

**EXPLORING POST-TRAINING SUPERVISORY SUPPORT IN ENHANCING
TRANSFER OF TRAINING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

by

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DATE

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Doctor Marizan Krügel.

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ABSTRACT

The research describes how post-training supervisory support enhances training transfer in the private sector. Transfer of training principles were identified, after which the participants were interviewed to determine which transfer of training criteria were used by supervisors to enhance training in the work environment. The study population for this research was comprised of call centre supervisors and call centre agents from a company in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The study methodology involved qualitative interviews and document reviews. Themes and sub-themes were identified from the data collected. The findings of the study reflected how post-training supervisory support enhances transfer of training. Recommendations were provided that could have a significant impact on organisations' approach towards ensuring successful transfer of training to the work environment. Suggestions for further studies were made. The study concludes by suggesting a transfer of learning strategy aimed at enhancing transfer to the work environment that should be implemented by organisations.

KEY WORDS

Supervisor support, Transfer of training, Transfer of training in the private sector, Transfer of learning, Training needs, Post-training support, Workplace learning, Adult learner, Corporate learning, Learning and development, Adult Learning.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USD:	United States Dollar
ACU:	Aramex Corporate University
JNB:	Johannesburg
HR:	Human Resource Management
DTP:	Development Training Programme
SA:	South Africa

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALISATION OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The research reported in this study focuses on exploring post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training in the private sector in Gauteng Province South Africa. In today's competitive global economy, organisations increasingly rely on a knowledgeable workforce to help them to survive (Arguinis & Kraiger 2009:452). Estimates suggest that American organisations spend anything from USD 55 billion to as much as USD 200 billion annually in an attempt to increase employees' knowledge and skills and change their behaviour in order for the organisation to prosper (Martin 2010:520).

Transfer of training refers to the effective and ongoing implementation in the work environment of knowledge and skills, obtained from both classroom and on the job training, by employees (Baldwin & Ford 1988; Broad & Newstrom 1992). According to Mestre (2005), the concept of transfer of training incited continuous debate over the years. Researchers considered transfer to be successful if the trainees implemented their newly acquired knowledge and skills and considered transfer to be unsuccessful if the trainees failed to implement the newly acquired knowledge and skills (Cormier & Hagman 1987; Marini & Genereux 1995).

Studies exploring transfer of training conducted in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands reported low levels of transfer (Baldwin & Ford 1988; Van den Bossche, Segers & Janse, 2010; Govaerts & Dochy, 2014; Greenaway, 2002). In some instances only 10 to 30 percent from what was learned was transferred to the workplace (Broad 2005; Baldwin & Ford 1988; Broad & Newstrom 1992; Harris 2000; Salas & Cannon-Bowers 2001). Harris (2000:358) mentions lack of support by supervisors and managers, lack of opportunity to apply and trainee's observing training to be impractical or irrelevant as some of the key reasons why transfer of learning to the workplace frequently fails.

Baldwin, Ford, and Blume (2009:45), a group of American researchers, report supervisor support as an important but under-recognised work environment factor affecting transfer and in particular, noted little attempt to understand the supervisory behaviours that assist transfer. Blume, Ford, Baldwin and Huang (2010:1063) recommend that researchers should focus on finding ways to foster higher levels of supervisor support in the work environment. Adding to this Lancaster, Di Milia and Cameron (2013:8) suggest that future research should focus on what the supervisor does “prior” to course attendance, “during” course attendance and “after” course attendance to assist in identifying these behaviours.

Coetzee, Eiselen and Basson (2006:46), who studied transfer of training in South African institutions, argue that utilisation of newly acquired knowledge and skills are fully dependent on successful transfer of training between the classroom and the workplace. Coetzee et al (2006:48) further identify workplace climate as an important variable that may impact on the transfer process. They describe workplace climate as including factors such as supervisor feedback, performance coaching, supervisor and manager support and supervisor and manager resistance or openness to change. These factors may either inhibit or encourage transfer.

In a more recent report, Dichaba (2011:166), another South African researcher, argues that one of the biggest problems associated with in-service training programmes for adult educators is the lack of transfer of training. Dichaba adds that very often what is learnt in a training session faces resistance in the workplace. Mateme, cited in Dichaba (2011:166), points out that when teachers returned from training and tried to implement what they have learned they met with resistance from their principals.

It is the opinion of the researcher that it is critical to ensure that the newly acquired knowledge and skills transfer to the workplace and thereby ensure a good return on investment for the organisation. Based on the experience of the researcher as training manager and the review of the relevant available literature this research explored post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training in the private sector.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Transfer of training is not always successful despite the fact that organisations spend large amounts of money on training and development. Based on his own practical experience as a training manager, the researcher concluded that employees may gain some new knowledge and skills from training interventions, but performance appraisals following training indicated not much has changed. The problem is that there is no real proof that training is transferred to the workplace. The role of the supervisor is seen as significant in the transfer process. However, little attempt to understand this role is reported. It is therefore the opinion of the researcher that it is pivotal to further explore the supervisors' role and determine what factors enhance transfer of training; what challenges employees and supervisors face and to explore ways to foster higher levels of supervisor support in the work environment.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

Organisations spend a great deal of time and money ensuring their employees are equipped with the knowledge and skill to perform to an optimum level, often through training and development (Kozlowski & Salas, 2010; Van den Bossche & Segers 2013:38). For training to be efficient, it has to transfer successfully from the corporate classroom back to the workplace (Hatala & Fleming, 2007; Wang & Wilcox, 2006). However, the success of transfer is not always guaranteed. Research indicates that transfer to the workplace is often confronted with many challenges such as lack of opportunity to apply and resistance to change by peers (Dichaba, 2011; Burke & Hutchins, 2007). The reason for this, Govaerts and Dochy (2014:78) argue, is that training transfer is a complex process in which many variables have been found to affect transfer. Over the past two decades, many studies focused on trying to find an answer to the challenges in the transfer process. Important reviews in this regard are the studies of: Baldwin and Ford (1988), Cheng and Ho (2001), Holton et al (2000), Colquitt et al (2000) and Cheng and Hampson (2008). Although large amounts of money is spent on training, it is estimated that only 10 to 20 percent from what is learned during the training is applied in the workplace (Kirwan & Birchall, 2006). Amongst the diverse factors identified as influencing the transfer process, support by the supervisor and manager has often been found to be a main indicator for success

in transfer (Holton et al 2003). It is therefore pivotal that companies do not focus only on identifying factors that inhibit transfer but also on those that contribute to successful transfer.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Through this study, the researcher hopes to contribute to education in general as well as to education and training in the public and private sector and to enhance the understanding of transfer of training by concentrating on the supporting role of the supervisor in the transfer process. The researcher hopes that the research findings will add to a better understanding of the role of the supervisor in training transfer in terms of particular behaviours and attitudes adopted by supervisors. Besides adding to the existing body of knowledge, it is suggested that the study will also inform and improve policy decisions regarding training transfer in different sectors in general and in the private sector in particular.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question:

How does post-training supervisory support improve transfer of training by employees in the private sector?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by employees in the transfer of training?
2. What support activities are undertaken by supervisors in order to improve the transfer of training?
3. Which of the support activities do employees experience as helpful to transfer?
4. Which of the support activities do not seem to be helpful to transfer, according to employees?
5. How can post-training supervisory support be enhanced?

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To examine how post-training supervisory support improves the transfer of training by employees in the private sector.

Objectives:

1. To identify challenges faced by trained employees in the transfer of training.
2. To examine the support activities undertaken by supervisors to improve the transfer of training.
3. To identify support activities employees experience as helpful to transfer.
4. To identify support activities employees experience as not helpful to transfer.
5. To identify ways of enhancing post-training supervisory services.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.7.1 CONCEPTS RELATED TO TRAINING TRANSFER

This section focuses on concepts identified in transfer literature as closely related to the transfer of training.

1.7.1.1 Workplace learning

Workplace learning is the “means, processes, and activities by which employees learn in the workplace from basic skills to high technology and management practice that are immediately applicable to workers’ jobs, duties, and roles” (Wang 2011:196). Wang argues that successful organisations continually strive to upskill their employees to match the needs of the organisation. To accomplish this, in 2009, South African companies spent up to 3.13% of their payroll on training and workplace learning (Meyer & Bushney 2009:10). In comparison, global estimates indicate that American organisations spend anything from USD 55 billion to as much as USD 200 billion annually with the objective of increasing employee performance through training and development (Martin 2010: 520).

1.7.1.2 Defining the concept transfer of training

Transfer of training is defined as the extent to which newly acquired knowledge and skills are successfully applied in the workplace and maintained over time. It is thus seen as the effective and continuing application, by trainees to their jobs, of the knowledge and skills gained in training – both on and off the job (Blume et al. 2010:1066). There is a long-standing interest in training transfer and Baldwin et al. (2009:41) recommended examining training design characteristics, trainee characteristics and variables in the work environment.

The focus in transfer studies is primarily on variables influencing transfer as well as the interventions intended to instil and improve a transfer climate (Arguinis & Kraiger 2009:452). Directly linked to a skilled workforce (Lim & Morris 2006:85) is the attainment of organisational performance objectives such as increasing revenue to ensure a profit. Effective training, followed by the successful transfer of the newly acquired knowledge, skill and attitude can add to productivity and improve performance. Successful transfer also increases motivation and commitment, morale and teamwork, and decreases the frequency of errors, resulting in a strong competitive advantage enabling organisations to meet their business goals (Grossman & Salas 2011:104). The absolute aim should be to ensure that the training transfers to the workplace, as argued by Lim and Morris (2006:85).

1.7.2 THREE CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCING TRANSFER OF TRAINING

Traditionally the factors influencing transfer of training are divided into three broad categories, using Baldwin and Ford's (1988:41) model of transfer of training, namely: trainee characteristics, training characteristics and work environment characteristics.

1.7.2.1 Trainee characteristics

It is widely accepted that trainee characteristics play a powerful role in the transfer of training. In this regard Grossman and Salas (2011:53) point out that learning and subsequent transfer to the job will only occur if trainees have the ability and the desire to acquire new skills and the motivation to apply the training content to their jobs. According to them, the trainee characteristics that show the strongest, most consistent relationships with transfer include cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation and perceived value of the training.

1.7.2.2 Training characteristics

The second group of influencing characteristics include design and content of the training programme. Numerous researchers have dedicated their time and effort to studying the influence of training design factors (Grossman & Salas 2011:111). A review of the design characteristics by Lim and Morris (2006:89) suggested at least two influencing factors, namely content design and instructional methods. Waller (2012:7) argues that the role of the organisation in preparing employees for the training commences long before the training starts. Influencing the participants' mind-set towards learning and alerting them to the transfer process is part of ensuring their readiness. Lim and Morris (2006:91) suggest that it is pivotal to ensure that the individual will in fact benefit from the training they are about to attend. They further argue that a suitable selection process, the supervisor's involvement in the training, and feedback by the supervisor are more factors influencing transfer. Adding to this, Waller (2012:7) contends that it is important for the benefits of the programmes to be communicated well.

1.7.2.3 Work environment characteristics

Since the early 1950's researchers have focused on the organisational transfer climate or workplace climate. The term 'workplace climate' refers to the extent to which organisations create a supportive environment that is conducive to transferring training from the classroom to the workplace (Lancaster et al. 2013:8). Both Blume et al. (2010:1070) and Martin (2010:522) indicated an increased emphasis by companies on building a climate that supports training transfer. These authors suggest that a need should exist for a supportive organisational climate in order for transfer of training to occur. Earlier, Lim and Morris (2006:90) defined work environment or workplace climate characteristics as those characteristics that either inhibit or promote training transfer.

According to Lancaster et al. (2013:8), work environment characteristics also include the actions organisations take to instill a supportive environment that is beneficial to transferring the learning from the classroom to the workplace. A review of the climate characteristics indicated that the factors that mostly influence transfer can be divided into two categories, namely factors related to systems and factors related to people (Lim & Morris 2006:91). These authors explain that systems include factors such as

effective communication, commitment to training and transfer, and the availability of resources to assist employees in applying the new knowledge and skills (Lim & Morris 2006:91). Pertaining to people skills, research has focused on the role that supervisors, co-workers and peers play in the transfer process (Baldwin et al. 2009:45). Lim and Morris (2006:91) also emphasise the need to have a mentor available.

While numerous factors can affect transfer of training, research has increasingly emphasised the important role that supervisors play in the transfer process (Baldwin et al. 2009:45). Although there is no universally accepted definition for the role of the supervisor in training transfer, Govaerts and Dochy (2014:87), suggest the following definition:

“The role of the supervisor in transfer of training can be defined as a multidimensional role with the aim of optimising trainees’ use on the job of knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in training. It entails the supervisor’s adoption of a potential variety of specific behaviours and/or attitudes before, during and after training”.

When the employee returns to the office after the training, support from the organisation can come in a variety of ways. Waller (2012:7) argues that it is important to assist employees in applying the skills and knowledge they have acquired. Managers and supervisors should provide opportunities for employees to practise the new skills; they should also expect responsibility and accountability and offer a variety of assignments that will expand the level of experience of the employees (Burke & Hutchins 2008:117). Creating individual transfer plans that support the learning outcomes and indicate how learning will be applied, will assist successful transfer (Waller 2012:7). Providing feedback, as well as developing and nurturing confidence, will help to avoid returning to former behaviour (Grossman & Salas 2011:114). In this study, the researcher focused specifically on supervisor support as a transfer factor and how it is experienced by employees in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

1.7.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES

Govaerts and Dochy (2014:78) posit that although employees may obtain new knowledge and skills in the corporate classroom, successful transfer to the workplace is not always ensured. It is therefore important to focus on successful transfer and how this leads to relevant and permanent changes in behaviour. However, despite the critical importance of transfer, and given the large investments, transfer is not always guaranteed (Van den Bossche & Segers 2013:38). Many organisations have reported a dismal transfer rate. Quantifying levels of transfer showed that only 10 to 15% of the training content transfers successfully to the job and results in behavioural changes in the workplace (Lim & Morris 2006:86). This was also confirmed in the study of Saks and Belcourt (2006:639) who investigated the percentage of employees in organisations that effectively apply what they have learned in training: immediately, six months, and one year after training. The results indicated that 62%, 44%, and 34% of employees respectively transfer immediately, six months, and one year after training. This amounts to a transfer average of only 47%. For organisations these results represent a poor return on investment and it is therefore valid, in the opinion of the researcher, to spend time and effort in thoroughly investigating the transfer problem.

1.7.4 SUPPORT ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY SUPERVISORS

As mentioned in the previous section, there is no universally accepted definition of the role of the supervisor in the transfer of training. The researcher concurs with Govaerts and Dochy's (2014) definition provided above, and adopted this same viewpoint in this research. Researchers have identified support from supervisors as one of the most helpful tools in enhancing transfer of training (Baldwin & Ford, cited in Nijman, Nijhof, Wognum & Veldkamp 2006:529). However, Baldwin et al. (2009:45) argue that supervisor support is not always recognised sufficiently for its role in the transfer process. In particular, they report little attempt to understand the supervisor's behaviour that might assist transfer. Blume et al. (2010:1063) recommend finding ways to foster higher levels of supervisor support in the work environment. Adding to this Lancaster et al. (2013:8) suggest that research should focus on what the supervisor does "prior" to course attendance, "during" course attendance and "after" course attendance to assist in identifying these behaviours.

1.7.5 SUPPORT ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCED AS HELPFUL AND UNHELPFUL

Researchers such as Govaerts and Dochy (2014:80) and Lancaster et al. (2013:8) agree that supporting activities are experienced as helpful by trainees. These supporting activities include but are not limited to transfer climate, support by the supervisor, opportunity to practice and apply, follow-up by the supervisor or manager, accountability, and adequate resources. These researchers also found that the absence of some or all of these supporting activities is often not helpful to the transfer process. These findings will be elaborated on in detail in Chapter 2.

1.7.5.1 Transfer climate

Transfer climate is described as organisational factors that either inhibit or encourage the use in the work environment of knowledge and skills obtained in training (Burke & Hutchins 2007:280). Nijman et al. (2006:535) also define transfer climate as those characteristics of the work environment viewed by the trainees as either encouraging or inhibiting the use of trained skills, a definition the current researcher consents to. Goldstein (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) identified factors such as encouragement, incentives, accountability, remediation and support from supervisors as the building blocks of a positive transfer climate.

1.7.5.2 Opportunity to practise and apply

Opportunity to practise and apply the newly acquired knowledge and skill is significant because of its direct link to transfer. (Ford, cited in Nijman et al. 2006:535) defines opportunity as “the extent to which trainees are provided with or actively obtains work experiences relevant to the task for which he or she was trained”. (Ford cited in Nijman et al 2006:535) also found that trainees rated opportunity to use trained skills as the best form of support and the lack of opportunity to use training as the biggest obstacle to transfer.

1.7.5.3 Follow-up by the supervisor

To ensure transfer and application, trainers and supervisors should provide post-training follow-up and feedback to trainees (Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons & Kavanagh 2007:284). These authors also found that feedback regarding trainees' post-training performances largely influenced transfer. Grossman and Salas

(2011:114) further emphasise that meeting with trainees to encourage the implementation of job aids designed to assist with transfer is of utmost importance.

1.7.5.4 Accountability

Bates (2003:264) postulates that accountability can be identified as the degree to which the organisation holds trainees responsible for using their newly acquired knowledge and skills in the work environment. This author's research has indicated that being held responsible and accountable for using new knowledge and skills showed trainees that transfer is an essential part of the transfer climate valued by organisations. According to Bates (2003:264), assessing trainees, holding trainees, trainers and others accountable and helping them, instils a culture that appreciates learning and the application of the knowledge and skills in the job environment.

1.7.5.5 Availability of resources

For effective transfer to take place, the trainees need to have access to the necessary resources. In a longitudinal study, Marler, Liang and Dulebohn (2006:735) found that the relationship between training and intention to use new skills on the job were influenced by employees' perception of availability of resources. Perceptions of resources were based on beliefs about whether or not sufficient time to practise new skills would be provided, whether or not supervisors would support the learning process and whether or not documentation and expert help would be available.

1.7.6 ENHANCEMENT OF POST-TRAINING SUPERVISORY SUPPORT

In their study, Burke and Hutchins (2008:116) investigated best practice strategies in enhancing transfer of training. The strategies most frequently reported were supervisory support (12%), followed by coaching and providing opportunities to practise new skills and knowledge (11%). They also emphasise the role of the supervisor in providing feedback and the availability of resources to assist in implementing the new skills (Burke & Hutchins 2008:116).

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

There are two main approaches in research, namely quantitative and qualitative. In

this study a qualitative approach was used. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:320) explain that qualitative research entails assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research would be conducted in the real world of work; the respondents would describe their everyday experiences relating to post-training supervisory support. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2011:313) state that the choices and actions of the researcher determine the strategy in a qualitative study. Qualitative researchers, therefore, create the research strategy best suited to the specific research.

Different types of designs are applied in qualitative research, such as: ethnographic, case studies, phenomenological, grounded theory and critical studies. A case study was used in this study. Creswell (2013:97) posits that a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a bounded system. Case studies are the preferred research strategy when how and why questions are posed and when the researcher has little control over events (Yin cited in Lancaster et al. 2013:9). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:320) note that in a case study the collective experience of the group will be the focus, rather than that of the individual. In this study, the bounded system was the call centre of a corporate company in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

1.8.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection methods that were used in this study are discussed below.

1.8.2.1 Interviews

Rubin and Rubin (2012:4) describe an interview as a conversation in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion. The important aspect here is giving the interviewee a voice. In the current study, the researcher elicited depth and detail about the research topic by following up on answers given by the interviewee during the discussion (Rubin & Rubin 2012:31). The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews following a predetermined interview guide. Participants were asked open-ended questions with further probing questions

to clarify the answers if necessary. It was anticipated that each interview would be 30 to 40 minutes in duration. An adapted version of Govaerts and Dochy's (2014:82) 24 supervisor support behaviours and attitudes were used in assembling the interview protocol (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.2.2).

1.8.2.2 Document review

Documents are printed or written records of different types, such as an organisation's documents on policies and procedures (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:367). The organisational policies are included in this study to indicate that the HR and Training Department has measures in place to support learners with the transfer of learning. Documents that were reviewed in this study are the Aramex SA Training Policy ACU 955 JNB and the Training Policy for Current Employees ACU 963 JNB. The policies regulate how learning and development functions have to be implemented in the company. The policy documents are discussed below in order to indicate how they guide the transfer of learning.

The Aramex SA Training Policy ACU 955 JNB states the purpose of training in the organisation. The policy contains a set of guidelines to ensure that each and every employee participates in a properly structured training process. The aim of the training is to ensure that their work performance is maximised and their potential is fully developed. The Aramex SA Policy Training for Current Employees ACU 963 JNB covers the steps for preparing a Development Training Programme (DTP) for current employees. The procedure includes training when employees are switching positions or are being promoted. Current staff receives a DTP based on their specific and agreed-upon training needs. The training must involve theory, practical and on-the-job sessions as well as a post-training support plan. The plan is facilitated by the employee's supervisor to ensure successful transfer of training. Completion and sign-off of the DTP are determined by successful completion of the agreed upon training and successful implementation and completion of the post-training support plan.

1.8.2.3 Population and sampling

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:489) define a population as a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalised. A

sample, according to De Vos et al. (2009:194), is a group of subjects or situations selected from a target population. A sample comprises the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. For this study convenience sampling or available sampling, a method of sampling used widely in both quantitative and qualitative studies (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:137), was used. Convenience sample was used because information-rich sources were available. The primary purpose of the research was not to generalise but to better understand relationships that may exist. A typical corporate call centre environment consists of call centre supervisors and call centre agents who they oversee. For this case study the sample consisted of six call centre supervisors and ten call centre agents. A call centre agent is the person who handles incoming and outgoing customer calls for a business.

1.8.2.4 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. In this study, a qualitative content data analysis process was used. The qualitative content data analysis involves recording data, transcribing data, coding and clustering the data into meaningful units, grouping units of data into categories and grouping related categories into themes and sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes serve as research findings (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:367).

1.9 ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is supported by the validity and credibility of the research findings. Validity and credibility in qualitative research refers to the degree of similarity between the explanation of the phenomena and the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:330). To enhance trustworthiness in this study the researcher triangulated the data by using two data collection techniques: interviews and documents. The researcher also employed member checking. This is a process where participants are given the opportunity to check the authenticity of the recorded interviews. The participants therefore had an opportunity to confirm that the researcher had captured their responses correctly and without personal bias. Congruency was therefore established in that the researcher did indeed check with each member of the group to confirm whether he had accurately recorded what they

had said (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). The researcher also shared with the participants how he had coded and categorised the data.

1.10 ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is generally concerned with beliefs about what is right or wrong from a moral perspective. Research ethics is focused on what is morally proper or improper when engaging with participants or when accessing archival data (De Vos et al. 2009:57).

To comply with the above the researcher:

- Applied for ethical clearance from the University of South Africa (UNISA) to conduct the study;
- Applied for permission from Aramex to conduct the research;
- Wrote letters to invite participants;
- Asked the participants to sign a letter of consent;
- Applied all necessary protocol such as anonymity and voluntary participation when conducting research; and
- Acknowledged all sources to avoid plagiarism.

1.11 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The concepts used in this study are explained below.

1.11.1 Training:

Training means the systematic acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes in the corporate environment that together leads to improved performance in a specific environment. Training was facilitated by corporate trainers.

1.11.2 Post-training:

Post-training means after training. It specifically included events such as the behaviour of the supervisor following immediately upon (or within the short to medium term after) trainees returning to their jobs.

1.11.3 Supervisor support:

Supervisor support means the extent to which supervisors reinforce and support the use of learning in the job situation.

1.11.4 Transfer of training:

Transfer of training means the effective and continuing application, by trainees to their jobs, of the knowledge and skills gained in training, both on and off the job.

1.11.5 Private sector:

The private sector is the part of the economy which is run by private individuals or groups, usually as a means of enterprise for profit, and is not controlled by the State. For the purpose of this study the transfer environment was a corporate company in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

1.11.6 Call centre agent:

A call centre agent is the person who handles incoming or outgoing customer calls for a business. A call centre agent might handle account inquiries, customer complaints or support issues.

1.11.7 Call centre supervisor:

A call centre supervisor is a person who oversees a team of call centre agents who deal with customers either in person, over the phone or online.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.12.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

An introduction and background to the study was presented and the focus was on formulating the research problem and research questions. The research design that was followed was presented. The methodology used to collect and analyse data was also addressed.

1.12.2 Chapter 2: Review of relevant literature

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for this study. The theoretical framework addresses the phenomenon of post-training supervisory support within the

workplace learning environment. Literature resources on post-training supervisory support and transfer of training are reviewed.

1.12.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology of the study. Data collection methods used to obtain empirical evidence, data analysis methodology as well as information on population and sampling are included. In addition, the validity and reliability of the data collection methods are discussed. The approach for selecting the sample is also explained.

1.12.4 Chapter 4: Presentation and interpretation of the findings

This chapter explains and describes the process that was followed for analysis of the data collected from the interviews. The main aim is to present the analysis of the answers and responses derived from the 16 participants during the semi-structured interviews. The actual conversations, remarks and accounts of the employees are cited to illustrate the specific themes and sub-themes.

1.12.5 Chapter 5: Summary, recommendations and conclusions

In this final chapter the conclusions and recommendations concerning the research findings are presented. The implication of the study for enhancing transfer in the private sector is presented. Recommendations for future research and the limitations of the study are put forward.

1.13 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 sketched the background to this research and highlighted the prominent issue, which was the motivational factor for the study. The aims and objectives of the research, and the research strategy and methods, which included data collection methods and data analysis, were discussed. Next, the significance of the study was explained and concepts used in the research were clarified. The outline of the chapters of the dissertation was also provided. Chapter 2 covers the literature review which focuses on the significant role of the supervisor in transfer of training. Variables that have an impact on transfer of training are reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an overview to this study and highlighted the research aims and objectives and research strategy and methods. It also clarified the significance of the study and key concepts. In Chapter 2 literature that explains how post-training supervisory support enhances transfer of training within organisations is reviewed. To answer the research questions literature addressing the role of the supervisor in transfer of training and the trainees' experience of the supervisor's role in transfer of training was thoroughly examined. The review also addresses variables influencing transfer of training such as trainee characteristics, training design characteristics and the work environment. The researcher conducted a detailed search for studies on transfer of training that included the role of the supervisor. The following keywords were used: 'training transfer' and 'learning transfer' in combination with either 'supervisor' or 'manager'. As a result, literature that clarified the phenomenon was found. Before analysing the role of the supervisor in the transfer of training, the theoretical framework is discussed.

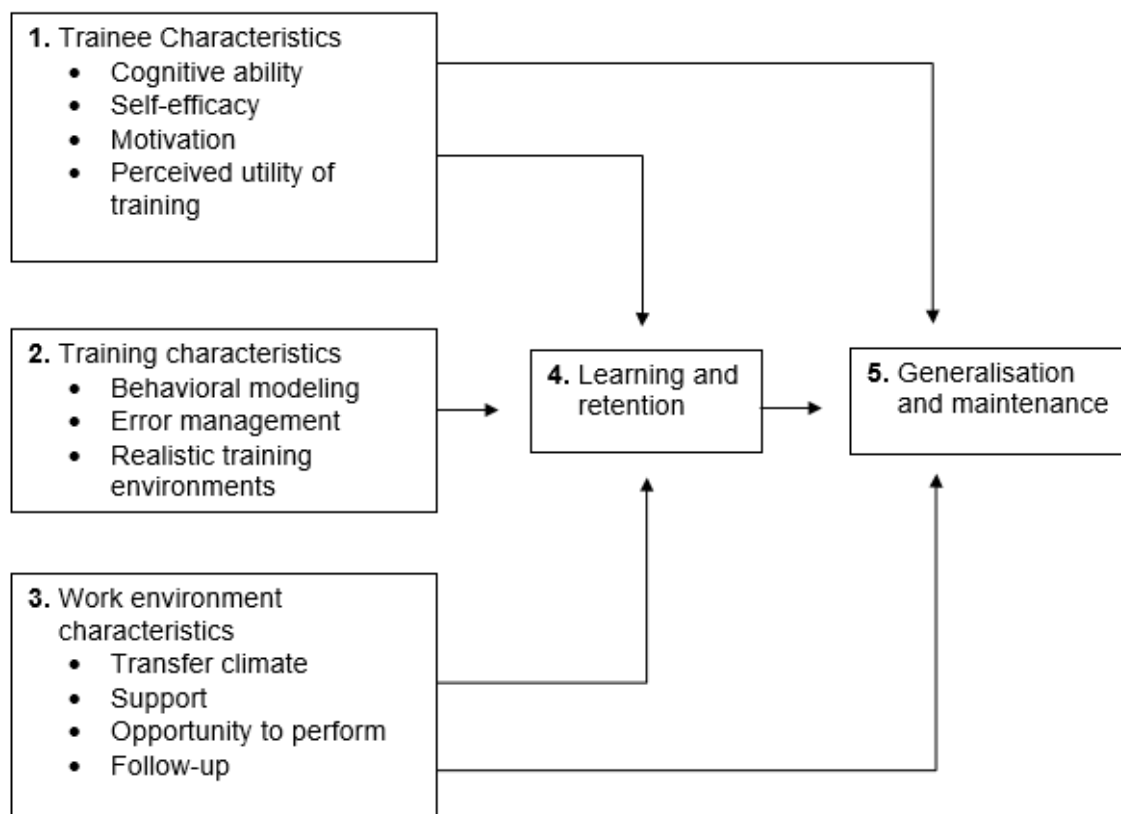
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysis of transfer issues requires a clear understanding of what is meant by transfer as well as the identification of the factors that influence transfer. Researchers have identified several reasons why trainees either do or do not apply in the workplace what they have learned in training (Caffarella 2002:210). The aim of the study was to investigate some of these reasons. The researcher therefore based this study's theoretical grounding on a model of the transfer process by Baldwin and Ford (1988:65) illustrated in Figure 2.1 below. This model presents a framework for understanding the transfer process. As pointed out in Chapter 1 three key-factors that influenced the transfer process directly were identified, namely (1) trainee characteristics (discussed in paragraph 2.3.3 below), (2) training design characteristics (paragraph 2.3.4) and (3) work environment characteristics (paragraph

2.3.5). These factors are known as training-input factors. Baldwin and Ford (1988:64) suggest that the conditions of transfer include training outputs, which they describe as learning and retention in the classroom environment (see Figure 2.1 number 4), and conditions of transfer, presented as the generalisation and maintenance of material learned in training over a period of time on the job (see Figure 2.1 number 5).

Sookhai and Budworth (2010:258) found that the work environment or social context influences training in at least two ways, namely, by motivating employees to use what they have learned in the work environment, and by rewarding these behaviours. These findings resonated with the researcher's own beliefs and thus the current study focused on support in the work environment, specifically supervisor support.

Figure 2.1: A model of transfer process (Baldwin & Ford 1988:65)



2.3 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS RELATED TO TRAINING TRANSFER

2.3.1 WORKPLACE LEARNING

Workplace learning can be defined as the systematic attainment of knowledge, skills and attitude that together lead to improved performance in the organisation (Grossman & Salas 2011:103). This definition addresses the knowledge employees need to acquire, what processes and procedures they need to execute, and what they need to experience in order to perform at an optimum level. Workplace learning also focuses on obtaining long lasting cognitive and behavioural changes and on developing critical competencies required for optimal performance. Based on his own experience, the researcher agrees that effective workplace learning is essential to the organisation's growth. It serves as a powerful tool for producing cognitive, behavioural and affective learning outcomes that support growth and development in the organisation.

The challenging global economy requires organisations to adapt to change continuously in order to remain competitive (Grossman & Salas 2011:115). One such change is to acquire the level of knowledge, skills and attitude that are key to not only surviving the challenges but also to prosper. To ensure that their employees gain the necessary knowledge and skills, organisations invest a great deal of money annually in training and development. However, despite these efforts, many employees are reportedly unable to obtain the required critical skills (International Business Machines: 2008).

Although employees might benefit from the training, trained competencies are commonly not applied or transferred to the workplace (Baldwin et al. 2009:41). The apparent lack of transfer has long been a major obstacle for both organisations and researchers. From the discussion above, it is evident that training is an essential component in establishing a competent workforce; however, training is not enough. It is therefore critical to further explore the transfer of training process.

2.3.2 TRANSFER OF TRAINING

Transfer of training, also termed transfer of learning or applications process, can be defined as the effective and continuing application, by trainees to their jobs, of the knowledge and skills gained in training (Blume et al. 2010:1066). However, Govaerts and Dochy (2014:78) argue that training employees is not enough. Employees might

gain new knowledge and skills through training programmes; but of greater significance is whether the newly acquired knowledge and skills are successfully transferred to the workplace. It is also important to ensure that the learning is continuously implemented. Yet this is not always the case, as argued by Lim and Morris (2006:86), who point out that estimates indicate that only a 10 to 15% of the training content transfers to the job and results in the necessary behavioural changes in the workplace. This reference to lack of transfer is supported by Van den Bossche, Segers and Jansen (2010:81) who argue that even though organisations spend large sums of money on training, in all probability, little of what is learned in the classroom is applied in the workplace.

Transfer of training has been studied since the early 1950s. Fleishman (1953:205) and Mosel (1957:56) found that there was a common belief that training fails to have significant impact as it either fails to transfer or that it is lost with time. The transfer literature was first summarised by Baldwin and Ford in 1988 (Baldwin et al 2009:41). Their proposal for future research included examining trainee characteristics, training design characteristics, and variables in the work environment that might influence transfer. A more recent review of the training transfer literature by Blume et al. (2010:1066) indicates that little has changed. Both the studies encouraged researchers to better understand the factors that influence training transfer. Training programmes can only be considered successful if the newly acquired knowledge and skills are transferred to the workplace (Nijman et al. 2006:529). Nijman et al. (2006:529) add that intended return on investment in training programmes will only be achieved if the trainees continue to apply the acquired knowledge and skills successfully long after they attended the training.

2.3.3 TRAINEE CHARACTERISTICS

It is generally accepted that trainee characteristics play a key role in the transfer of training. Baldwin and Ford, (cited in Grossman & Salas 2011:106) argue that trainee characteristics include factors such as cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation and perceived utility of training. Grossman and Salas (2011:108) point out that learning and the ensuing transfer to the job will occur only if trainees are intrinsically motivated, have the ability and desire to obtain new skills and are determined to apply the training content to their jobs. In addition, they argued that the trainee characteristics showing

the most constant relationships with transfer are cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation and apparent usefulness of training.

2.3.4 DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

The second group of characteristics identified by researchers as influencing transfer involve the design and content of the training programme. Many hours of research have been dedicated to the improvement of training design (Grossman & Salas 2011:111). According to Baldwin and Ford (1988:66) the focus was on factors such as behavioural modeling, error management and realistic training environments. These factors were also linked to Burke and Hutchins's factors (2007:272) which included the identification of training needs and goals, applicability of content, important instructional strategies and methods, self-management strategies, and instructional media.

2.3.5 WORK ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS

According to Baldwin and Ford, (cited in Grossman & Salas 2011:106), the third group of characteristics are work environment factors such as transfer climate, support, opportunity to perform and follow-up. Grossman and Salas (2011:113) define work environment, also referred to as workplace climate, as the extent to which organisations construct and maintain a supportive environment which encourages transfer of training from the classroom to the workplace. Lancaster et al. (2013:8) concur that the work environment is critical in supporting transfer of training. Blume et al. (2010:1070) contend that companies are increasingly focused on creating a work environment that is conducive to transfer and Martin (2010:522) argues that even well designed training programmes will fail to produce positive transfer outcomes if the work environment does not support the use of trained behaviours.

The researcher supports the above-mentioned views, including that of Meyer, Lees, Humphris and Connel (2007:309), who identified supervisor and peer support, transfer climate, opportunity and follow-up as key factors that have a great influence on the ability of trainees to make use of their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The current study therefore focused on the above-mentioned factors as critical factors influencing the transfer process. Barriers or challenges in transfer of training are discussed next.

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES IN TRANSFER OF TRAINING

Challenges to training transfer are seen as factors that stop transfer from happening. One of these challenging factors is resistance to implementing the newly acquired knowledge and skills. Resistance is defined by Holton (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:536) as the extent to which current group norms are observed by individuals resulting in resistance to use the skills and knowledge acquired in training. Dichaba (2011:166) adds that very often what is learnt in a training session faces resistance back on the job. When trainees return from training and try to implement what they have learned their efforts are often met with resistance from their supervisors and peers.

Harris (cited in Dichaba 2011:166) identified three key reasons why transfer of learning frequently fails to take place: lack of support for implementing the new competencies on the job; trainees being uncomfortable with using new competencies and trainees perceiving programmes as impractical or irrelevant. Other challenges faced by trainees are training not experienced as helpful, lack of support by the supervisor, limited or no feedback, time constraints, lack of applicability, personal challenges, workplace issues and other life issues (Caffarella & Daffron 2013:218). The organisation may also lack a strong transfer culture which may curtail transfer. Managers and supervisors or other important people in the trainees' environment may appear pre-occupied or not interested in listening to the trainee who wants to discuss the new information and skills. Trainees are also sometimes heavily occupied with having to catch up with their duties which were neglected while they were away to attend the training (Caffarella & Daffron 2013:218). Barriers also arise from factors such as a lack of sufficient planning, lack of a proper transfer plan, poorly designed training, and little or no interest on the part of the trainee, management, presenters or others involved in the programme planning process (Caffarella & Daffron 2013:218). Govaerts and Dochy (2014:85) refer to barriers as sanctions. A supervisor sanction is defined as a negative response from the supervisor when a trainee attempts to implement the training in the work environment. It also includes other more specific aspects such as providing constant negative feedback, objection to the use of training and lack of interest (Govaerts & Dochy 2014:85).

2.5 SUPPORT ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY SUPERVISORS

As explained above researchers such as Govaerts and Dochy (2014:78) emphasise that many variables have been found to affect transfer. Some of these variables are trainee characteristics, trainee motivation, programme design and delivery, organisational culture and organisational strategies such as support by supervisors and peers. Supervisor's role in influencing and supporting trainees to transfer the newly acquired competencies to the job has been widely corroborated in both quantitative and qualitative studies (Burke & Hutchins 2007:281). Supervisory support related to transfer of training, has been defined as the degree to which supervisors behave in a way that encourages employees to use their newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in the workplace (Nijman et al. 2006:537). Behaviours such as discussing new training opportunities, participating in training, providing positive feedback and encouragement and mentoring trainees has been identified as the main contributors to positive transfer (Burke & Hutchins 2007:280; Govaerts & Dochy (2014:82). Lim and Morris (2006:89), who found that trainees emphasised supervisor's support and particularly positive feedback as an important element in influencing the transfer process, support the findings of the aforementioned authors. Cromwell and Kolb (cited in Govaerts & Dochy 2014:82) found that trainees who received high levels of supervisor support transferred more knowledge and skills one year after participating in a training programme than those who reported lower levels of support. Moreover, Burke and Hutchins (2007:273) postulate that goal setting, for example, has a significant impact on transfer outcomes. Prior to training supervisors should discuss goals regarding the desired performance, the conditions under which the performance is expected to occur, and the criteria set for performance with the trainee. In addition, a study by Robbins and Judge (cited in Grossman & Salas 2011:113) indicated that specific and difficult goals, in combination with feedback, can greatly enhance motivation and, in turn, performance. Supervisors can also support trainees by providing recognition, encouragement and rewards, and through modelling behaviours. Lim and Morris (cited in Grossman & Salas 2011:113) identified supervisors' participation in discussions of new learning, involvement in training and provision of positive feedback as forms of support most recognised as positively influencing transfer. Grossman and Salas (2011:114) found that of all of the work environment variables, support had gathered the strongest evidence for its role in the

transfer of training. Given the important factors mentioned above, the researcher is of the opinion that companies can largely benefit when the role of supervisors is prioritised and their support is enhanced.

2.6 SUPPORT ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCED AS HELPFUL AND UNHELPFUL

As mentioned in Chapter 1 researchers Govaerts and Dochy (2014:80) and Lancaster, et al. (2013:8) agree that the presence of supporting activities is experienced as helpful by trainees. They also agree that the absence of some or all of these supporting activities is often reported as not helpful to the transfer process. These supportive activities are elucidated below.

2.6.1 TRANSFER CLIMATE

Transfer climate is described as consisting of organisational factors that either inhibit or encourage the use on the job of knowledge and skills obtained in training (Burke & Hutchins 2007:280). Nijman et al. (2006:535) define transfer climate as those characteristics of the work environment viewed by trainees as either encouraging or inhibiting the use of trained skills, a definition with which the current researcher agrees. Coetzee, Eiselen and Basson (2006:46) identified workplace climate as an important variable that may have an impact on the transfer process. They describe workplace climate as including factors such as feedback, performance coaching, supervisor and manager support, supervisor and manager sanctions, resistance or openness to change, personal outcomes either positive or negative, and opportunity to use learning. These factors may either inhibit or encourage transfer. Goldstein (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) identified factors such as encouragement, incentives, accountability, remediation and support from supervisors as the building blocks of a positive transfer climate. The current researcher agrees in this regard with While and Holton (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:535) who name factors such as supervisor support, opportunity to use, peer support, supervisor sanctions and resistance to change as essential elements of the transfer climate. In a qualitative exploratory study by Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007:4), trainees identified an unsupportive transfer climate as the greatest inhibitor to transfer of training as mentioned in Chapter 1 of the current study. Rouiller and Richman-Hirsch (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) found that

trainees who perceived a supportive transfer climate were more prone to transfer of customer service skills than those that perceived an unsupportive transfer climate.

2.6.2 OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY

Opportunity to apply is significant in that it is directly linked to transfer. Ford (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:535) define opportunity as “the extent to which a trainee is provided with or actively obtains work experiences relevant to the task for which he or she was trained”. In research by Nijman et al. (2006:535), trainees rated opportunity to use trained skills as the best form of support and the lack of opportunity to use training as the biggest obstacle to transfer. Employees need ample opportunity to apply their new skills in the workplace for positive transfer to occur (Burke & Hutchins 2008:117). Research has also indicated that a lack of such opportunities can seriously inhibit the use of trained competencies in the work environment. Furthermore, Clarke (2002:146), identified limited opportunity to perform skills on the job as the strongest barrier to successful training transfer. After conducting interviews with trainees, Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007:10) concluded that having time to use new skills is critical for training transfer, while Cromwell and Kolb (2004:464) found that lack of opportunity was a significant barrier to transfer. To provide opportunities, managers should adapt trainees’ workloads to allow them to practise new skills on the job as delay between training and opportunity to use their learned skills minimises optimal transfer (Cromwell & Kolb 2004:464). In concluding this argument, it is noted that Marler et al. (2006:735) postulated that for training to transfer successfully, trainees need the resources and opportunities to apply their new skills and abilities in the workplace as positive transfer is limited when trainees are not provided with opportunities to use new learning in their work setting.

2.6.3 FOLLOW-UP

The researcher contends that the completion of the scheduled training should not indicate the end of the learning experience; therefore, follow-up is another important factor included in this review. The days and weeks following the training provide diverse opportunities for enhancing learning and maintaining the knowledge and skills over time. To ensure transfer and application, trainers and supervisors should provide post-training follow-up and feedback to trainees. In this regard, Velada et al. (2007:284) found that feedback regarding trainees’ post-training performances to a

large extent influenced transfer. Grossman and Salas (2011:114) emphasise that meeting with trainees to encourage the implementation of job aids designed to assist with transfer is of utmost importance. In an updated review of the transfer literature, Baldwin et al. (2009:45) and Grossman and Salas (2011:114) concluded that post-training interventions such as relapse prevention, self-management, goal setting, training in self-talk, and post-training instructor and supervisor follow-ups showed positive effects on the transfer of training. It is therefore the opinion of the current researcher that managers and supervisors should continue to manage the learning process after the training is completed by providing regular feedback to trainees thereby enhancing the transfer process.

2.6.4 ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is significant in that it is linked to responsibility. It can be defined as the degree to which the organisation holds trainees responsible for using their newly acquired knowledge and skills in the work environment (Bates 2003:264). Research has indicated that being held responsible and accountable for using new knowledge and skills shows trainees that transfer is an essential part of the transfer climate which organisations value. According to Bates (2003:264), through assessing trainees, the trainees, trainers and others are held accountable; this process also helps instil a culture that appreciates learning and the application of the knowledge and skills in the job environment. Hutchins and Burke (2007:250) claim that trainees are more likely to be successful at transferring their newly acquired skills when their managers and supervisors hold them accountable, encourage them, and provide regular feedback. Rouiller and Goldstein (cited in Grossman & Salas 2011:112) classify the characteristics of a positive approach into two categories, namely situational cues and consequences. Situational cues include factors such as goalsetting, peer support, equipment availability and opportunity to practice trained skills. Consequences entail holding trainees' accountable and instituting punishment and positive and negative feedback following wrongful implementation or lack of implementation of trained skills. In the current research the role of accountability in the transfer process was scrutinised.

2.6.5 AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES

For effective transfer to take place, the trainee must have access to the necessary resources. In a longitudinal study, Marler et al. (2006:735) found that the relationship between training and intention to use new skills on the job were influenced by employees' perception of availability of resources. Perceptions of resources were based on beliefs about whether or not sufficient time to practice new skills would be provided, whether or not supervisors would support the learning process and whether or not documentation and expert help would be available.

2.7 ENHANCEMENT OF TRANSFER OF TRAINING

Enhancers in learning transfer are factors that positively influence on the transfer of the newly acquired skills and knowledge to the workplace once the training is completed. Al-Eisa, Furayyan and Alhemoud (2009:1237) found that trainees were more inclined to commence transfer when they perceived high levels of support from their immediate supervisors. Scaduto, Lindsay and Chiaburu (2008:165) suggest that trainees who know where they stand with their supervisor, who have the certainty that the supervisor will use his power to help them solve problems related to their jobs, and more generally, who have a strong bond with their supervisor gained more from training, all of which leads to improved training transfer.

In a study by Lancaster et al. (2013:15) comparing what supervisors do before, during and after training, it appeared that transfer was maximised when trainees experienced their supervisor as a positive role model and when supervisors showed interest in the trainees' experience of the training, encouraged and supported new initiatives, and involved trainees in decision-making. In their evaluation of predictors of successful implementation of an ergonomic training programme, Korunka, Dudak, Molnar, and Hoonakker (2010:104) examined three types of supervisor support, namely social (support trainee in his role as ergo-guide), time (invest time in affairs related to training content), and monetary support (invest money in affairs related to training content). Positive correlations were observed between both time and monetary support with a time regression analysis showing time support more important than financial support (Korunka et al. 2010:104).

In addition, a qualitative in-depth case-study by Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007:9), investigating what contributed to transfer of leadership skills showed that trainees were more susceptible to transfer when their managers participated in the training and were actively engaged in implementing the trained skills and concepts. Adding to this important finding trainees in their study described how discussions, coaching and personal engagement from their bosses facilitated continued learning and engagement with new skills (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe 2007:9). Tai (2006:53) also established that trainees who received more information about the purpose of the training from their supervisors experienced higher levels of self-efficacy and motivation to transfer. That is, if supervisors present a specific training programme as useful to trainees before they attend the training, they will develop higher self-efficacy and motivation to transfer than those who did not receive such information (Tai 2006:53).

2.7.1 BEST PRACTICE IN TRANSFER OF TRAINING

The researcher was of the opinion that best practice factors needed to be included in the literature review because it was the aim of the research to investigate how supervisors can enhance transfer, which implicates best practice procedures. In their research, Daffron and North (2006:62) identified some best practice factors that influenced the transfer process. The software professionals participating in the above-mentioned research were asked to identify the best ways of ensuring that newly acquired skills are implemented in the workplace. Daffron and North (2006:62) found that their responses could be summarised into three categories, namely: content and applicability to the job, method and delivery of information, and support with the transfer process and follow-up. In their review, Burke and Hutchins (2008:116) also reported on best practice strategies. The training professionals whom they interviewed named supervisory support (12%) and providing opportunities to practise new skills and knowledge and coaching (11%) as best practice strategies. The participants in the study furthermore identified tasks to encourage participation (9%), assessment (7%), and making training content relevant to actual job duties (5%) as factors that best support transfer (Burke & Hutchins 2008:116). In addition to the above Caffarella and Daffron (2013:217) identified planning, motivating trainees, design and delivery of the training, context, immediate application, work place environment and elimination of barriers as best practice factors that are conducive to transfer. Immediate application of the learning is very important for the transfer to take place. The researcher agrees

with the best practice factors highlighted in the discussion above. Supervisory support, the content and applicability to the job, method and delivery of information, and opportunity to apply and follow up are all pivotal factors in the transfer process that were addressed in the research.

2.7.2 THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE IN TRANSFER OF TRAINING

This section contains a discussion of the supervisor's role in transfer of training. Successful learning and skills transfer have been associated in numerous studies with the role of the supervisor. Baldwin et al. (2009:45) mention that even though several factors can affect transfer of training, research has often emphasised the important role that supervisors play in the transfer process. Likewise, in a more recent report, Govaerts and Dochy (2014:78) postulated that the role supervisors have in influencing and supporting trainees to transfer their newly acquired knowledge and skills to the job had been widely supported in qualitative and quantitative studies. Baldwin et al. (2009:45) reported supervisor support as an important work environment factor affecting transfer. However, they argue that not much was done to understand the supervisory behaviours that assist transfer. Blume et al. (2010:1063) recommend finding ways to foster higher levels of supervisor support in the work environment. Adding to this, Lancaster et al. (2013:8) suggest that research should focus on what the supervisor does "prior" to course attendance, "during" course attendance and "after" course attendance to assist in identifying these behaviours. The aim of this study was therefore to explore post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training in the private sector.

2.7.2.1 Defining the supervisor's role

Govaerts and Dochy (2014:87) argue that it is best to implement a comprehensive definition of the role of the supervisor in transfer of training. The definition should focus on the variety of supportive supervisor behaviours and attitudes. Govaerts and Dochy (2014:87) define the role of the supervisor in transfer of training as follows:

"It is a multidimensional role with the aim of optimising trainees' use on the job of knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in training. It entails the supervisor's implementation of a potential diverse group of specific behaviours and/or attitudes before, during and after training."

The researcher concurs with this definition as such an approach acknowledges the diverse nature of the supportive supervisor behaviours and attitudes. It also addresses both timing and the purpose of the role of the supervisor in transfer of training.

2.7.2.2 Categorising the supervisor's role

In order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the role of the supervisor in transfer of training, this segment focuses on categorising the role of the supervisor. Govaerts and Dochy (2014:86) formulated 24 categories of supervisor support in a review that focused on specific supportive supervisor behaviours and attitudes. The 24 categories represented different supervisor support behaviours and attitudes. The researcher adopted Govaerts and Dochy's 24 categories of supervisor support to construct the interview schedule for the call centre agents and call centre supervisors. From the discussion above, it is evident that the supervisor's role forms a key component in the transfer of learning process. The 24 categories are presented in Table 2.1, indicating the category, a description and whether the category influences transfer before, during or after training.

**Table 2.1: Description of categories of supervisor support in transfer of training
(Adapted from Govaerts & Dochy 2014:86, with a column added)**

No.	Category	Description	Before, during or after training
1	Alignment	The supervisor acts in accordance with training content and/or serves as good work model.	After
2	Clarify trainee selection	The supervisor notifies the trainees (in a positive way) of the reasons why they were accepted or selected to attend the training.	Before
3	Coach learning and transfer	The supervisor coaches trainees in their general development or transfer of training in specific ways by providing	After

		assistance, giving advice and/or working on problems together.	
4	Discuss application	The supervisor discusses the use of training on the job with trainees.	During After
5	Emotional support	The supervisor shows confidence in trainees' successful completion of training and application in the job, and shows understanding if problems arise.	During After
6	Encouragement	The supervisor encourages the use of newly acquired training on the job.	During After
7	Favour follow-up training	The supervisor approves that trainees participate in follow-up training or make follow-up contact with the trainer.	After
8	Feedback	The supervisor provides the trainees with feedback on their use of the training on the job and their work performance in general.	After
9	Goal setting	The supervisor sets learning application and/or performance goals for trainees based on the training content.	During After
10	Involvement in training selection	The supervisor actively participates in discussing training needs and selecting training programmes that meet the needs of employees.	Before
11	Informal reinforcement	The supervisor appreciates, praises and/or reinforces trainees' use of training on the job.	After
12	Interest in training content	The supervisor is interested in what trainees learned in training.	During After
13	Monitor application	The supervisor cares about, observes and checks the progress and/or quality of trainees' use of training on the job.	After

14	Openness to change	The supervisor is open to new ideas and tolerates changes.	After
15	Opportunities to practise and apply	The supervisor provides opportunities for trainees to practise newly learned competencies and to apply the training in the job.	After
16	Positive attitude towards training	The supervisor openly supports and values trainees' participation in training.	Before During
17	Practical support	The supervisor provides trainees with resources and practical support (e.g. time and money, practical tools) to prepare for training, to attend training and/or to practise and apply afterwards.	Before During After
18	Request sharing	The supervisor request that trainees share what they have learned with other employees.	After
19	Rewards	The supervisor gives trainees rewards for use of training on the job.	After
20	Supervisor's involvement in training	The supervisor is aware of the content and objectives of the training and/or takes part in the training him/herself.	During
21	Tolerate mistakes	The supervisor is tolerant of mistakes trainees make when trying to apply training on the job.	After
22	Trainee preparation	The supervisor helps trainees with their preparation of the training.	Before
23	Value of training for the job	The supervisor informs trainees of the relevance and benefits of the training for their job.	Before
24	Work coverage	The supervisor has the current work of trainees covered during training.	During

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a discussion of how post-training supervisory support enhances transfer of training. A detailed study was undertaken of the contributions of a diverse group of authors. The literature study provided valuable information regarding the transfer of learning and the role of the supervisor post-training. Variables influencing transfer of training, such as trainee characteristics and training design characteristics, were scrutinised. Special attention was given to the work environment and the role of the supervisor in transfer of training. Consequently, guidelines for effective transfer of learning, focusing on the post-training role of the supervisor, were obtained. A theoretical foundation for best practices in training transfer was also established. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology adopted for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presented the literature review. Variables that have an impact on transfer of training were discussed. It furthermore focused on information pertaining to methods that can be used to ensure that trainees have the best chance of implementing what they learned in training. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methodology and design implemented to investigate transfer of training in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The data collection methods and the population and sampling methods are described. The data analysis techniques and ethical considerations are also discussed. The research design was chosen in an endeavour to provide answers to the following research questions mentioned in Chapter 1:

- How does post-training supervisory support enhance transfer of training?
- What challenges are trainees experiencing in the transfer process?
- Which support activities are implemented by supervisors?
- Which of these support activities are experienced as assisting transfer and which of the factors are experienced as not helpful?
- What are the best ways in which to enhance transfer of training?

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

This study is embedded in the interpretive paradigm. According to Moyo, Modiba and Simwa (cited in Okeke & Van Wyk 2015) researchers choosing this paradigm are interested in the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. Since the participants in this study were call centre agents and supervisors, the study attempted to understand the phenomenon through the meanings that the participants assigned to the phenomenon (Phothongsunan 2010).

Creswell (cited in McMillan & Schumacher 2010:320) mention that researchers utilising this paradigm apply qualitative research methodologies. De Vos (2011) postulates that the focus in qualitative research is on describing phenomena through documenting the actual words of the participants. Qualitative researchers observe and interview people or events and afterwards analyse the data through qualitative methods such as interviews. A qualitative research approach is further characterised by a natural setting. In the current research the natural setting is the call centre of the organisation and the participants in this study are the call centre agents and their supervisors. Having considered the above mentioned factors the researcher chose the qualitative approach for this study

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:20), the term 'research design' refers to the overall strategy chosen by the researcher to combine the different components of the study in a consistent manner. The aim of the chosen design is to ensure that the researcher consistently addresses the research problem. The design entails collection, measurement, and analysis of the research data. The design also includes determining when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be collected.

Creswell (2013:69) identifies five research designs that can be used in qualitative research. They are biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. The researcher selected a case study design for this study. A case study can be defined as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a bounded system. In this study, the call centre of Aramex South Africa was the bounded system. In a case study, the focus is on one entity and the researcher defines the case and its boundary (Booyse 1999). Lancaster et al. (2013:9) argued that case studies are the preferred research strategy when how and why questions are posed and when the researcher has little control over events. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:320) comment that the collective experience of the group is the focus, rather than the individual.

3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

A population is a group of elements or causes, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalise the results of the research (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:129). The population for this

research was supervisors and call centre agents in the public sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa who underwent the 'Handling Irate Customers' training. This training programme is designed to equip call centre agents to better understand the irate customer. It is aimed at equipping the agent with the ability to empathise, apologise, and offer a solution to their complaint or query.

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2009:194), a sample is a group of subjects or situations selected from a target population. A sample comprises the same characteristics as the population. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:325) argue that qualitative sampling entails selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study when the researcher wants to understand something about those cases without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases. Qualitative sampling is done to increase the value of information obtained from small samples.

For this study the researcher chose convenience and purposeful sampling. The reason for choosing convenience sampling was that the participants were employees of the company and were therefore readily available. The participants were selected purposefully because of their valuable experience and expertise pertaining to the research topic. They were deemed information-rich key informants likely to be knowledgeable about the phenomena the researcher is investigating therefore they were likely to be able to contribute to better understanding the phenomena being researched.

The research was conducted at the national call centre of the company in Johannesburg. This centre is a fully operational call centre. The participants from the national call centre receive ample and regular training, conduct all customer service functions and have designated supervisors. This made it possible to investigate the research questions, unlike the situation at the company's call centres at the different branches outside of Johannesburg where the following challenges with respect to sampling would apply:

- The branch call centres are small in size. There are mostly only one or two agents.

- The functions of these branch call centres are limited because of their size.
- Supervision in the branch call centres is general and not specific. The agents share a supervisor with the Operations Department. The researcher was investigating a specific relationship between the call centre agent and the supervisor and it would not be possible to do this at the different branches.
- The branch call centres do not receive the same quantity of training as the national call centre.

Table 3.1 reflects the sample of 16 participants comprising 6 call centre supervisors and 10 call centre agents, with the following demographics:

Table 3.1: Research sample of the participants

Factor	Age in years	Agents	Supervisors
Age	20–25	2	1
	25–35	4	3
	35–45	4	2
Work responsibilities		Call centre agent	Call centre supervisor
Position		Call centre agent	Junior management

In the following section the data collection techniques are discussed.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Greef (cited in De Vos et al. 2011:341) notes that data collection techniques in qualitative research include interviews, focus groups and document review. Semi-structured interviews and document review were used as data collection instruments.

3.4.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In this study qualitative interviews were utilised as described by Rubin and Rubin (2012:4). Their model of qualitative interviewing defines interviews as conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion. The interview provides an opportunity for the researcher and the

participant to meet and exchange information about the relevant phenomena. Interviews could be seen as interacting, and interviewers are allocating meaning to the participants' words (De Vos et al. 2011:342). The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews to better understand the behaviours that facilitate transfer. An interview guide was used. The interviews were conducted in English. The estimated time span of each interview was between 30 and 45 minutes per participant.

The call centre agents who were interviewed attended the organisation's training programme 'Handling Irate Customers' as mentioned in 3.3. The training focused on a problem-solving strategy, with special attention to dealing with clients' emotional reactions, and on practical guidelines that supported the implementation of the knowledge and skills obtained in the training. The instructional methods used were theory, group discussions and role-plays. The trainees also listened to pre-recorded calls to help them identify the desired behaviour.

Four weeks after completion of the training programme an appointment was scheduled with each of the participants to conduct a semi-structured interview. The purpose of the interview was to obtain their views on how they experienced the processes explored in the research project. The interviews were conducted at the company's headquarters and during working hours in the corporate classroom which provided the necessary privacy as it was situated away from any major distractions (Creswell 2013:165). The interviews were conducted one-on-one and the interaction was purposive of nature. The data collected focused on the participants' experience of the transfer process. The researcher documented data obtained during the interview in the form of written notes. The interviews were also audio-recorded. Permission was obtained from the call centre agents and supervisors to record the interviews. After the completion of the interviews, the researcher discussed the transcripts from the interview with the call centre agents and supervisors to check for accuracy, as mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.9, to ensure validity and reliability. Corrections were made during the interviews and reviewed afterwards.

3.4.2 DOCUMENT REVIEW

In addition to the interviews, organisational policies were studied to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the objective of training and development and

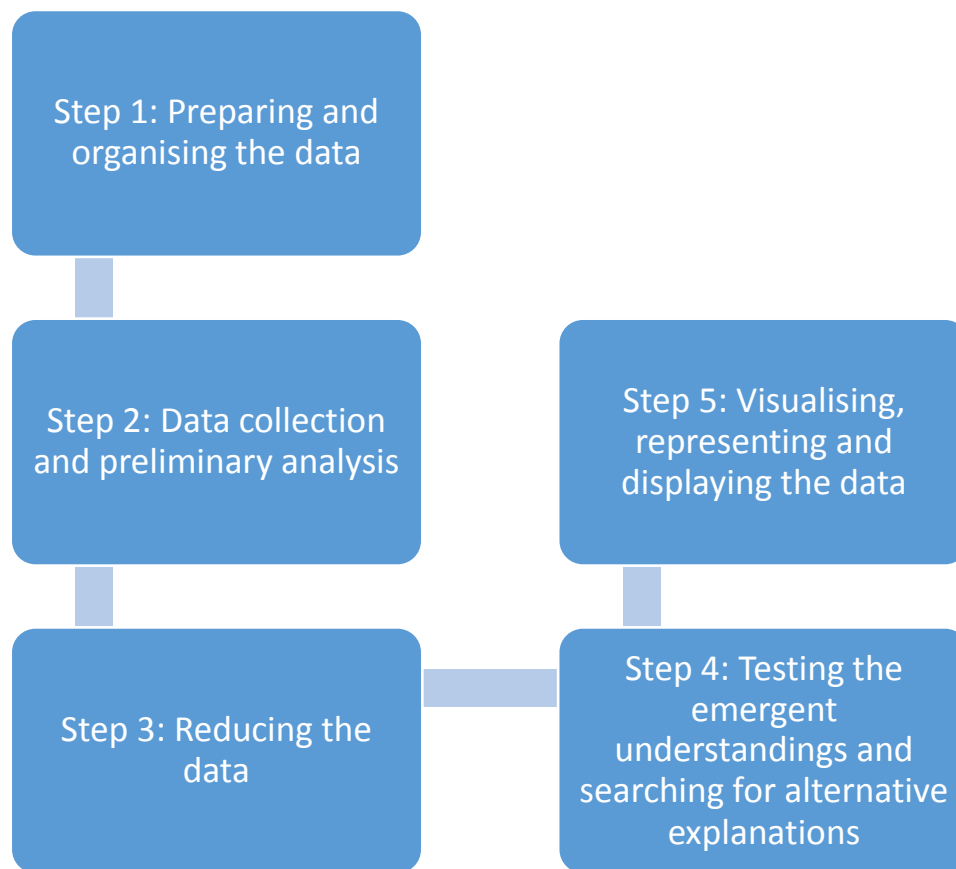
transfer of training in the organisation. The policy documents studied were the *Training Policy* and the *Training and Development Policy for Current Employees*. The purpose of studying and referring to these policies was to establish how training and transfer of learning were dealt with within the organisation. It was pivotal to understand what the internal policies had to say about transfer of learning and how this relates to training and development within the organisation.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

During the data analysis process, the qualitative data collected from the interviews were analysed. Babbie (2007:278) explains that qualitative analysis is the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, the purpose of which is to focus on discovering the underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. The researcher began by collecting qualitative data and then processing it, through systematic process, into meaningful entities (Gibbs, 2007:1). The researcher obtained data regarding the age, position and work responsibilities of the call centre supervisors and call centre agents during the interviews (see Table 3.1, section 3.3).

Subsequently, the researcher analysed the data from the interviews following the five steps as illustrated in Figure 3.1. The steps followed are described below.

Figure 3.1: Five steps to analyse the data as a process (De Vos et al. 2011:403)



Step 1: Preparing and organising the data

During the first phase a framework was created for the design and development of the interview questions. The questions were based on the research questions formulated for the study. The literature review and the transfer of learning strategies were used to compose the questions that were asked in the interviews.

Step 2: Data collection and preliminary analysis

The responses from the call centre agents and call centre supervisors were collected and recorded in writing and through the use of an audio-recorder and are discussed in Chapter 4 of this study. During the analysis of the responses, the researcher sought common themes and sub-themes in the answers provided by the participants. Once a theme was identified, the researcher captured the theme and it was later added to the research report in Chapter 4. Each call centre agent

and call centre supervisor was allocated a random code to ensure anonymity. The results from the interviews are presented in the next chapter.

Step 3: Reducing the data

The data from the interviews were categorised according to themes and sub-themes and the research questions; these results are presented in Chapter 4.

Step 4: Testing the emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations

Through the analysis of the data it became apparent that transfer factors listed in the literature review were confirmed by the data collected during the interviews. The current researcher's interpretation of the data is presented in Chapter 4. In the interpretation process, the researcher constantly aligned the literature review with the results from the interviews.

Step 5: Visualising, representing and displaying the data

The interviews with the call centre agents and call centre supervisors provided important data regarding the transfer of learning strategies that can be implemented in the classroom and work environment. In the analysis of the data, the researcher made use of the steps indicated above to ensure that the analysis was done in an orderly manner as described in the next chapter.

3.6 ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the process of checking with participants the validity of data collected (Savin-Baden & Major 2010:178). The trustworthiness of interpretations and findings are dependent on being able to demonstrate how they were reached (La Blanca 2004). In qualitative research, validity or trustworthiness is achieved through dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability. These will be dealt with in turn in the following sub-sections:

3.6.1 Dependability

According to Bradley (1993:437) dependability refers to the coherence of the internal process and the way the researcher accounts for changing conditions in the

phenomena. In a bid to attain dependability, the researcher used interviews and document analysis to explore the situation regarding transfer of training in a corporate company in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

3.6.2 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be accurate, trustworthy and reasonable (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:102). To ensure that credibility was achieved in this study the researcher triangulated the data using two data collection techniques: interviews and documents. The researcher also employed member checking. This is a process where participants are given the opportunity to check the authenticity of the recorded interviews. Credibility was further established in that the researcher documented verbatim the actual words of the participants and checked with each member of the group to confirm whether he had accurately recorded what they had said (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:331). The researcher also shared with the participants how he had coded and categorised the data.

3.6.3 Transferability

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009:1) describe transferability as the extent to which the researcher's working hypothesis can be applied to another context. He is responsible for providing data sets and descriptions that are rich enough so that other researchers are able to make judgments about the findings' transferability to different settings or contexts. It was anticipated that the views and experiences of the call centre agents and their supervisors who were interviewed represented the views and experiences of other call centre agents and supervisors in the call centre regarding factors influencing transfer of training. It was ensured that data was supported by sufficient evidence.

3.6.4 Conformability

Conformability means the extent to which the characteristics of the data, as posited by the researcher, can be confirmed by others who read or reviews the research results (Bradley 1993:437). The major technique for establishing dependability and conformability is through audits of the research processes and findings. Dependability is determined by checking the consistency of the study processes, and conformability

is determined by checking the internal coherence of the research product, namely: the data, the findings, the interpretations, and the recommendations.

To ensure conformability the researcher drafted field notes about his feelings, attitudes, and reactions to minimise possible bias and preconceived ideas about the situation regarding transfer of training in a corporate company in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

3.7 ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics concerns the responsibility of researchers to be honest and respectful towards all individuals who are affected by their research studies or their reports of the studies' results. Researchers are usually governed by ethical guidelines that assist them in making proper decisions and choosing proper actions (Gravetter & Fornanzo 2012:72). Permission to conduct the research was sought and obtained from the Ethics Committee of the College of Education at Unisa as well as from Aramex (see Appendices 5 and 6). Each call centre agent and call centre supervisor was given a participant consent form to complete (see Appendices 1 and 2). All the participants understood what the procedure entailed. Participants had the option to withdraw at any time. It was also important to assure participants that their privacy and confidentiality would be guarded at all times during the research. Anonymity was ensured by allocating a random number to each call centre and each call centre supervisor. This number would be used in research when referring to a specific participant. The researcher also acknowledged all sources to avoid plagiarism.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research methodology, approach and research design were addressed. The research population, data collection techniques, including semi-structured interviews, were also discussed. The data are presented and the analysis process is described in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the research methodology, approach and research design were addressed. This chapter (Chapter 4) explains the processes that were followed when analysing the data collected from the semi-structured qualitative interviews. In the presentation of the responses the actual words of the respondents are quoted to demonstrate the themes and sub-themes of the study. Interviews were held with 10 call centre agents and 6 call centre supervisors.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted and used to collect data from call centre agents and call centre supervisors as mentioned in Chapter 3. The interview questions focused on the participants' experience of support activities implemented by their supervisors aimed at assisting the transfer of learning processes. The questions also addressed biographical data. Tables are used to present the responses from the semi-structured interviews in the study. The biographical data of the participants are represented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Biographical data of the Call Centre Agents and Call Centre Supervisors

Question	Age in years	Agents	Supervisors
Age	20–25	2	1
	25–35	4	3
	35–45	4	2
Position		Agent	Junior management
Work responsibilities		Call centre agent	Call centre supervisor

Table 4.1 specifies the age, position and work responsibilities of each of the participants.

Age was an important variable as the majority of the participants were between 25 and 45 years of age. Some studies have suggested that adults obtain a comprehensive knowledge and skills set over the years, which might influence the level of transfer of learning (Caffarella 2002:28). Future studies might therefore investigate the level of transfer within the different age groups. Gender was not a critical variable for this study and is therefore not included, but future studies might investigate how male and female agents and supervisors responded differently to the questions.

4.3 ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) describe analysing data as a focused process aimed at understanding the data. The process involves a continuous reflection upon the data as well as examining and synthesising themes and sub-themes forthcoming from the data. Studying the interviews and repeatedly listening to the recordings as well as making notes and studying the field notes are an essential part of understanding the data (Maxwell 2013:105).

The researcher scheduled interviews with each participant. Recordings and transcriptions were made of the interviews. To familiarise himself with the data the researcher listened to the recorded interviews and read and re-read the transcripts of the recordings. He then organised the data in workable units identifying themes and sub-themes as suggested by Mouton (2011:108). The themes and sub-themes shown in the tables below emerged from the data gathering, data analysis and data interpretation. To create the units, the researcher clustered the answers given by the call centre agents and call centre supervisors into meaningful units. The grouping of the answers was a first attempt at coding the data. Next, the researcher combined the coded data into themes. Themes represent key thoughts and are portions of data that the researcher wished to look into further (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:377). The data were grouped into five main themes given that the research questions, articulated in Chapter 1, guided the coding process. After the process of categorising was completed, the researcher noted themes in the data which were associated with the

questions asked during the interview (see Appendices 3 and 4). The researcher then tabled the themes and sub-themes for both the call centre agents (Tables 4.2 and 4.3) and the call centre supervisors (Tables 4.4 and 4.5).

4.4 INTERVIEW DATA PRESENTATION: CALL CENTRE AGENTS

As mentioned before, the themes and sub-themes that were identified from the data were aligned to the questions that were asked during the interviews.

Table 4.2: Data presentation of the Call Centre Agents: Main Themes

Main themes	
Theme 1: Challenges faced by call centre agents	Linked to question 1
Theme 2: Support activities implemented by their Supervisors	Linked to question 2
Theme 3: Support activities experienced as helpful by the call centre agents	Linked to question 3
Theme 4: Support activities experienced as not helpful by the call centre agents	Linked to question 4

Table 4.3: Data presentation of the Call Centre Agents: Sub-Themes

Sub-themes		
	Theme	Sub-themes
Question 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges faced by call centre agents 	Training not helpful Feel overwhelmed Peers resist change Lack of opportunity Lack of support
Question 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities implemented by supervisors 	Opportunities to practise and apply Discuss application Follow-up training Monitor application Provide mentoring
Question 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities experienced as helpful by call centre agents 	Discussing practical implementation Getting an opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge Follow-up discussions about progress Supervisor being a role model Discussing future learning requirements
Question 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities experienced as not helpful by call centre agents 	Not enough time for discussion Not enough opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge Lack of a transfer plan Lack of feedback about progress No mentoring
Question 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practice activities proposed by call centre agents 	Expect to see results Make employees accountable Provide feedback Implement assessments Reward successful implementation

4.4.1 DISCUSSION OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The responses from the interviews are presented and discussed in this section of the study linking it to the themes. The researcher retained the grammatically incorrect wording in the verbatim quotations.

4.4.1.1 Theme 1: Challenges faced by call centre agents

Barriers or challenges in transfer of training are factors that stop transfer from happening. The challenges are factors such as peer resistance, training experienced as not helpful, lack of support from supervisors or peers, limited or no feedback, time constraints, lack of applicability, personal challenges, workplace issues and other life issues (Caffarella & Daffron 2013:218). The organisation may also lack a strong transfer culture, which may curtail transfer. Managers and supervisors or other important people in the trainees' environment may appear preoccupied or not interested in listening to learners who want to discuss the new knowledge and skills. Trainees are also sometimes occupied with having to catch up with their duties which were neglected while they were away to attend the training (Caffarella & Daffron 2013:218). Barriers also arise from factors such as a lack of sufficient planning, a lack of a proper transfer plan, poorly designed training, and no or little interest on the part of the learner, management, presenters or others involved in the programme planning process (Caffarella & Daffron 2013:218).

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 1:

- Training not helpful
- Feel overwhelmed
- Peers resist change
- Lack of opportunity
- Lack of support

Training not helpful

Agent 3: I do not think the training always addresses all the problems we experience in the workplace. It might talk to certain aspects, but cannot prepare me in full for all the issues I experience on a daily basis with customers.

Agent 5: It was a lot of information in a short period of time. So when I want to apply I have forgotten some of it. I did not get an opportunity to ask all my questions. Therefore I don't have a lot of confidence.

Two of the call centre agents mentioned that they did not think the training was helpful. Their views correspond with Caffarella and Daffron's (2013:218) contention that when training is not being perceived as helpful it becomes a barrier to transfer. The

researcher, however, is not overly concerned about these remarks as none of the other participants mentioned this. The two call centre agents that mentioned that they felt the training was not helpful had only recently been appointed. They were from a different industry and had joined the company only weeks before the training. This might explain why they felt the training was not helpful.

Feel overwhelmed

Agent 1: I was only one month with the company when they sent me for the training. It was too much too soon. I did not have enough time to practise the new skills before going live (on the phone). I was therefore not able to meet the expectations and requirements of the job.

Agent 4: I felt overwhelmed after returning from the training. I was thrown in at the deep end. I do not think I was ready for the challenge.

Two call centre agents reported they felt overwhelmed after the training. One mentioned that he felt the training was too much too soon and the other said he felt he was thrown in at the deep end. The researcher noticed that both the call centre agents that reported these feelings were in their early twenties, which together with inexperience might contribute to their feelings. It is the opinion of the researcher that the supervisor plays an important role when trainees return to the workplace. The supervisor should create opportunities for the trainees to discuss the new knowledge and skills. This will alleviate the feelings of being overwhelmed and add to the trainees' confidence.

Peers resist change

Agent 4: I think the problem sits with the way we do things ... There is a lot of resistance to change – especially the older employees in the Operations Department. They are still used to doing things in an old school way.

Agent 7: Not all of the team members accept changes. Some question the new way of doing. Although I see the value and it helps me. This causes conflict.

Holton (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:536) defines resistance as the extent to which current group norms are observed by individuals resulting in resistance to use the skills and knowledge acquired in training. Two trainees reported resistance from their peers as a challenge. They mentioned that there is a lot of resistance to change, especially from older employees. They also mentioned that some of their peers questioned the

new way of doing. The researcher agrees with Caffarella and Daffron (2013:218) that organisations sometimes lack a strong transfer climate which has a negative impact on successful transfer.

Lack of opportunity

Agent 8: I enjoyed the training. But I don't get a chance to apply the new knowledge. I am too busy resolving queries.

Agent 2: I am not given a chance to apply all my new skills. I get distracted, as the pressure in the call centre is too much.

Some of the trainees mentioned that they do not get enough opportunity to implement their new skills. Both felt that pressure in the work environment contributes to their experience of lack of opportunity. The comments above corresponds with a study by Nijman et al. (2006:535) in which trainees rated opportunity to use trained skills as the best form of support and the lack of opportunity to use training as the biggest obstacle to transfer as experienced by the current researcher in this study.

Lack of support

Agent 2: I am not in a position where I can apply the training ... I am not given enough opportunity to observe and apply.

Agent 6: My supervisor did not mentor me enough. He just gave me a few tips.

The researcher agrees with Baldwin and Ford (1988:65) who emphasise social support and opportunity to use the newly acquired skills as two of the key environmental transfer factors in ensuring successful transfer. The importance of mentoring is supported by Caffarella (2002:215) who states that facilitators need to provide follow-up assistance to the learners for transfer to happen (e.g. mentorship). Caffarella (2002:218) also claims that coaching as a transfer of learning strategy can assist learners in making specific changes in their life roles. Some of the trainees experienced a lack of support and felt they were not given enough opportunity to apply their new skills. They also mentioned that their supervisor did not mentor them enough.

4.4.1.2 Theme 2: Support activities implemented by supervisors

In a study by Nijman et al. (2006:535), trainees rated opportunity to use trained skills as the best form of support and the lack of opportunity to use training as the biggest obstacle to transfer. Caffarella (2002:218) indicates mentoring as an important factor

in ensuring positive transfer. She argues that mentoring as a transfer of learning strategy amounts to a caring relationship in which a person with more experience, such as the supervisor, interacts with a person with less experience, such as the trainee. The mentoring relationship is aimed at promoting development. Caffarella (2002:215) also posits that a lack of mentoring opportunities can inhibit the use of trained competencies on the job and facilitators and that supervisors need to provide follow-up assistance such as mentoring to trainees for transfer to take place.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 2:

- Opportunities to practise and apply
- Discuss application
- Follow-up training
- Monitor application
- Provide mentoring

Opportunities to practise and apply

Agent 3: The training gave me an opportunity to apply my new skills to resolve the challenges I experience. I was very excited about this.

Agent 1: It is great to come back and have an opportunity to apply in practice what you have learned. It is good to see it actually works.

The call centre agents were greatly appreciative when given an opportunity to practise and apply their new skills. They agreed that opportunity to practise their newly acquired skills and knowledge added to their confidence and helped them to apply what they had learned. This view on the value of practising is in accordance with the current researcher's own personal experience as training manager. Trainees do well when given the opportunity to start implementing the new knowledge and skills immediately.

Discuss application

Agent 6: We had face-to-face meetings to discuss the activities and tasks I have to implement.

Agent 7: My supervisor is available and approachable. She will give me advice and ask me whether I tried something or she will suggest something new to try.

Agent 10: *My supervisor discuss the workload with me as well as the positive implications of implementing the new skills.*

The call centre agents mentioned the value of face-to-face discussions on the training with their supervisors. They were also very appreciative of the fact that their supervisor was readily available to discuss their concerns. Having the opportunity to discuss their experiences and concerns is pivotal to successful transfer, as indicated by Caffarella (2002:215). It is the opinion of the researcher that trainees have a strong need to express their hopes and fears. Having this opportunity adds to their confidence and speeds up the application process.

Follow-up training

Agent 7: *I told my supervisor how much I enjoyed the training and she promised to send me on more training.*

Agent 10: *After the training, we had a follow-up discussion to identify further learning needs.*

The call centre agents mentioned opportunity to attend more training as a strategy implemented by their supervisors. One call centre agent mentioned that she told her supervisor how much she had enjoyed the training after which the supervisor promised to send her for more training. It is the experience of the researcher that deficits in the skills base of the trainee are often identified when trainees return to the workplace after training. Attending training and then implementing the new skills makes them aware of other needs they have to perform their jobs successfully. Often they approach their supervisor to request more training.

Monitor application

Agent 1: *She follows up with me, guides me and shows me what to do. I can check with her before finalising the job. This makes me confident. I can ask her questions. She is patient.*

One of the call centre agents mentioned that her supervisor monitors her performance after the training. She said that the supervisor follows up with her and that she creates an opportunity for the trainee to ask questions. It is the opinion of the researcher that the completion of the scheduled training should not indicate the end of the learning experience. He agrees with Grossman and Salas (2011:114) who argue that the days and weeks immediately following the training provide diverse opportunities for

enhancing learning and preserving the new knowledge and skills. Monitoring performance in the workplace is an important tool to assist both supervisor and trainee.

Provide mentoring

Agent 1: She is mentoring me. She follows up with me, guide me and show me what to do. I can check with her before finalising the job. This makes me confident. I can ask her questions. She is patient.

One of the call centre agents mentioned that her supervisor was mentoring her. She explained that it added to her confidence level as she had the opportunity to ask questions. She also mentioned that she experienced her supervisor as patient. The importance of mentoring is emphasised by Caffarella (2002:218) who states that mentoring as a transfer strategy is a caring relationship in which a person with more experience works with a person with less experience to promote professional and/or personal development.

4.4.1.3 Theme 3: Support activities experienced as helpful

Rouiller and Goldstein (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) identified the features of a positive transfer climate as cues that prompt trainees to use new skills, consequences for correct use of skills and remediation for not using skills, and social support from peers and supervisors in the form of incentives and feedback. In this regard Richman-Hirsch (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) found trainees who perceived a supportive transfer climate more likely to use goals to support transfer of skills from customer-service-skills-training than those who perceived an unsupportive transfer climate.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 3:

- Discussing practical implementation
- Getting an opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge
- Follow-up discussions about progress
- Being a role model
- Discussing future learning requirements

Discussing practical implementation

Agent 1: She meets with me regularly to discuss the implementation of the new skills. We discuss the positives and the negatives and she encourages me to try and implement as much as possible of what I have learned.

The agents identified discussions after the training as helpful. Having the opportunity to meet regularly and to express their concerns and being encouraged to try new things were experienced as helping them to implement what they have learned. Grossmann and Salas (2011:114) posit that post-training follow-up by the instructor and supervisor has positive implications for the transfer process. It is the opinion of the researcher that trainees appreciate the opportunity to discuss their concerns.

Getting an opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge

Agent 4: For me the most helpful is when the supervisor creates an opportunity for me to apply my skills. I can see that what I have learned is applied and benefit the business.

The agents reported getting an opportunity to practise and apply their new skills as helpful. It was especially helpful when they could see how the new behaviour benefitted them as well as the business. The importance of getting an opportunity to apply has been emphasised by several researchers. Ford (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:535) defines opportunity to apply as the extent to which a trainee is provided with or actively obtains work experience relevant to the task for which he or she was trained. The researcher experienced that the trainees in the study valued opportunity and cited it as one of the most helpful factors in assisting them with the transfer process.

Follow-up discussions about progress

Agent 6: To meet with my supervisor and discuss a strategy. It gives me an opportunity to ask questions and gives me a clear understanding of what is expected. It makes it easier to apply what I have learned.

Agent 8: She provides guidance and is available to talk to at any time.

Trainees reported that they find it helpful when they know where they stand with their supervisor. They indicated that they like the idea of getting regular feedback and having an opportunity to ask questions. Hirsch (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) found trainees who perceived a supportive transfer climate more likely to use goals to

support transfer of skills from customer-service-skills-training than those who perceived an unsupportive transfer climate. It is the opinion of the researcher that follow-up discussions contribute positively to a supportive climate. Trainees want to know where they stand with their supervisors and appreciate honest feedback from them.

Being a role model

Agent 4: He is a good example to us. His knowledge about the company is impressive. I may ask him any question.

Call centre agents expressed their appreciation for their supervisor's level of knowledge. One of the trainees said that his supervisor was a good example and that their supervisors' knowledge about the company were impressive. This finding concurs with the view expressed by Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007:9) in their review. These researchers sought to understand what contributed to transfer of soft skills. They found that trainees were particularly strong on transferring their training when their bosses had both followed the training themselves and acted as role models in practising the trained skills and concepts. It is also the experience of the researcher that trainees copy their supervisors' behaviour. They mimic both the good and the bad. Supervisors should be made aware of this.

Discussing future learning requirements

Agent 7: I will attend more training. We discussed specific training. She calls it "fit-for-purpose-training". The company makes training available and easy to attend.

One of the agents mentioned that her supervisor introduced the notion of fit-for-purpose training. She also appreciated the fact that the company makes training readily available. It is the experience of the researcher, as indicated in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.3, that trainees are thankful for an opportunity to continue the learning process. Often new additional training needs are identified during training or when the trainees return to the workplace.

4.4.1.4 Theme 4: Support activities experienced as not helpful

It is the opinion of the researcher that the lack of helpful strategies, as indicated by the call centre agents, mostly inhibits their progress in applying the new knowledge and skills. Nijman et al. (2006:535) identified organisational transfer climate as a key factor

in successful transfer. His view is that the transfer climate refers to perceived characteristics of the work environment that may facilitate or inhibit the use of trained skills. Even programmes that are designed and delivered effectively will fail to yield positive transfer outcomes when the subsequent work environment does not encourage the use of targeted behaviours. The call centre agents identified the following factors as not helpful, therefore having an inhibiting effect on the transfer process.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 4:

- Not enough time for discussion
- Not enough opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge
- Lack of a transfer plan
- Lack of feedback about progress
- No mentoring

Not enough time for discussion

Agent 2: It is not helpful if my supervisor do not ask about the training. I always wonder what the reason might be. Maybe he is not interested, or perhaps too busy.

Agent 3: My supervisor did not spend enough time with me after the training.

Agent 5: There was not enough time to explore. I do not feel like an expert.

The call centre agents mentioned that they did not always get enough time to discuss the training with their supervisors. One call centre agent mentioned that he thought his supervisor might not be interested enough in him. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.3, discussing their performance is important to trainees. Three of the participants mentioned too little time for discussing their performance as negative.

Not enough opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge

Agent 9: It is negative if they do not create an opportunity for me to display my new knowledge.

One of the call centre agents mentioned that he experiences it as negative if he does not get an opportunity to display his new skills. As mentioned in 4.5.1.1, trainees see a lack of opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills as an obstacle to transfer.

Trainees value opportunity to apply and experience it as helpful and a confidence builder.

Lack of transfer plan

Agent 5: *She did not give us a plan for implementing.*

One of the agents mentioned that he did not receive a plan to assist him with the transfer process. It is the experience of the researcher that providing trainees with a transfer plan is especially helpful when they are newly appointed, have no industry experience, or feel unsure about the application process. Trainees can already start with the plan when they are still attending training. The researcher suggests that it can be one of the outcomes of the training.

Lack of feedback about progress

Agent 1: *When the supervisor give me a task without properly explaining and then blaming me when I made a mistake. He did not give me feedback.*

Agent 7: *No urgency, no attention, no follow-up. Not explaining the importance of the new knowledge.*

The call centre agents emphasised the importance of receiving feedback. They mentioned that supervisors sometimes do not explain what they expect. This leads to uncertainty. In his capacity as training manager the researcher knows that trainees welcome feedback about their progress. They are mostly keen to implement what they have learned and want to know whether they are getting it right.

No mentoring

Agent 6: *The supervisor did not spend enough time mentoring me. He was not clear about what is expected and due dates for implementation. This led to uncertainty.*

One of the agents expressed a concern about lack of mentoring by his supervisor, explaining that it led to uncertainty on his side. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2, trainees value a mentor. Even the more experienced call centre agents stressed the importance of having a mentor and referred to how much their performance improved with the guidance and support of their mentors.

4.4.1.5 Theme 5: Best practice support activities proposed

The completion of formal training should not mark the end of the learning experience. The period immediately following the official training programme holds various opportunities for enhancing learning and maintenance (Grossman & Salas 2011:114). Trainers and supervisors should provide post-training follow-up and feedback. In this regard, Velada et al. (2007:284) found that feedback regarding trainees' post-training performances significantly influenced transfer. Behaviour such as discussing new learning, participating in training, and providing encouragement and mentoring to trainees has been identified as the main contributors to positive transfer (Burke & Hutchins 2007:280; Govaerts & Dochy 2014:82). Employees need ample opportunity to apply their new skills to the workplace for positive transfer to occur (Burke & Hutchins 2008: 117). From the above it is clear that supervisors should provide feedback, create opportunity and encourage the trainees in order to enhance transfer – key factors the current researcher subscribes to.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 5:

- Expect to see results
- Hold employees accountable
- Provide feedback
- Implement assessments
- Reward successful implementation

Expect to see results

Agent 2: It is important that we know the supervisor expects to see results. It will encourage me to give my best.

One of the call centre agents mentioned that it is important for him to know his supervisor expects to see results. He finds this encouraging and it helps him to do his best. It is the opinion of the researcher that expecting to see results (sub-theme 1), holding employees accountable (sub-theme 2) and implementing workplace assessments (sub-theme 4) are all important to successful transfer. All three these themes link to being held responsible and accountable. Bates (2003:264) defined accountability as the degree to which the organisation holds trainees responsible for using their newly acquired skills and knowledge.

Hold employees accountable

Agent 6: She implemented a call rating process. Customers are requested to rate the level of service after the call. You are responsible for your actions.

One of the call centre agents mentioned that their supervisor implemented a call rating system. She mentioned that she felt this made her responsible for her performance. Hutchins and Burke (2007:250) indicated that trainees are more likely to be successful in the transferring process when their managers and supervisors hold them accountable, encourage them and provide regular feedback.

Provide feedback

Agent 7: The supervisor must give clear instructions and meet with us to discuss. He must give feedback about my performance – the good and the bad.

The call centre agent mentioned that she required her supervisor to give clear instructions. She also required feedback about her performance. As mentioned in 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.3, trainees value feedback. They feel secure if they receive honest feedback and know where they stand with their supervisors. They also value the time their supervisors spent with them giving them feedback.

Implement assessments

Agent 3: Trainees should be tested on the job to see if you are doing the right thing. This can be done two to four weeks after I came back from training.

One of the trainees mentioned that trainees should be assessed in the workplace. He mentioned that the purpose of a workplace assessment would be to ensure he is correctly applying what he learned. The researcher strongly supports workplace assessments. He is of the opinion that one cannot manage what cannot be measured. Successful implementation should be measurable and should be added to the trainees' key performance areas.

Reward successful implementation

Agent 9: The supervisor must be the driver of the process. The supervisor must be positive. He must incentivise us and encourage us.

Agent 10: The supervisor must reward us if we are doing things right; for example, the top performers in the call quality assessments can receive a voucher.

Trainees felt that they should receive recognition when successfully applying their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The researcher is in full support of recognition. In his experience, trainees appreciate being recognised, especially in front of their peers. Robbins and Judge (cited in Grossman & Salas 2011:113) contend that specific and difficult goals, in combination with feedback and recognition, can greatly enhance motivation and, in turn, performance. Supervisors should support trainees by providing recognition, encouragement and rewards and modelling behaviours.

4.5 INTERVIEW DATA PRESENTATION: CALL CENTRE SUPERVISORS

As mentioned before, the themes and sub-themes identified from the data were aligned to the questions that were asked during the interviews.

Table 4.4: Data presentation of the Call Centre Supervisors: Main Themes

Main themes	
Theme 1: How post-training support improves transfer	Linked to question 1
Theme 2: Support activities implemented by supervisors	Linked to question 2
Theme 3: Support activities experienced as helpful by call centre agents	Linked to question 3
Theme 4: Support activities experienced as not helpful by call centre agents	Linked to question 4
Theme 5: How post-training supervisory support can be enhanced	Linked to question 5

Table 4.5: Data presentation of the Call Centre Supervisors: Sub-Themes

Sub-themes		
		Sub-themes
Question 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does post-training support improve transfer? 	<p>Increases employees' confidence</p> <p>Helps improve service-level agreements</p> <p>Helps determine future training needs</p> <p>Feedback will ensure they stay on track</p> <p>Encourages them to try out new knowledge and skills</p>
Question 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities implemented by supervisors 	<p>Follow-up discussions</p> <p>Ensure the new skills and knowledge are practised and applied</p> <p>Hold them accountable</p> <p>Clear instructions of what is expected</p> <p>Feedback about performance</p>
Question 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities experienced as helpful by call centre agents 	<p>Follow-up to ensure they are on the right track</p> <p>Create opportunities to apply the new skills and knowledge</p> <p>Help them to create a transfer plan</p> <p>Create opportunities for feedback</p> <p>Reward success</p>
Question 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities experienced as not helpful by call centre agents 	<p>Continual criticism</p> <p>Lack of feedback</p> <p>Expecting too much too soon</p> <p>No discussion on return from training</p> <p>Not demonstrating the correct way</p>
Question 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can post-training supervisory support be enhanced? 	<p>Creating accountability</p> <p>Follow-up assessments</p> <p>Creating opportunity</p> <p>Constant feedback</p> <p>Rewarding implementation</p>

4.5.1 DISCUSSION OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The responses from the interviews are presented and discussed in this section of the study, linking them to the themes. The researcher retained the grammatically incorrect wording in the verbatim quotations.

4.5.1.1 Theme 1: How post-training support improves transfer

Hamid, Saman and Saud (2012:665) identified the work environment as having a direct influence on transfer of training. Nijman et al. (2006:530) postulate that the environment could have either a positive or a negative influence on the transfer process. They also identified support from the supervisor as a powerful environmental factor that contributes to employees' level of confidence (Nijman et al. 2006:530). They furthermore indicated that supervisors are among the most significant sources of performance feedback for trainees. Other factors adding to trainees' confidence were found to be encouragement by their supervisor, assisting trainees in identifying suitable situations in which to use new knowledge, skills and attitude, and guiding trainees in applying the skills. The supervisor affects transfer outcomes directly, or indirectly, by means of their ability to motivate the trainee to transfer (Nijman et al. 2006:530) as is reported in Chapter 5 of this study.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 1:

- Increase trainees' confidence
- Help improve service-level agreements
- Help determine future training needs
- Feedback will ensure they stay on track
- Encourage them to try out new knowledge and skills

Increase trainees' confidence

Supervisor 1: *It definitely boosts their confidence levels. I have seen this many times. Asking them about the training and helping them to implement what they have learned.*

Supervisor 6: *Giving feedback improves their confidence. It helps them to add onto their strengths and improve their weak spots. Overall, it helps them to grow.*

When asked how they thought supervisory support improved transfer of training the supervisors reported that it added to the confidence level of the trainees. They also

mentioned that feedback helped the trainees to grow and develop. The responses of the call centre agents indicated that they appreciated feedback. They also reported that it helped them to act more confidently if their supervisors were involved in the transfer process. This also resonated with Velada et al.'s (2007:288) argument that supervisory support enhances the trainees' confidence in their ability to use new skills at work.

Help improve service-level agreements

Supervisor 1: *Positive transfer will strengthen the results. The service-level agreements will show improvement. That is time spent on calls, hold time and productivity.*

The researcher agrees with this comment, as in his experience supervisors reported that trainees perform better at their task after training if they assisted them with the implementation process. The supervisor reported that positive transfer helped improve service-level agreements. When prompted she further explained that trainees spend less time on a call because they are more competent. Less time on the call reduced hold time, which means incoming calls are attended to in quick succession.

Help determine future training needs

Supervisor 4: *When the supervisor attends the training or some of the training and then observe application in the workplace it will give them some indication of the strengths and weaknesses and what further training is needed.*

Supervisors reported that they find it helpful if they attend some of the training as they then know what to expect from the trainees on their return. Govaerts and Dochy (2014:85) confirm that supervisor involvement in the training assists in the transfer process. As was seen from the responses from the call centre agents, they confirmed that their supervisors undertook to send them for more training. They also confirmed that the interaction with their supervisors after the training helped them to identify additional training needs.

Feedback will ensure they stay on track

Supervisor 2: Because the employee receives regular feedback, they will know they are on the right track.

The supervisor reported that his feedback to the trainees helped them to stay on track with the implementation process. When prompted, he explained that the feedback had guided the trainees and helped them to act more confidently. Through his personal experience, the researcher found that regular feedback assisted the trainees in the endeavour to apply what they had learned. It was also clear from the responses of the call centre agents that they found their supervisors' feedback helpful and that it guided them.

Encourage them to try out new knowledge and skills

Supervisor 3: It is all about putting into practice what they have learned under supervision. Encouraging them and giving them an opportunity to expand their knowledge base.

Supervisor 5: Giving them an opportunity to solve problems and encourage them to apply their skills and observe the result.

Supervisors 3 and 4 reported that their involvement after the training encouraged the trainees to try out new things. They mentioned that they helped and encouraged the trainees to put into practice what they have learned. Daffron and North (2006:62) identified encouragement of the trainee by the supervisor to implement their new skills as speeding up the transfer process. The researcher also experienced that the supervisors' encouragement assisted in the trainees' transfer process.

4.5.1.2 Theme 2: Activities implemented by supervisors

Coates (2007:6) contends that to assume employees' performance will improve after one training intervention is not realistic as such an assumption would disregard everything that is known about behavioural change. To ensure positive transfer, Van den Bossche et al. (2010:82) argue that training must be followed by reinforcing the learned knowledge, skills and attitude over time through continuous learning, coaching, follow-up discussions and feedback, assessments and instilling accountability. Clarke (cited in Van den Bossche et al. 2010:83) suggests that opportunity to apply, and social support factors such as feedback from managers and supervisors are the two pivotal elements to influence the use of training on the job.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 2:

- Follow-up discussions
- Ensure the new skills and knowledge are practised and applied
- Hold them accountable
- Give clear instructions on what is expected
- Feedback about performance

Follow-up discussions

Supervisor 5: *Feedback is important. Formal one-on-ones and informal feedback. I give them the bigger picture to help them understand how the new knowledge and skills help improve standards.*

Supervisor 1: *Follow-up to ensure what is required is indeed implemented. I will ask them about the challenges they are experiencing.*

The supervisors reported that they implemented one-on-one discussions after the training to give the trainees an opportunity to engage with them about the training. They also mentioned that they found feedback to the trainees as adding to the transfer process. It gave them an opportunity to ensure that the new knowledge is implemented. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, the call centre agents reported that some of the supervisors engaged with them after the training by scheduling follow-up discussions.

Ensure the new skills and knowledge are practised and applied

Supervisor 4: *I have amended how we do on-on-ones to include what we have trained. I ask them to give me examples of how they are applying the new knowledge. In this way I can determine the training is applied.*

Supervisor 3: *I observe if they apply. I also check if what is applied is applied correctly.*

Supervisors 3 and 4 reported that they created opportunities to observe the trainees to confirm that they were indeed applying the newly acquired knowledge and skills. Supervisor 4 also mentioned that she amended the one-on-one feedback process to be more specific and addressed the new skills. From his personal experience, the researcher found that detailed feedback contributed to the advancement of the trainees' application of the skills they had obtained in the classroom.

Hold them accountable

Supervisor 2: *To be responsible and accountable. I hold them accountable. I want to make sure they are applying what they have learned. I give them random tasks to see that they are on the right track. There is no better way than to hold them responsible and accountable.*

Supervisor 6: *Accountability and feedback. I constantly communicate to them my expectations and give them feedback on their performance. I tell them how they are doing.*

Supervisors 2 and 3 mentioned that they believed in instilling responsibility and accountability within their employees. This particularly applied to the trainees returning to the workplace. They added that it was important to clearly communicate their expectation for transfer. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, the call centre agents reported that some of their supervisors had implemented a culture of accountability. They reported that they found it helpful.

Give clear instructions on what is expected

Supervisor 4: *The focus on transfer allows us to set goals. They must then report back on progress. We try and set goals that is specific and adhere to the specific criteria.*

The supervisor mentioned that being aware of transfer helped to set performance goals for the trainees. She tried to give clear instructions as this helped to guide the transfer process. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2, the researcher agreed that giving their employees clear instructions assisted the call centre agents in focusing on the application process.

Feedback about performance

Supervisor 6: *Accountability and feedback. I constantly communicate to them my expectations and give them feedback on their performance. I tell them how they are doing. If something extra is required I will put this in place.*

The supervisor confirmed the importance of feedback and of holding the trainees accountable for successful implementation of what they had learned. It also gave her the opportunity to become aware if trainees lacked resources, which she would then put in place. Marler et al. (2006:735) support the view that having access to adequate resources is a positive transfer factor. They reported that the relationship between

training and the intention to use new skills on the job was influenced by employees' perception of availability of resources.

4.5.1.3 Theme 3: Activities experienced as helpful by call centre agents

Rouiller and Goldstein (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) argue that a positive transfer climate prompts trainees to use new skills. They also reported that making trainees accountable for the correct use of skills, implementing remedial action for not using skills, and social support from peers and supervisors were traits of a positive and successful transfer climate. Richman-Hirsch (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) found that trainees who perceived a supportive transfer climate were more likely to use goals to support transfer of skills after attending training that focused on customer service.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 3:

- Follow-up to ensure they are on the right track
- Create opportunities to apply the new skills and knowledge
- Help them to create a transfer plan
- Create opportunities for feedback
- Reward success

Follow-up to ensure they are on the right track

Supervisor 3: *I discuss the training and opportunities to apply what was learnt.*

Supervisor 1: *Follow-up and practice to ensure they practise, practise and practise.*

Do not assume. Make sure you and they are on the same plate.

Supervisors 3 and 4 reported that the call centre agents found it helpful if they scheduled follow-up sessions with them after the training. They also mentioned that the purpose of the follow-up sessions was to ensure that the trainees practised what they had learned.

As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, the call centre agents indicated that their supervisors were scheduling follow-up sessions. This was in alignment with the findings of Al-Eisa et al. (2009:1237), namely that trainees were more inclined to commence transfer when they had high levels of support from their immediate supervisors.

Create opportunities to apply the new skills and knowledge

Supervisor 6: *Encourage them and create opportunities to apply. Give them extra tasks to see how they cope, reminding them that they are professionals.*

Supervisor 2: *I think it is important to create opportunities to apply and receive feedback.*

The supervisors reported that trainees found it helpful if they created specific opportunities for them to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, the call centre agents reported that their supervisors were helping them to create opportunities to practise and apply their skills. It is the opinion of the researcher that trainees do indeed find it helpful if their supervisors create opportunities for them to practise and apply what they have learned in the training.

Help them to create a transfer plan

Supervisor 4: *I help them create a transfer plan which is unique for the individual as the challenges they experience is unique. The plan is designed to be hands-on and the focus is on practical application.*

Supervisor 4 reported that the call centre agents found it helpful when she assisted them in putting together a transfer plan. She mentioned that the plan should be hands-on and aimed at seamless implementation. The researcher, who is the organisation's head of training, congratulated the supervisor for being proactive by assisting the trainees in creating their plans during the training. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, the call centre agents confirmed that their supervisors were assisting them with creating transfer plans.

Create opportunities for feedback

Supervisor 5: *I find that the trainees are generally keen to know how they are doing. They seek feedback from me and are accepting of any suggestions or feedback I may have for them.*

Supervisor 5 stressed the importance of feedback to the trainee once the implementation process commenced. She added that trainees wanted to know how they were doing, which in turn led to improved self-confidence. As reported in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, trainees found feedback helpful. It was also the experience of the researcher that trainees wanted to know where they stand with their supervisors,

therefore the researcher encouraged supervisors to make transfer part of the trainees' performance management plan by adding successful transfer as a key performance indicator.

Reward success

Supervisor 4: *We incentivise improved performance. We choose a best performer. But others are also rewarded, not only the best performer. They should feel appreciated and that it is important to try.*

Supervisor 4 emphasised the importance of a rewards system to encourage successful implementation. She mentioned that they chose a best performer, but also rewarded others. She added that it made the trainees feel appreciated. As mentioned in 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.1.5, the call centre agents confirmed that their supervisors implemented a reward system and that they reacted positively to this reward system. They liked being acknowledged and supervisors were encouraged to celebrate success.

4.5.1.4 Theme 4: Activities experienced as not helpful by call centre agents

Nijman et al. (2006:535) postulate that the transfer climate refers to characteristics of the work environment that employees perceive as either helpful or not helpful in the use of trained skills. They add that even programmes that are designed well and delivered effectively will fail to yield positive transfer outcomes when the subsequent work environment does not encourage and support the use of targeted behaviours. The supervisors identified a number of factors as not helpful and therefore having an inhibiting effect on the transfer process. These factors are elucidated below.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 4:

- Continual criticism
- Lack of feedback
- Expecting too much too soon
- No discussion on returning from training
- Not demonstrating the correct way

Continual criticism

Supervisor 6: *Constant negative feedback, especially in front of the other members of the team. Feedback is good as it inform them about their progress.*

Supervisor 1: *Being too critical. Don't attack but point out their weaknesses.*

Supervisors 1 and 6 reported that trainees found constant negative feedback detrimental, especially when the feedback was given in the presence of their peers. Trainees reported constant negative feedback as a challenge (4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.4). Based on his own experience as training manager, the researcher agreed with the supervisors that feedback should be focused on what needs to change to successfully implement the new knowledge and skills.

Lack of feedback

Supervisor 4: *You have to connect with them. They have to get feedback. Not giving them feedback is negative. They feel you do not care.*

Supervisor 4 reported that trainees experienced a lack of feedback as negative. They felt that they were not valued and that they were ignored. Trainees experienced a lack of feedback as discouraging, as mentioned in 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.4. They sometimes experienced a lack of feedback as being ignored or that their supervisors did not care about them.

Expecting too much too soon

Supervisor 3: *To be thrown into the deep end too soon after training. To expect them to immediately resolve difficult queries for which they are not ready.*

Supervisor 3 emphasised the negative impact of expecting too much too soon from trainees. She also added that they should be allowed to start resolving difficult queries gradually. Some of the trainees reported that they felt overwhelmed or “thrown in at the deep end” (see 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.4). It is the experience of the researcher that this is especially true of inexperienced employees, newly appointed employees and employees who are not familiar with the industry.

No discussion on returning from training

Supervisor 1: *Don't ignore them. It will seem if you don't care. Discuss the training with them. It is the first step to implementing the training.*

Supervisor 1 reported that she tried to meet with the trainees on their arrival back in the workplace. She considered the meeting as an important first step to implementation. Based on the researcher's own experience, trainees experience an opportunity to discuss the training when they return to the work environment positive.

Not demonstrating the correct way

Supervisor 4: *Don't allow them to keep on making mistakes. You sometimes have to personally show them the correct way.*

Supervisor 4 mentioned the importance of demonstrating to trainees the correct way of doing things. She further mentioned that supervisors should not allow trainees to continue making mistakes. In the experience of the researcher trainees look up to their supervisors for guidance. They mimic what they observe from their supervisors.

4.5.1.5 Theme 5: How can post-training supervisory support be enhanced?

Wills (cited in Dichaba 2011:168) argues that the training process concludes with determining how successful the training has been. He further says that success in training entails the application in the workplace of the newly acquired knowledge and skills. Rouiller and Goldstein (cited in Burke & Hutchins 2007:280) identified several factors influencing transfer, including supervisor support, opportunity to use, peer support, supervisor sanctions and resistance to change. Ford (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:535) defines opportunity to apply as the extent to which a trainee is provided with work experiences relevant to the tasks for which he/she was trained. Ford also indicates that perceived opportunity to use skills enhances trainees' motivation to transfer; while Holton (cited in Nijman et al. 2006:536) notes that the expected positive consequences of the use of training on the job are believed to have a major effect on motivation to transfer, as the current researcher indicated in this research.

The following sub-themes emerged from Theme 5:

- Create accountability
- Follow-up assessments
- Create opportunity
- Constant feedback
- Reward implementation

Create accountability

Supervisor 6: *Unpack the training with them. Check if they grasp. Hold them accountable. Expect them to be independent. Expect them to perform. Do not spoon-feed them; it will cripple your staff.*

Supervisor 1: *Listen to their calls to determine whether they are applying what they have learned. Communicate your expectation to hear in the call what they have learned. They should be accountable to implement the changes.*

The supervisors emphasised the importance of instilling accountability as a contributing factor to a positive transfer climate. Supervisor 6 mentioned that supervisors should expect trainees to perform. It was also important not to spoon-feed trainees. In the experience of the researcher, supervisors should embrace and encourage the idea of creating a culture of responsibility and accountability as it contributes to instilling a successful transfer culture.

Follow-up assessments

Supervisor 1: *They can only be competent after the training if they are assessed on a live call. You should implement weekly calibration session to see if they are on track and discuss progress.*

Supervisor 2: *Expect them to make mistakes at first, but keep on assessing their performance and give them feedback. A test before and after the training is a good idea.*

Supervisor 1 and 2 mentioned the importance of follow-up, feedback and assessing performance in the workplace. Supervisor 1 mentioned that a trainee could be declared competent only when assessed on a live call proving that they were implementing the necessary skills and behaviour. The researcher is in favour of workplace assessments and it is his opinion that it should be a non-negotiable part of the transfer implementation plan as it creates a culture of accountability. Trainees

reported that they were more motivated to try new skills when knowing that they would be assessed.

Assist with a transfer plan

Supervisor 4: *Help them create a plan for applying the training. The things they will do to implement the training when they return.*

Supervisor 1: *Be more involved. Help the employees create their own plan for applying the skills. Your approach must be hands-on. You also have to be part of the training.*

Supervisors 1 and 4 emphasised the importance of implementing a transfer plan to ensure successful implementation of the newly acquired knowledge and skills. In the researcher's own experience trainees find it helpful to have some idea of how they are going to implement the new skills in the workplace. He encouraged the supervisors to continue to discuss with trainees how best to create and implement a transfer plan.

Constant feedback

Supervisor 3: *Check if they apply and give them feedback. Revisit what was trained. Look at the outcomes of the training and check if they apply.*

Supervisor 3 mentioned the advantage of regular and ongoing feedback. It was also important to check whether they were implementing the new skills in the correct manner. The researcher, in his role as training manager, has often experienced the value of regular and constant feedback: it allows trainees to correct their behaviour and also enhances their confidence.

Celebrate successful implementation

Supervisor 5: *Incentivise improved performance. Choose a best performer. But also rewards others, not only the best performer. They should feel appreciated and that it is important to try.*

Supervisor 1: *It is always better to catch someone out doing something right or even excellent. We should celebrate more often.*

Supervisors 5 and 1 mentioned the importance of rewarding and celebrating success. Supervisor 1 mentioned that that they should celebrate more often. A concluding factor agreed upon by the supervisors was the importance of rewarding and celebrating successful implementation of learned skills. Thus the researcher encouraged the

acknowledgement of success.

Having discussed data presentation from the interviews, findings resulting from the organisational documents are discussed below.

4.6 DOCUMENTS DATA PRESENTATION: HUMAN RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PERTAINING TO TRAINING

Training and development in the organisation is directed primarily by the Aramex Training Policy (ACU 955 JNB) and Training for Current Employees Policy (ACU 963 JNB). The purpose of the training policies is to set guidelines for training within Aramex South Africa and to ensure that all employees participate in a properly structured training process that will ensure that their work performance is maximised and their potential is fully developed.

4.6.1 Aramex Training Policy (ACU 955 JNB)

This policy explains the standard operating procedure for internal and external training. It further stipulates that Aramex shall invest in its employees through creating training and development opportunities and encourage its employees to develop their skills and knowledge to the optimum. It states that the organisation wants to create an enabling environment thereby creating a pool of suitably qualified individuals. The focus is on describing the procedure for determining skills gaps, resources, feedback structures, programme design, learner support and keeping learner records. It also explains that the manager or supervisor should ensure implementation of the policy guidelines in the workplace. It is recommended that the policy should be amended to include specific guidelines for training interventions, the implementation of training in the workplace and assessment and continuous monitoring after the completion of training. Thus the organisation can successfully evaluate the result of implementing its training and development policy.

4.6.2 Training for Current Employees (ACU 963 JNB)

The policy covers the steps for preparing a development training programme (DTP) for current employees. The policy addresses workplace learning and defines it as an intervention in the workplace aimed at equipping employees with the necessary skills,

knowledge and competencies aligned with the organisational objectives and strategies. The policy includes training when employees are switching positions or are being promoted. Current employees receive a DTP based on their specific and agreed-upon training needs. The training must include classroom training, role plays and on-the-job sessions as well as a post-training implementation plan for transfer of the learned skills, knowledge and attitude to the workplace. The transfer plan is facilitated by the employees' manager or supervisor to ensure successful implementation and transfer of training. Completion and sign-off of the DTP are determined by successful completion of the agreed-upon training and successful implementation and completion of the post-training transfer plan.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the process that was followed during the presentation and analysis of the data collected from the interviews was explained and described. The actual words of the participants were quoted and the major themes presented. The transfer strategies discussed in this chapter could assist the call centre agents and their supervisors in improving the level of transfer of skills and knowledge gained in the training. The next chapter presents an overview of the study, together with a summary of its major findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 comprises the main themes and sub-themes of the research. The themes and sub-themes resulted from analysing and interpreting literature, documents and interviews, and they are discussed in this chapter. In this chapter the outcomes of the research are summarised and discussed. The main focus of the study was to explore how post-training supervisory support enhances transfer of training in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Recommendations that have resulted from this study are given and the limitations of the research are also addressed. The research was a qualitative case study where certain phenomena were explored within a bounded system. The bounded system was the national call centre of Aramex, South Africa.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

This part of the chapter contains the research questions and the findings addressing each research question, as indicated below.

Main question:

How does post-training supervisory support improve transfer of training by employees in the private sector?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by employees in the transfer of training?
2. What support activities are undertaken by supervisors in order to improve the transfer of training?
3. Which of the support activities do employees experience as helpful to transfer?
4. Which of the support activities do not seem to be helpful to transfer, according to employees?
5. How can post-training supervisory support be enhanced?

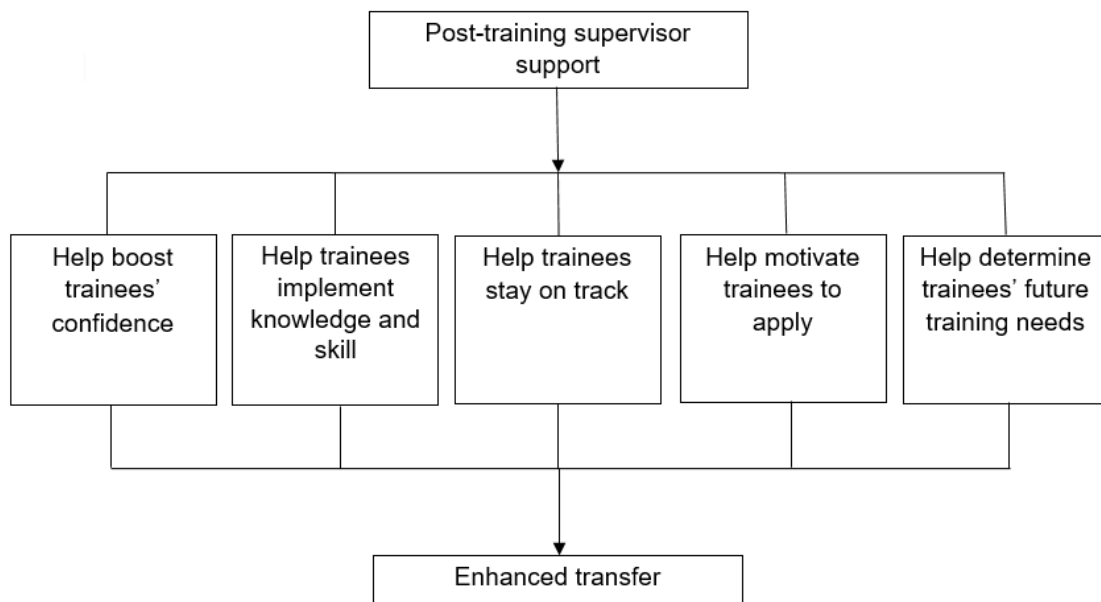
The analysis of the organisation's human resource and development policy documents pertaining to training and development is also discussed.

5.2.1 KEY FINDINGS FOR THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:

How does post-training supervisory support improve transfer of training by employees?

Figure 5.1 presents a proposal of how post-training supervisory support can improve transfer in the private sector, based on the research findings and the researcher's own view with regard to the implementation to the transfer of training.

Figure 5.1: How post-training supervisor support improves transfer



Throughout the interviews both the call centre agents and call centre supervisors provided answers that can make a meaningful contribution towards better understanding the transfer of the training phenomenon. Pertaining to the main research question, the following factors were identified:

5.2.1.1 Support by the supervisor increased trainees' confidence

Trainees reported they felt more confident when their supervisors supported them after the training. When they felt more confident it was easier to apply what they had

learned. They further reported that they felt more confident when their supervisors implemented the following support measures: encouraged them to implement in the workplace what they had learned, helped them to compile an implementation plan, gave them regular and detailed feedback, and rewarded them when they successfully implemented the learned skills and knowledge.

5.2.1.2 Supervisor support helped trainees implement what they had learned, which in return improved service-level agreements

Employees reported that it was easier to implement what they had learned when their supervisors supported and encouraged them. Supervisors reported in turn that higher levels of implementation led to an improvement in service-level agreements. There was a decrease in performance outside of service-level agreements.

5.2.1.3 When supervisors continued supporting their trainees by giving them feedback it helped them to stay on track with the transfer process

Regular and detailed feedback helped employees to stay on track. Supervisors reported that employees wanted to know how they were doing. Employees, on their part, reported that they wanted to know where they stand with their manager or supervisor.

5.2.1.4 Supervisor support and involvement encouraged trainees to try out new knowledge and skills

Employees reported they were more motivated to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills when their supervisors encouraged them to do so. Encouragement to apply the new skills further enhanced transfer in that it made employees feel accountable and responsible for successful transfer. Seeing how the implementation assisted in resolving problems and queries from difficult clients more effectively further encouraged trainees.

5.2.1.5 When supervisors were more involved and supportive when trainees returned from training it assisted in determining future training needs

Through closer attention to whether knowledge and skills were successfully implemented, managers and supervisors were able to identify gaps in performance sooner and more effectively. This happened because the focus was on successful implementation of the learning.

5.2.2 KEY FINDINGS FOR SUB-QUESTION 1:

What are the challenges faced by trainees in the transfer of training?

Throughout the interviews both the call centre agents and the call centre supervisors provided answers that can make a meaningful contribution to the transfer of training. Pertaining to sub-question 1 the following factors were identified:

5.2.2.1 Training not helpful

Some of the trainees reported that they did not find the training helpful to address all of the problems they experienced in the call centre on a daily basis. It is therefore important to do a proper needs analysis prior to the training and to align the gaps with the outcomes of the training thereby ensuring the training equips the trainees to successfully transfer their knowledge and skills to the workplace.

5.2.2.2 Feel overwhelmed

Some of the employees reported that they felt overwhelmed. They reported that the training was intense with a lot of new information taught by the trainers. Some also reported that they did not have an opportunity to ask all the questions they wanted to ask. It was also mentioned that coming back from training and then being expected to be competent is a tall order. It is important to create ample opportunity for trainees to ask questions. Supervisors should create opportunities for transfer and expect trainees to ease their way into the transfer process. Once they have more confidence they will proceed faster with the transfer process.

5.2.2.3 Peers resist change

Not all the team members were equally willing to implement the newly acquired skills. It was especially the older members of the team who wanted to continue as before. They were sceptical about the trainees returning from training eager to implement their new skills. It is important to address peer resistance. This can be done by explaining the purpose of the training and how the training can assist in increasing performance.

5.2.2.4 Lack of opportunity

Trained staff are usually behind on answering queries and have little time to focus on implementing new knowledge and skills. The trainees in this study reported that managers put pressure on them to catch up as soon as possible. It is imperative that managers and supervisors accept that their employees will require time to catch up; they should therefore create space for implementation and be less demanding.

5.2.2.5 Lack of support

Probably the biggest challenge identified by the call centre agents was coming back from training and then being ignored by the managers or supervisors. Employees have a strong need to discuss the training and specifically how to implement the learned skills effectively in the workplace. It is therefore critical that call centre supervisors make sure they are aware of the content of the training and even attend some of the training. Once the employees return from training, supervisors should ensure that they spend time with each individual member of their team to discuss the training.

5.2.3 KEY FINDINGS FOR SUB-QUESTION 2:

What support activities are undertaken by supervisors in order to improve the transfer of training?

Throughout the interviews both the call centre agents and the call centre supervisors provided answers that can make a meaningful contribution to the transfer of training. Pertaining to sub-question 2, the following factors were identified:

5.2.3.1 Opportunities to practise and apply

Both the call centre agents and the supervisors reported opportunities to practise and apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills as important once the trainees return to the workplace.

5.2.3.2 Discuss application

Supervisors emphasised the importance of creating opportunities to discuss application in the workplace and giving feedback about the employees' performance. During the interviews, call centre agents identified feedback and guidance from their supervisor as key to assist them in the implementation process. They also mentioned assistance with putting together a transfer plan. This was helpful as they had mastered the theory in the classroom; however, they required assistance with planning practical application.

5.2.3.3 Follow-up training

The call centre agents reported that their managers and supervisors were keen to send them for follow-up training. Both supervisors and employees mentioned that additional training needs are often identified when employees start to implement the newly acquired skills; therefore, more training is helpful in bridging the gaps.

5.2.3.4 Monitor application

Employees reported that their supervisors monitored their performance in the workplace. They also reported that they were clear about their supervisors' expectations for application. Supervisors, on their part, reported that they followed up and monitored whether the employees were indeed implementing what they had learned. For example, supervisors listened to random calls to ensure application. It is especially helpful if the monitoring is followed up with feedback.

5.2.3.5 Provide mentoring

Managers and supervisors reported that mentoring was vital in ensuring that the trainees implement their trained skills. They enter into a mentoring relationship with the employees after the training. They create opportunities to discuss uncertainties and show the way and encourage the employees to try to implement the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

5.2.4 KEY FINDINGS FOR SUB-QUESTION 3:

Which of the support activities do employees experience as helpful to transfer?

Throughout the interviews both the call centre agents and the call centre supervisors provided answers that could make a meaningful contribution to the transfer of training. Pertaining to sub-question 3, the following factors were identified:

5.2.4.1 Discussing practical implementation

Employees reported it as helpful when their supervisors created opportunities to discuss application in the workplace. Call centre agents reported a need for guidance from their supervisor. They also required assistance with putting together a transfer plan. Although they had mastered the theory in the classroom, they wanted to discuss the practical implication. Supervisors confirmed that it is vital to meet and discuss implementation with their employees.

5.2.4.2 Getting an opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge

Both the call centre agents and the supervisors reported that it would be helpful to have the opportunity to practise and apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills once they return to the workplace. They indicated opportunities such as: moving from an administrative function to dealing directly with customers, working with high-end customers, and demonstrating their knowledge and skills to employees that had not attended the training.

5.2.4.3 Follow-up discussions about progress

Both the supervisors and the call centre agents pointed out the importance of creating opportunities for follow-up discussions and feedback about their performance and discussing application in the workplace. Call centre agents reported that it was helpful when their supervisors provide guidance. They also reported assistance with putting together a transfer plan as helpful.

5.2.4.4 Being a role model

Trainees found it helpful if their managers and supervisors acted as role models. They mentioned that their managers and supervisors mentored them; they created opportunities to discuss uncertainties and showed trainees the way and encouraged them to try to implement the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

5.2.4.5 Discuss future learning requirements

The call centre agents reported it as helpful if their managers created an opportunity for more training. Additional training needs are often identified when employees start to implement the newly acquired skills and then realise that they require more training.

5.2.5 KEY FINDINGS FOR SUB-QUESTION 4:

Which of the support activities do not seem to be helpful to transfer, according to employees?

Throughout the interviews both the call centre agents and the call centre supervisors provided answers that could make a meaningful contribution to the transfer of training. Pertaining to sub-question 4, the following factors were identified:

5.2.5.1 Not enough time for discussion

The call centre agents identified lack of opportunity to discuss the training and the application process as not helpful. They mentioned that their managers and supervisors are sometimes too busy or even appear not interested to enter into a discussion after the training.

5.2.5.2 Not enough opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge

The call centre agents mentioned that their supervisors should create opportunities for them to practise and apply their newly acquired skills. Should the manager or supervisor refrain from actively assist in making this possible, it is experienced as not helpful.

5.2.5.3 Lack of a transfer plan

Call centre agents reported lack of assistance from their supervisors with putting together a transfer plan as not helpful. They also mentioned that their supervisors should be clear about their expectations regarding transfer.

5.2.5.4 Lack of feedback about progress

The employees reported a strong need to know where they stand with their supervisors pertaining to their performance. They want to know where they stand with their managers and want to know whether they are getting it right. The lack of such feedback was reported as not helpful.

5.2.5.5 No mentoring

Not receiving guidance and support from their managers or supervisors was reported as not helpful. Call centre agents often reported that they received no mentoring at all or very little mentoring.

5.2.6 KEY FINDINGS FOR SUB-QUESTION 5:

How can post-training supervisory support be enhanced?

Throughout the interviews both the call centre agents and the call centre supervisors provided answers that could make a meaningful contribution to the transfer of training. Pertaining to sub-question 5, the following factors were identified:

5.2.6.1 Expect to see results

Supervisors and employees felt it was a good idea to set very specific transfer goals for the trainees. The researcher suggests that it might even be better to make transfer a key performance indicator. In that way trainees will get detailed feedback about progress in their quarterly performance reviews.

5.2.6.2 Hold employees accountable

The researcher found that it should be made clear to trainees that they are responsible and accountable. They should be well aware that successes is up to them and that they are responsible to utilise the newly acquired skills to ensure successful transfer.

5.2.6.3 Provide feedback

It was derived from the answers that feedback is a key element with regard to both call centre agents and supervisors in establishing successful transfer. The call centre agents expressed a strong desire to know how they were doing. Supervisors identified feedback as an important opportunity to align performance with the outcomes of the training and ensure application.

5.2.6.4 Implement assessments

A pre-course assessment as well as a post-course assessment should be conducted as part of the learning programme to determine firstly, the level of knowledge prior to the course and secondly, whether the trainees are implementing the new skills, knowledge and attitude gained from the training.

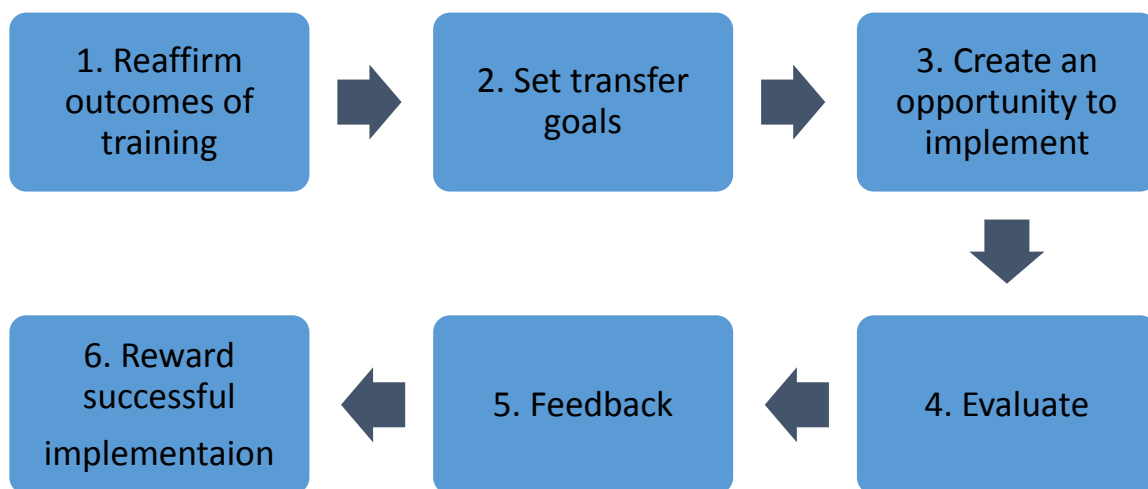
5.2.6.5 Reward successful implementation

Both the call centre agents and the supervisors mentioned rewarding successful implementation. The agents expressed a desire to be acknowledged in a special way. The supervisors expressed a need to have a tool to further motivate the trainees to aim for successful implementation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE TRANSFER OF TRAINING

Figure 5.2 (designed by the researcher) indicates transfer of training strategies based on the research findings and the researcher's own view with regard to the implementation to the transfer of training. In order to enable supervisors to be more successful in enhancing transfer of training, these processes should be implemented by the organisation.

Figure 5.2: Transfer of training process



5.3.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: *Start the transfer process by reaffirming the outcomes of training*

It is recommended to start the transfer process with a meeting to discuss the training and reaffirm the outcomes of the training with the trainee; demonstrating the supervisor's interest in both the trainee and the training. It also demonstrates that the supervisor is serious about the implementation of the transfer process. The meeting should be scheduled as soon as possible after employees arrive back at the

workplace, but by no later than the first week. Reaffirming the outcomes will allow both the supervisor and the trainee to create a platform from where to launch the transfer process. It will also help create a common understanding of the purpose and goal of the training, and help to create clear objectives for the implementation of the transfer process.

5.3.2 RECOMMENDATION 2: *Set transfer goals*

It is suggested that the transfer process be continued by setting and agreeing upon the goals for transfer. The goals should be specific in that they address the focus of the transfer. In this way the call centre agent will understand which changes in behaviour his supervisor expects, where it should be implemented and, most importantly, how the changes should be implemented. The goals should also be measurable. It is important that the trainee understands the nature of success. Measurement includes feedback and will help the trainee to understand when the transfer goals are achieved. The goals should furthermore be assigned, which means the trainees will take ownership and understand that they are responsible and accountable for implementation. The goals should also be realistic. Reaffirming the outcomes of the training assists both the supervisor and trainee in setting achievable goals. The trainee should know when the supervisor expects to see results. Setting a time frame for implementation will help motivate the trainee to implement the newly acquired knowledge and skills immediately.

5.3.3 RECOMMENDATION 3: *Create opportunities to implement*

From this research it is clear that the trainees are sometimes inundated with work in order to catch up after they have attended training. It is therefore important to create space and opportunities for them to start applying and practising their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Supervisors should not assume that trainees will create opportunities for application on their own accord. This is especially true of the first days after they have returned from training.

5.3.4 RECOMMENDATION 4: *Evaluate transfer of training*

The results from this study indicate that continuous evaluation of trainees back in the workplace, after training, will assist managers and supervisors in quantifying the level of transfer of training. Continuous assessment will help determine the impact the training has on service-level agreements and assist in measuring the change in behaviour of the trainees.

5.3.5 RECOMMENDATION 5: *Provide feedback*

The participants in this study were unanimous in identifying feedback by the supervisor as pivotal to the transfer process. The trainees expressed a need to know where they stand with their supervisors. They also mentioned that feedback will help them determine how they are doing and help them to adjust their behaviour should it be necessary.

5.3.6 RECOMMENDATION 6: *Reward successful implementation*

From this study it was clear that the trainees want to be recognised for achieving the goals set for the transfer process. Making a fuss about the individual and rewarding them will inspire both the individual and their peers. Examples of rewards are gift vouchers, dinner for two, writing a story about the individual's success and publishing it on the company's intranet, or asking them to coach a peer that might not be so successful. Acknowledging the successes publically sends a positive signal to the rest of the team. People feel good about being acknowledged. Recognition is a powerful motivator and incentive.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following suggestions are made for future study:

- Future research should focus on creating a South African instrument to quantify actual transfer after trainees return from the classroom. The core purpose of such an instrument will be to determine actual change in behaviour. Quantifying should commence prior to training and continue for a set period after the training.

- A training programme could be explored for managers and supervisors to equip them to facilitate successful transfer. Managers and supervisors play a key role in assisting trainees in the transfer process. However, several of the supervisors in the current study reported that they did not know what to do to assist the trainees in the best possible way.
- Future research could focus on the needs of different age groups in transfer of training. A diverse group of employees of different ages are in the employ of Aramex South Africa. Understanding the unique needs of an employee who joins the company directly after school as opposed to one with several years' experience could ensure that managers and supervisors are suitably equipped to assist in the best possible way.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this study, factors were pointed out by both the call centre agents and their supervisors as factors supporting transfer of training from the corporate classroom to the workplace. It was found that the current training standard operating procedures should be elaborated on to include a more specific transfer of training procedure.

Organisations spend large amounts of money annually on training and development to address workplace training requirements. Workplace training is a key factor if companies want to stay competitive. However, it is even more important to ensure that the newly acquired knowledge and skills transfer to the workplace, as this enhances the effectiveness of the training programmes.

The research clearly indicated that supervisors can contribute to enhancing transfer through implementing accountability, follow-up assessments, opportunity to practise and apply, constant feedback, and implementing a reward system. The researcher therefore suggests a transfer of training approach to be implemented in the company in question. The main aim of the transfer approach is to enhance post-training transfer. It is hoped that through this study organisations and those responsible for training and development will be more appreciative of the important role of the supervisor in

transfer of training. As it is only through ensuring successful transfer to the workplace that organisations can warrant that the knowledge and skills are implemented, which will in return add to the relevance of the organisation and help them prosper in a competitive global economy.

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APPENDIX 1

INVITATION AND CONSENT LETTER TO CALL CENTRE AGENTS

Dear Respondent

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study. My name is Willem Krügel. I am conducting a research project as part of my Master's degree at the University of South Africa.

Permission for the study has been given by the HR Executive of Aramex South Africa and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise as related to my research topic. The invitation to participate will also be extended to a group of Aramex Call Centre Supervisors.

I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to better understand and improve the role of the supervisor in transfer of learning and skills to enable learners to apply the skills and knowledge learned during training to their work environment.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 30 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed-upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report.

However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for twelve months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 072 359 5804 or by email at: willem.krugel@aramex.com.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows.

Yours sincerely

.....

WF Krügel

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about: **“Exploring post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training in the private sector”**.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio-recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant Name: (Please print)

Participant Signature:

Researcher Name: (Please print)

Researcher Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 2

INVITATION AND CONSENT LETTER TO CALL CENTRE SUPERVISORS

Dear Respondent

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study. My name is Willem Krügel. I am conducting a research project as part of my Master's degree at the University of South Africa.

Permission for the study has been given by the HR Executive of Aramex South Africa and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise as related to my research topic. The invitation to participate will also be extended to a group of Aramex Call Centre Agents.

I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to better understand and improve the role of the supervisor in transfer of learning and skills to enable learners to apply the skills and knowledge learned during training to their work environment.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 30 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed-upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report.

However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for twelve months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 072 359 5804 or by email at: willem.krugel@aramex.com.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows.

Yours sincerely

.....

WF Krügel

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about: **“Exploring post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training in the private sector”**.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio-recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant Name: (Please print)

Participant Signature:

Researcher Name: (Please print)

Researcher Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 3

CALL CENTRE AGENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about transfer of training and I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information you share can be used to better understand and improve the role of the supervisor in transfer of learning and skills to enable call centre agents to apply the skills and knowledge learned during training to their work environment.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. The duration of the interview will be approximately 30 minutes in length. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report.

A. General information

1. How old are you?
2. Please describe your current work responsibilities.

B. Transfer of training

3. What are the current challenges you are facing when trying to implement your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?
4. What is your supervisor currently doing to help you apply your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?

5. Which of these support activities have you found helpful in assisting you to apply your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?
6. Which of these support activities have you not found helpful in assisting you to apply your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?
7. What do you think is the best way supervisors can support employees after training to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills?

APPENDIX 4

CALL CENTRE SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about transfer of training and I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information you share can be used to better understand and improve the role of the supervisor in transfer of learning and skills to enable call centre agents to apply the skills and knowledge learned during training to their work environment.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. The duration of the interview will be approximately 30 minutes in length. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report.

A. General information

1. How old are you?
2. Please describe your current work responsibilities.
3. On what level of management are you functioning?

B. Transfer of training

4. How do you think post-training supervisory support improves transfer of training?

5. What specific transfer activities are you currently implementing?
6. Which of these activities are experienced as helpful to transfer by employees?
7. Which of these activities are experienced as not helpful to transfer by employees?
8. How do you think can post-training supervisory support be enhanced?

APPENDIX 5

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Chantal Schoombie

■ Willem Krugel; ■ Tyron Coote ▾

FW: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ARAMEX SOUTH AFRICA



Signed Copy.pdf
.pdf File

Dear Willem

This is great and your continuous learning is an inspiration to all.

I have no issues to this as it does not require access to any confidential data.

However I am including Tyron as MD as he should be aware and also give us his blessing for such research.

We would however want access to your report and findings to assist us in what we are doing well and where we can improve.

Kind Regards

Chantal Schoombie
HR Executive
Aramex South Africa

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APPENDIX 6

RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

15 June 2016

Ref : 2016/06/15/05382769/21/MC

Student: Mr WF Krügel

Student Number : 05382769

Dear Mr WF Krügel

Decision: Ethics Approval

Researcher: Mr WF Krügel
Tel: +2711 457 3036
Email: Willem.krugel@aramex.com

Supervisor: Dr MM Malale
College of Education
Department of ABET and Youth Development
Tel: 2712 481 2974
Email : malalmm@unisa.ac.za

Proposal: Exploring post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training in the private sector in Gauteng Province, South Africa

Qualification: M Ed in Adult Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 15 June 2016.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for*



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Open Rubric

the research participants.

- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

Note:

*The reference number **2016/06/15/05382769/21/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.*

Kind regards,

Dr M Claassens

CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Prof VI McKay
EXECUTIVE DEAN

APPENDIX 7

A TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH CALL CENTRE AGENT

I: How old are you?

R: *I am 36 years old.*

I: Please describe your current work responsibilities.

R: *I am a call centre agent.*

I: What are the current challenges you are facing when trying to implement your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?

R: *Well, I would say not all the team members accept changes. Some question the new way of doing. Although I see the value and it helps me. The fact that we are not all on the same side sometimes causes conflict.*

I: What is your supervisor currently doing to help you apply your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?

R: *She is supportive. Her focus is on training on the job. She asks me whether I have tried this or that. If something is not working, she will suggest an alternative. She is always available and approachable. I told my supervisor how much I enjoyed the training and she promised to send me for more training.*

I: Which of these activities have you found helpful in assisting you to apply your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?

R: *Definitely her ongoing support. She is an expert so I learn a lot from her. I will attend more training. We discussed specific training. She calls it "fit-for-purpose" training. The company makes training available and easy to attend. It is nice to have a supervisor that is making herself available and that is accessible at all times.*

I: Which of these support activities have you not found helpful in assisting you to apply your newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace?

R: *My supervisor is doing a good job. However, I think it is bad if a supervisor is not involved or has no sense of urgency. Also if they do not pay attention to detail or do not follow up or is not explaining the importance of something. What I am saying is if a supervisor is the opposite of my supervisor the trainees will suffer.*

I: What do you think is the best way supervisors can support employees after training to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills?

R: *The most important is follow-up. The supervisor must give clear instructions and*

meet with us to discuss. She must give feedback about my performance. The good and the bad. They should also set an example and lead from the front. They should push the team to do better and apply the skills and remind them of best practice. Constant reminders is very important.

APPENDIX 8

A TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW WITH A CALL CENTRE SUPERVISOR

I: How old are you?

R: I will be 34 later this month but for now, I am 33.

I: Please describe your current work responsibilities.

R: I am a call centre supervisor for the past three years.

I: How do you think post-training supervisory support improves transfer of training?

R: It definitely boosts their confidence levels. I have seen this many times. Asking them about the training and helping them to implement what they have learned. It also improves results. It will show in the improved service-level agreements. What I mean is that application of the learned material will help them improve their performance. The time they spend on calls will decrease and therefore hold time will decrease. Overall productivity will improve.

I: What specific transfer activities are you currently implementing?

R: Definitely follow-up. I will ask them about the challenges they are experiencing. I follow up to ensure they are doing what is required. I also have discussions with them about what they have learned in training. You will find that each individual have a different experience. I have to make sure that what they practise and apply is the same. I revisit them to ask what new challenges they experience.

I: Which of these activities are experienced as helpful to transfer by employees?

R: Follow-up and ensure they practise, practise, practise. You should never assume they are automatically on track. Make sure you and they are on the same plate.

I: Which of these activities are experienced as not helpful to transfer by employees?

R: If you are too critical, it does not help them. Do not attack them. Point out their weak areas, but do not overdo it. Do not ignore them. It will seem if you do not care. Discuss the training with them. It is the first step to implementing the training.

I: How do you think can post-training supervisory support be enhanced?

R: *Listen to their calls to determine whether they are applying what they have learned. Communicate your expectation to hear in the call what they have learned. They should be accountable to implement the changes. You should implement weekly calibration sessions to see if they are on track and discuss progress. You must be more involved. Help the employees create their own plan for applying the skills. Your approach must be hands-on. You also have to be part of the training. It is always better to catch someone out doing something right or even excellent. We should celebrate more often.*

APPENDIX 9

A DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the Master's dissertation mentioned below has been properly language edited.

Title of dissertation

Exploring post-training supervisory support in enhancing transfer of training
in the private sector

Student

Willem Frederik Krügel

ELLA BELCHER
Somerset West
13 March 2017