced doctoral study. The project would be completed in two phases: an evaluative climate survey or sensing of current instructor development activities through a data collection activity that will be the first effort of the project; and a suggested program composition and development that would follow the data collection.

Major Activities: Phase One. The first phase, while not an official program evaluation, being more of an evaluative climate survey or sensing of those involved in training, still takes on a program evaluation air. Data collection will seek soft-data categories, such as work climate and job satisfaction, and attitude, such as perception of

job responsibilities, perceived changes in performance, and confidence levels in job tasks (Phillips & Stone, 2002). To use the most reliable data sources (Phillips & Stone, 2002) and to exercise triangulation in data collection (Spaulding, 2014), instructors, instructors of supervisors, and key senior managers will be engaged for ethical, confidential engagement (Spaulding, 2014). These three stakeholder groups will also be used to identify critical behaviors for an instructor to learn and which support and accountability drivers are necessary for success in and out of learning events (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

- Study site accepts this proposal.
- Team is formed to conduct the data collection and compose the actual program proposal and development plan of action.
- Conduct meeting with senior study site leaders to determine:
    - Understanding and scope of the issue
    - What they think is the solution
    - What are their requirements
- Team finalizes data collection instruments:
    - Survey for instructor staff
    - Interview questionnaires for senior managers, instructional design and technology personnel, and supervisors of instructors
- Team conducts data analysis and drafts program proposal and development document plan of action.
- Team presents findings, via plan of action, to study site leadership for approval.

Administrative Details: Phase One

- Timeline for Phase One: three months.
- Activities Reporting to Senior Advisor: bi-weekly via email or telephone call.
- Team Size and Composition: four study site employees, presumably with experience in instruction, certification practices, and instructional design and technologies.

Major Activities: Phase Two

Presuming the study site approves the program proposal and development plan of action, and presuming the COA variation is similar to COA 3, the following activities would be expected. The suggested programmatic elements are offered as place holders to give an idea of what a new instructor development program might look like.

- Team is formed, if the original team is not preferred for this activity, to engage with appropriate stakeholders.
- Engage with following stakeholders for program development:
    - Study site leadership and administrative staff to consider policy documents and implications
    - IDT leadership for assigning an IDT employee or team of employees to create course
    - Subject Matter Experts (SME) at the study site on the art and science of observing instructors for the creation of a course or other type of learning aid to improve observations of instructors
    - IT leadership for the creation of a possible technology for programmatic administration
    - Supervisors of instructors to discover elements that would ease the facilitation of their instructor supervisory activities in association with programmatic administration
    - Instructors to act as SME with the hope of securing their buy-in through development participation activities
- Create a Change Management Plan and a Communications Plan

Administrative Details: Phase Two

- Timeline for Phase One: six months, initially, with re-evaluation thereafter.
- Activities Reporting to Senior Advisor: monthly via email or telephone call.
- Team Size and Composition: enough study site personnel who can devote time to development activities over and above their normal work task.

Suggested Programmatic Elements

Policy Documentation

The program should be formalized and standardized with a signed policy document. Such a document would outline all aspects of the program, timelines for the completion of programmatic elements

Program Administration Web Site

A web presence would prove helpful for instructors, supervisors of instructors, and senior managers. Instructors could annotate training completed, professional development instructor observations that have been conducted, and administrative data on their training instructional duties. Supervisors of instructors could annotate their instructor observations of their subordinates, monitor their development progress, and use the information for developmental conversations. Senior managers could use the information to track metrics and business unit information. This web presence would require someone skilled in IT to make a web site that would be easily used, accessible, and be seen as valuable.

Instructor Certification

Make instructor certification an administrative function within the larger instructor development program by dropping the concept that it is itself a program. Eliminate all but the Adjunct and the Instructor levels of certification as this should be invisible to the learner and something that is not a discriminator of actual instructor skill. Eliminate the current time-on-podium standard as it is not the right indicator of a quality instructor. For those instructors who teach fewer hours and shorter training courses, even if they demonstrate advanced skills, achieving longer hour requirements in the current certification activities is unattainable and unfair. Instructor observations, as summative evaluations, should be completed by entrusted and assigned instructors to guarantee a level of quality control.

Instructor Demonstration of Content Proficiency And Delivery Skills

An instructor candidate must learn the content of a training course and then demonstrating ability to train that course by performing thorough train the trainer (T3) activities with an approved instructor-mentor, per the DoD Manual 3115.11 (Department of Defense, 2015). These activities are not synonymous with being a subject matter expert in the subject of the training course, but are specifically centered on demonstrating a full understanding of how a course is to be taught, what is the order of sequence of knowledge distribution and skills practice, and how to perform as a facilitator of adult learning. It is the instructor-mentor's responsibility to prepare instructor candidates fully to instruct or facilitate in the learning event.

Fundamental Instructor Familiarization Course

The DoD Manual 3115.11 (Department of Defense, 2015) presents a list of instructor qualities, as knowledge and skills, that should be incorporated into a basic instructor familiarization course. A few of the qualities are being knowledgeable in adult learning principles and basic instructional systems design principles, as well as having basic facilitation and classroom management skills.

Instructional Design And Technology (IDT) Course

Create a fundamentals course on IDT, previously known as instructional systems design (ISD), to increase knowledge of IDT and how to put IDT into at least limited practice. An IDT course should be developed by study site IDT personnel and instructed by them, as the subject matter experts. If instructors gain this fundamental knowledge, they will understand better how to engage with clients to conduct training needs analyses, how to create better learning objectives that are measureable and meet client

requirements, and how to better assess learning in the classroom through formative and summative techniques. Brookfield (2006) stated that what educators choose for educational approaches is value-laden, and a course on IDT principles and practices would hopefully eliminate some of this bias and add a more scientific measure to course design. This could also free study site IDT personnel for work on larger organizational projects, rather than having to attend to small-scale needs that the instructor could resolve. Some course elements might be:

- Instruct how to create criterion-referenced learning objectives such that learners' activities are measureable, observable actions (Mager, 1997).
- Instruct how to conduct a training needs assessment, to include evaluating client requirements and conducting skills and task analyses.

Instructor Observation Course

Develop and mandate a formal course and a culture of practice on instructor observation. Instructor observation should be considered as almost a sacred duty, not to be conducted haphazardly, by a friend, or only at the end of the formal employee rating period. Consider a dedicated cohort of individuals to become qualified as observers such that leadership is assured of instructional quality because of assurances of observational quality. This course should be considered for all supervisors of instructors as well to enable them to provide evidentiary support for performance appraisals. Brookfield's (2006) suggestions on student evaluations are equally applicable to instructors, such as for instructors who would observe other instructors, and these mirror suggestions given by Brookhart (2008).

- Evaluations are judgments that reveal the power and the commitment of the evaluator.

- Evaluating provides the opportunity to demonstrate credibility and authenticity.
- The evaluated individual has the opportunity to internalize the observer's feedback to better evaluate his or her own work.
- The evaluator should be clear about what is being evaluated.
- The evaluator should give feedback as soon after the evaluation observation as possible.
- Make evaluative judgment statements in language that is easily understood and accessible to the one being observed and evaluated.

Sample Survey & Questionnaire Questions

Partial Example Interview Questionnaire for Supervisors of Instructors

1) What do you think is your role in instructor development?

2) What activities do you do already to help your instructors to become better?

3) How much time do you spend or do you think you should spend on helping your instructors develop?

4) If your role in helping instructors to develop was to expand, what kind of support do you think you would need to help your instructors to become better?

Partial Example Survey for Instructors

Directions for completing the survey.
Please answer all questions by clicking the radial button icon ☐ and providing amplifying information as requested in these fillable fields . *There is no text limit in these fillable fields.*

1) Do you have a college degree? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, answer the following:
   a) Degree Level (BA, MA, PhD, etc.)
   b) Academic Discipline (e.g., Poli-Sci, Intelligence Studies, Education)
   c) If your degree is not in Education, do you use what you learned in your degree program in the courses you instruct? Yes ☐ No ☐
   d) If your degree is in Education, what is the emphasis (e.g., adult education, ISD, administration)
   e) If your degree is in Education, do you use what you learned in your degree program to help you in your instruction? Yes ☐ No ☐

2) Are you a *current* subject matter expert in the subject you instruct?
   Current is defined as that you recently conducted the same type of job as the learners in your classes.
   Subject matter expertise is defined as "…possess expertise in the field being taught…(being) the best candidate…capable of challenging students while fostering professional growth and development" (DoD Manual 3115.11, Enclosure 5, Section 4, Paragraph a, 2015/2016).
   a) Yes ☐ No ☐

3) How long have you been an instructor (with this organization and any previous experience)?
   a) Less than 2 years ☐ 2-5 years ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 10+ years ☐

4) Why did you originally become a cadre instructor?
   a) Is that answer still the same today? Yes ☐ No ☐
   b) What may have caused your answer changed?

5) Have you attended or received any professional development in a training-related subject within the last year? Yes ☐ No Please list:

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Appendix B: Individual Employee Interview Protocol

Interviewer Name: _____

Interviewee Name: _____

Interview Date: _____ Interview Time: _____

Interview Location: _____

Introductions

I am conducting this research project, *The Perceptions Of Employees And Supervisors Of A Training program*, to discover the perceptions of employees who completed a training program and those of their supervisors about the relationship of the training and information analysis and written communications production tasks at a site in the southern US.

Review of Informed Consent form

Reminder of confidentiality

Reminder of voluntary nature of participation and acceptance of refusal at any time

Interview Questions: The following questions are designed to guide the interview. This is a semi-structured interview, so probes and follow-up questions will depend on the interviewees' responses.

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
    a. How long have you been in your current position?
    b. How long have you been doing this line of work?
    c. How often do you or have you participated in training at this organization?

2. Describe your reasons for participating in the training program. What are the reasons to participate in training (voluntary or being told to do so) (Aragon & Valle,

2013; Lau & McLean, 2013; Patrick, Smy, Tombs, & Shelton, 2012) (job satisfaction) (Jodlbauer, Selenki, Batinic, & Stiglbauer, 2011)?

3. How would you describe your approach to participating in training?

a. Describe your belief in your ability to put into practice those things you learn, either in a training event or on the job (self-efficacy) (Bandura, 1977; 1989).

b. Please describe your understanding of training in terms of having a mindset of discovering your capabilities or having a mindset of ensuring you confirm your capabilities (Growth [Incremental] or Fixed [Entity] Mindsets) (Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012)? Can you elaborate?

c. Please explain the effects of training in terms of being by your own decisions (self-directed learning) or by being told to complete training (Knowles, 1975; Du, 2013)? Can you elaborate?

d. During training, please describe the idea of wanting to be told what you need to learn and why and to be shown the right answers, or of discovering the information on your own or in a group and to figure out the right answers. Given your description, what do you look for in a training class?

4. In terms of the training program you completed, please describe why you completed it (motivation) (Knowles, 1990; Wlodkowski, 2008).

a. What was your motivation to do so (motivation to learn) (Francis & Flanigan, 2012) (self-efficacy leading to motivation) (Bhatti, Ali, Isa, Battour, 2014)?

b. Describe your motivation over the course of the program (Kim, Oh, Chiaburu & Brown, 2012)? What affected it (self-efficacy, peer support, supervisor support)

(Bhatti, Ali, Isa, Battour, 2014; Ng, 2013; Pilati & Borges-Andrade, 2012; Sanjeevkumar & Yanan, 2012)?

c. How would you describe your motivation to put what you learned into practice and what would you say has influenced this motivation (motivation to transfer learning) (Bhatti, Ali, Isa, & Battour, 2014; Pham, Segers, & Gilselaers, 2012; Sanjeevkumar & Yanan, 2012)?

5. In terms of participating in the training program and then completing it, please describe your goals (need to achieve, goals to learn) (Lauzier & Haccoun, 2014; Scielzo, Neeper, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

a. Describe your process for setting your goals for completing this program (assigned from someone else, assigned by self, do your best) (Brown, McCracken, & Hillier, 2013;.Wexley & Baldwin, 1986

b. Describe how completing your goals for this program affected you at work (Johnson, Garrison, Broome, Fleenor, & Steed, 2012).

6. Please describe your understanding of the training program (perception).

a. What is your understanding of what the program was designed for, its purpose (Francis & Flanigan, 2012; Miranda, Radliff, Cooper, & Eschenbrenner, 2014)?

b. Describe how you think the program's design affected your learning (Currie & Davidson, 2015) or your ability to do your job (Henrikson, Polonyi, Bornshheuer-Boswell, Greger, & Watts, 2015) after you completed the program.

i. Explain your ideas about whether having a belief in being able to put into practice the things learned in the program might play a part in your completing

the program (Putwain, Sander, & Larkin, 2013; Singh, de Grave, Ganjiwale, Supe, Burdick, & van der Vleuten, 2013)?

ii. Describe whether you think the program was geared toward those who could direct their own participation and completion or toward those who wanted to be told what to do and how to complete it (Hong & Park, 2012; Raemdonck, Gijbels & van Groen, 2014; Winstead, 2013)? How do you think that affected you and your learning in the program?

c. Describe how you think completing the program will affect you, your work, your career (career development, career opportunities) (Legette & McCord, 2014; Quinn, Keppol, Bligdon, & Lyons, 2015).

d. Describe the way in which the program is or is not relevant to your work and how you are using what you have learned in the program after completing it (Zhang, Zhan, Li, Hu, & Yan, 2015) (content validity) (Lau & McLean, 2013).

7. Please tell me anything else you would like to say about your experience with the training program that you feel you have not addressed or would like to add.

Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Interviewer Name: _____

Focus Group Members' Names: _____

Interview Date: _____ Interview Time: _____

Interview Location: _____

Introductions

I am conducting this research project, *The Perceptions Of Employees And Supervisors Of A Training program*, to discover the perceptions of employees who completed a training program and those of their supervisors about the relationship of the training and information analysis and written communications production tasks at a site in the southern US.

Review and signing of Informed Consent forms

Reminder of confidentiality

Reminder of voluntary nature of participation and acceptance of refusal at any time

Signing of Promise of Confidentiality of Participants

Focus Group Questions: The following questions are designed to guide the group. Probes and follow-up questions will depend on the group's responses and interactions.

1. Describe your employees' participation in the training program. How do you think your employees' completion of the program affected their performance on the job (self-efficacy and self-direction) in relation to information analysis and written communications?

2. Describe your employees' motivation to complete the program. What types of peer or supervisor interactions influenced employees' completion (motivation)?

3. What are your observations on whether your employees are better able to plan their information analysis and written communications tasks successfully and complete them successfully after they completed the program (motivation to transfer and goal setting)?

4. Describe your perceptions of the training program employees completed and what value the program may have added to your employees' information analysis and written communications work performance (perceptions of training).

5. Possible additional questions derived from the continual data analysis and coding of the employee individual interview data.