

Study Of Individual Dimensions Influencing The Transfer Of Knowledge Acquired During Continuing Education At The National School Of Administration (ENA) Of Côte d'Ivoire

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the individual factors influencing the transfer of continuing professional training skills among ENA agents. Through an approach combining theoretical analysis and field research, this article is based on a qualitative and quantitative study, conducted with a sample of twenty-eight (28) respondents. Several key determinants are highlighted. Individual factors, such as learners' representations of training, its perceived usefulness and individual skills, play a central role in the application of acquired knowledge. The results of this study allow us to make suggestions aimed at optimizing the impact of continuing training within the ENA, by strengthening support systems and adapting training to the professional realities of agents. Continuing professional training is an essential lever for developing skills and improving the performance of public administration agents. However, the effectiveness of these training courses depends on learners' ability to transfer their skills to work situations.

Keywords: continuing professional training, individual factors, transfer of acquired skills, public administration, National School of Administration.

INTRODUCTION

Public administration plays a central role in a country's economic and social development by ensuring the efficiency of public services, preserving the public interest, and ensuring optimal resource management. In a constantly evolving environment, marked by digital transformation, administrative, legislative, and regulatory reforms, as well as increasing citizen demands, it is becoming imperative for administrations to continuously strengthen the skills of their employees. In this vision, continuing professional training becomes a strategic tool that allows public officials to adapt to all these changes. The Ivorian civil service is no exception to this rule.

Thus, in order to support Civil Servants and State Agents (FAE) in quality continuing training, the Ivorian Public Administration has quality structures and human resources, capable of handling all issues related to the development of the skills of public agents. These training institutions play a key role in this process by offering training adapted to the specific needs of the civil service. This is the case of the

National School of Administration (ENA).

The ENA, being at the heart of the training of executives in the Ivorian public administration, attaches particular importance to the training of its staff. To this end, it organizes training seminars to strengthen the capacities of agents. However, despite the training organized each year for all agents of all categories, it is clear that the criticized professional practices have changed little and the skills of some agents do not always correspond to the job occupied. This state of affairs leads not only to questioning the cognitive abilities of the agents but also to questioning the learning during the seminars, the effective application of the acquired knowledge in work situations, and even the individual factors influencing this transfer. All these concerns have led to a reflection on the determinants in the individual that promote or hinder the transfer of the acquired knowledge from the continuing training of ENA agents.

Some writings assert that the success of a training program is not measured solely by the acquisition of new

knowledge, but above all by the ability of learners to transfer this knowledge to a professional situation. This is what Frenay and Bedard (2011) defend well when they say that the ability for any person to reuse what they have learned at another time or place represents a worrying issue for both professionals and learners. This is the challenge of any training program because, whatever the objectives, the quality of training depends on a successful transfer of the acquired knowledge. This is why the literature on the transfer of acquired knowledge puts forward several conceptual models on the different factors influencing it. This is the case of the theory of learning and transfer of Baldwin & Ford (1988). It focuses on the relationship between learning, training and the transfer of acquired skills in a professional context. This theory highlights several factors influencing the successful transfer of learning from training to the workplace. Indeed, Baldwin & Ford (1988) propose a key model of learning transfer, identifying three determining factors: the characteristics of the learner, the characteristics of the training and the work environment.

They agree with Holton (1996) who developed the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI), a tool for assessing the variables that influence the transfer of acquired knowledge. These various writings thus show the importance of the transfer of acquired knowledge in defining the quality of training. Indeed, this transfer represents the key point by which the skills learned in training cease to belong solely to the individual sphere and are reinvested in the organization (Devos. and Dumay , 2006) . For the company to benefit from the positive effects of training on its performance, there must first be a transfer of acquired knowledge to the workplace, through the learner. The individual therefore becomes an important vector in this process.

Therefore, maximizing or optimizing the transfer of acquired knowledge in a work situation becomes a major mission because this transfer is influenced by many factors, including individual factors. The main elements of the theory of Baldwin & Ford (Op. Cit .) concerning factors linked to the learner are the following: motivation to learn, perception of training, cognitive capacity. These elements indicate that the commitment, positive perception and capacity of the learner are essential to transform learning into concrete application in the professional context. In the particular case of Public Administration, it is relevant to identify the key individual determinants of the transfer of acquired knowledge, especially in a context of budgetary restriction. This approach makes it possible to better direct investments in a continuing training policy to strengthen the skills and responsiveness of administrations in order to effectively take charge of public service and general interest missions, essential to social cohesion (Bachelard and Espagno -Abadie, 2019).

So, what is the influence of individual factors on the transfer

of skills acquired through continuing professional training? To demonstrate the influence of these factors on the transfer of skills acquired, this article examined the case of staff at the National School of Administration.

This study aims to understand the individual factors influencing the transfer of skills acquired through continuing professional training among ENA staff.

Specifically, this involves:

- describe the representations of ENA agents on training;
- show the influence of cognitive skills (or individual skills) on the transfer of knowledge acquired through continuing education.

The main hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows: Individual factors influence the transfer of acquired skills from continuing professional training of ENA agents.

From this hypothesis, the following subsidiary hypotheses arise:

Hypothesis 1: ENA agents' representations of training have an impact on the transfer of knowledge acquired through continuing professional training.

Hypothesis 2: the cognitive skills (or individual competencies) of ENA agents promote or hinder the transfer of training acquired.

METHODOLOGY

Site and participants

The target population is all ENA agents, i.e. eighty-nine (89) agents, women and men, of all categories (A; B; C; D) (2021).

A sample of twenty-eight (28) respondents was taken from the parent population. Considering the objective of the study, the use of quota sampling was necessary in order to obtain substantially the same profile as that of the population studied in terms of category. Then, it was added as a condition, agents having participated in at least two (02) training courses organized by the Center for Professional Development and Internships (CPSP) formerly the Directorate of Continuing Education (DFC) in year n-1 and year n. The choice of this empirical and non-probabilistic method is based on our considered choice of the selection of individuals for the constitution of its sample.

The twenty-eight ⁽²⁸⁾ agents representing the sample and who will be the subject of the investigation are distributed as follows:

- **Category A:** seventeen ⁽¹⁷⁾; including one ⁽⁰²⁾ directors, four ⁽⁰⁶⁾ deputy directors, nine ⁽⁰⁹⁾ department heads and study officers;
- **Category B:** nine ⁽⁰⁹⁾, composed of supervisors;
- **Category C:** two ⁽⁰²⁾ office staff.

The table below shows the entire target population.

Table 1: Statistics of respondents

No.	Sample	Number of people who received the questionnaire or interview guide	Number of respondents	Percentage %
1	ENA agents	25	22	88
2	Hierarchy interviewed	03	03	100
	Total	28	25	89.28

Source: Anon, Mollé & N'goran, 2023

Data collection techniques and instruments

In order to provide the answers to the problem, the choice was made to combine three ⁽⁰³⁾ main techniques for carrying out this study. We first carried out a documentary research whose objective is to take stock of the issue of the analysis of continuing training needs as well as the evaluation of the transfer of acquired knowledge. Thus, books, reports, theses and articles on the subject were consulted. Then, we opted for a questionnaire addressed to twenty-five ⁽²⁵⁾ agents. A questionnaire was administered which included both open and semi-open questions. Finally, the interview method was used. In this case, the hierarchical superiors directly linked to the continuing training of agents were interviewed. It was therefore a semi-directive individual and centered interview which was administered to three ⁽⁰³⁾ hierarchical superiors. The aim of these interviews with the hierarchy was to collect information in addition to the questionnaire.

The research work was carried out with the authorization of the governing bodies. The various techniques used went well overall. There were no refusals to participate in the survey or to answer certain interview questions. It must be said that the position of researcher and participant sometimes made the task complex. In the sense that the study being a scientific approach, it was necessary to find the right balance to remain both scientific and free of any professional judgment. One of the difficulties encountered lay in the survey period. The study was limited in time: from June to December. This period corresponds to an increase in activities at the ENA. Furthermore, the months of October and November are devoted to the annual leave of staff. It was therefore necessary to wait until December to conduct the survey.

RESULTS

Agents' representations on training

The staff's perceptions of training allow us to measure the level of motivation of staff for training and therefore their motivation to transfer to the workplace. From the analysis of

the results, the study showed that the representations of ENA staff on training have an impact on the transfer of the acquired skills from continuing vocational training.

Reasons for training

To the question "In your opinion, what are the reasons for training?", the survey agents had the choice of response between: individual professional project and organizational project. The majority opted for the individual professional project with 98.4%, as the main reason why the agents train. Furthermore, from the analysis of the interviews, the three ⁽⁰³⁾ hierarchical superiors attest that the objective of training is indeed the individual professional project. Indeed, the comments collected on this subject are formulated as follows:

- **Interviewee 1:** "I think we train to meet professional requirements";
- **Interviewee 2:** "It's for the strengthening of technical skills";
- **Interviewee 3:** "The training aims to enable agents to improve their efficiency in carrying out the missions entrusted to them. It also aims for professional mobility..."

In conclusion, ENA employees are training for professional reasons. These reasons include: strengthening their skills to hold the position; improving their skills for promotion; accessing higher levels of qualification; acquiring new skills for retraining, etc. According to them, these reasons influence the application of what they have learned in their workplace.

Perceived usefulness of training

The perceived usefulness of training plays a role in motivating employees to transfer their skills. The majority of employees believe that there is a close link between the perceived usefulness of training and the transfer of skills.

The figure below shows the respondents' responses

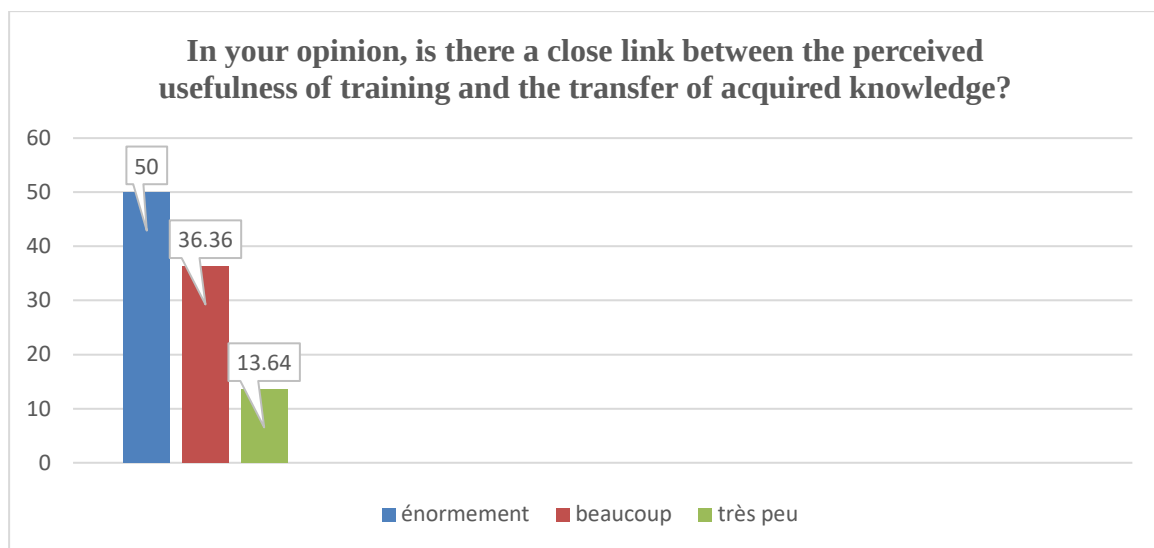


Figure 1: Perceived usefulness of training and transfer of acquired knowledge

Source: Anon, Mollé & N'goran, 2023

The analysis of the graph shows that half (50%) of the respondents think that there is a strong link between the usefulness of training and the transfer of acquired knowledge and 36.36% believe that there is a strong link between the two. Only 13.64% believe that there is little link. However, it

should be noted that there is no link between the functions of the agents and the perceived usefulness of the training. The chi-square test does not confirm this link according to the table below:

Table 2: Chi-square test - link between the function of the agents and the perceived usefulness of the training

Chi-square tests			Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
	Value	ddl	
Pearson chi-square	1,394 ^a	2	,498
Likelihood ratio	1,514	2	,469
Linear by linear association	,290	1	,590
Number of valid observations	22		

Source: Anon, Mollé & N'goran, 2023

From the analysis of the table, the chi-square test does not confirm the link between the function of the agents and the perceived usefulness of the training. The chi-square read is equal to 0.498, we can therefore conclude that the function of the agents does not influence their perception of the usefulness of the training. This perception of the usefulness of the training is therefore in no way dependent on the functions of the agents. Indeed, all the agents, regardless of their function, are unanimous on the fact that the training meets a

professional need.

Individual skills of agents and transfer of knowledge acquired through continuing training

The individual skills of the agents influence the transfer of acquired knowledge among ENA agents. To confirm this hypothesis, the results obtained, represented below, were statistically analyzed.

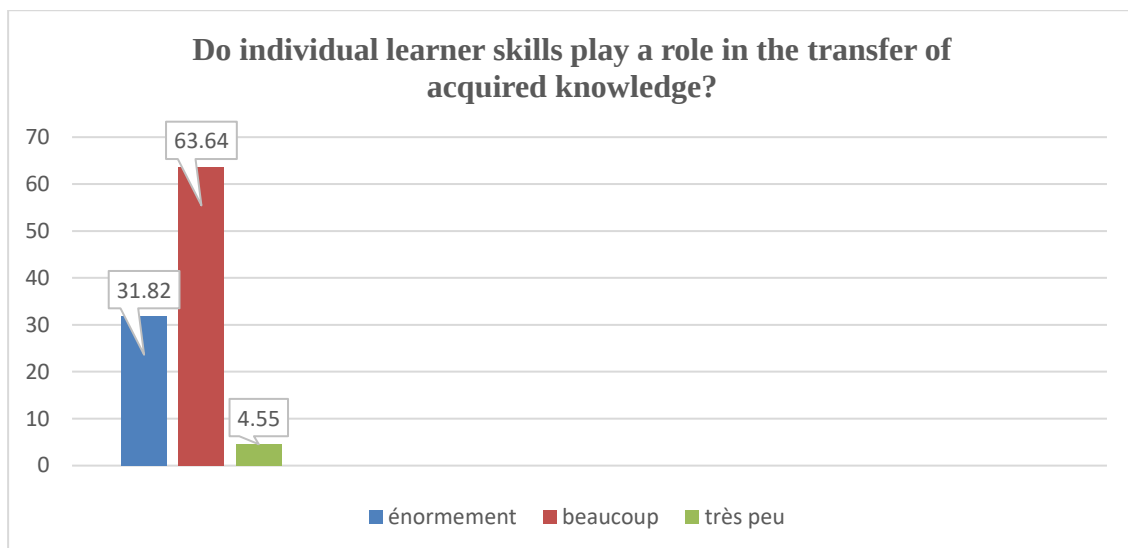


Figure 2: Individual skills and transfer of acquired skills among agents

Source: Anon, Mollé & N'goran, 2023

Analysis of the graph shows that 31.82% of agents believe that there is a strong link between the two variables. 63.64% say there is a "lot" of link, while only 4.55% say there is very little. According to the respondents, individual skills are crucial in the transfer of acquired knowledge. They can either promote

or hinder it. Furthermore, the Chi-Square test across the table shows that there is no significant difference between the two variables. Indeed, the Chi-Square significance threshold is > 0.005 , or 0.533. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that there is no link between the two variables.

Table 3: Chi-square test - link between the sex of agents and individual skills

Chi-square tests			
	Value	ddl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson chi-square	1,257 ^a	2	,533
Likelihood ratio	1,634	2	,442
Linear by linear association	,632	1	,427
Number of valid observations	22		

Source: Anon, Mollé & N'goran, 2023

It should also be noted that there is no link between the variables "agent function" and "individual skills". Indeed, the analysis of the cross-tabulation table below indicates the

difference between the two groups is therefore not significant. In addition, chi-square $0.822 > 0.005$.

Table 4: Chi-square test - link between agent function and individual skills

Chi-square tests			
	Value	ddl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson chi-square	,393 ^a	2	,822
Likelihood ratio	,655	2	,721
Linear by linear association	,198	1	,657
Number of valid observations	22		

Source: Anon, Mollé & N'goran, 2023

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The central question of the study was worded as follows: What is the influence of individual factors on the transfer of skills acquired during continuing professional training for ENA

staff? Thus, in order to answer the research question, the article focused on the case of ENA. Individual variables such as learners' representations of training, the perceived usefulness of training and individual skills were analyzed.

This discussion of the results obtained aims to compare them with the research and studies identified on the question of the influence of individual factors on the transfer of skills acquired during continuing training.

Learners' perceptions of training influence the transfer of knowledge acquired through continuing vocational training. The importance given to training is crucial for the success of the transfer. In general, training is perceived according to two (02) representations: training as an organizational strategy and training presented as an individual asset. As an organizational strategy, training is considered a management tool necessary to support organizational changes. It is a strategic vector for the economic and social development of the company. Indeed, the decision to train concerns decision-makers, thus asserting itself as an investment from which a quantifiable return is expected. The new skills acquired by learners are added values, representing an asset for the structures which see in this, a return on investment.

However, it should be noted that skills development appears to be a major concern for individuals. Thus, through training, learners aim to improve, update their knowledge, and integrate new skills into their professional practices. In addition, beneficiaries expect training to be a means for them to access promotion, thus allowing them to manage their professional careers. Continuing vocational training is an essential mechanism for improving skills and is a factor in the dynamism and participation of individuals in community life.

The representations that ENA agents have of training is one of the main variables that emerge from the analysis of the results. The agents questioned and interviewed highlighted the importance of this variable in relation to the transfer of learning. This importance was highlighted by Jacot, A., Raemdonck and Frenay, M. (2016). According to these authors, the trained person perceives training as a means of achieving career or other objectives. In the context of this research, the agents perceive training as a means of carrying out their professional project. Therefore, training and applying what they have learned to achieve their objectives represents a personal interest for them. This is confirmed by Axtell, CM, et Al, (1997). They believe that the representations that learners have of training can have an indirect effect on the subsequent use of skills and knowledge acquired in training.

Agents' representations of training, based on their individual professional project, are a determining factor in the applicability of training outcomes. Therefore, when choosing continuing education programs, ENA training managers should take these representations into account and choose training programs directly related to their job. Because, for individuals, training is crucial to their career paths. It helps restore meaning to the agent's job, and helps them obtain promotion or recognition. From this perspective, we agree

with the proponents of andragogy who say that when an adult train, they generally know what they are going to do with it. To achieve this, adult learners must be involved throughout the training process. This ensures that they have a sense of meaning and social significance for the learning tasks. As a result, their needs, expectations, values, beliefs, emotions, attitudes, and motivation can all influence their learning. In this logic, in the learning process of ENA agents, an important place must be given to andragogical practices.

Perceived usefulness is one of the factors influencing attitudes toward transfer. It refers to the value or importance that individuals attribute to the training they receive, based on their beliefs about the relevance of the content learned and its potential application in professional contexts. This perception is influenced by several variables, including learner expectations, content quality, clarity of training objectives, and the possibility of applying the acquired knowledge in concrete work situations. In the case of ENA agents, these variables are measured at the end of each training through an evaluation sheet. In addition, the survey revealed that the usefulness that agents perceive of training modifies their behavior towards transfer. The literature on the transfer of acquired knowledge, specifically that of Baldwin & Ford, (1988) highlights that employees with a high perception of the usefulness of training are more likely to transfer the skills learned to their work environment. Positive perceptions increase engagement and motivation, thus promoting better knowledge transfer.

According to the results obtained, the agents believe in the vast majority and above all, whatever the function of the latter, that the transfer of acquired knowledge will be automatically influenced by the way in which the agents perceive it. It is proven that perceived usefulness is a variable strongly correlated with the change of behaviors (Burke and Hutchins, 2007). Indeed, according to these authors, a positive perception of the participants regarding the usefulness of their training is necessary for a good transfer of learning.

Thus, to promote the effective transfer of skills acquired during training in the workplace, it is essential to pay particular attention to the usefulness perceived by agents. This position is defended by the writings of Colquitt and Jarvis, (2009). They emphasize the importance of this perception to strengthen motivation and commitment in order to ensure the sustainable integration of acquired skills into professional practice. As for Franco and Adams (2014), they recommend evaluating upstream the perception that agents have on the relevance of the training, in order to adapt the content to their specific needs. This can be done through surveys or interviews to

target individual expectations and organizational issues.

The individual skills of agents is an individual variable that influences the transfer of acquired knowledge among ENA agents. Regardless of the agents' gender, these individual skills play an important role in transfer. Individual skills, in our understanding, refer firstly to whether learners feel capable of learning and assimilating the training content and secondly, whether they feel capable of applying what they have learned upon their return.

In the literature of education and training sciences, (Baldwin & Ford (1988) Holton, (1996)) the importance of individual skills for the transfer of acquired knowledge is no longer in doubt. Firstly, they would facilitate the transfer if individuals are capable (in terms of knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills) of assimilating the learning during training. In other words, if they have the required skills. On this approach, Colquitt et al. (2000) noted a positive relationship between cognitive ability and transfer. Second, these individual skills represent a significant determinant in maximizing transfer in the learner, in relation to their sense of self-efficacy. This is what is reflected Dalmás et al. (2017) when they say that: *"the interest sought by the individual in a learning situation is implemented by his feeling of self-efficacy"*. As for Holton et al. (2000), they define this self-efficacy as *"the general belief of an individual that he is able to change his performance whenever he wants"*. From these different definitions, Tharanganie, (2013) cited by Ben Lakhal, & Gara Bach Ouerdian, (2018) distinguishes two types of self-efficacy: pre-training self-efficacy and post-training self-efficacy. According to him, pre-training self-efficacy is defined as the learner's ability to learn the training content. Post-training self-efficacy is defined as the latter's ability to apply the knowledge learned in the workplace after receiving training.

In addition to this research on the individual skills of learners, Awoniyi et al, (2002) (cited by Devos and Dumas (2006), in their studies demonstrated that there is no significant link between the degree of qualification and transfer. This contradicts the writings of Colquitt et al. (2000) who, on the other hand, observe a positive relationship between cognitive ability and transfer. Notwithstanding, we support, like Burke and Hutchins, (2007), that the cognitive capacity of the individual influences the development of certain skills. These skills, according to Chochard (2012), play an important role in the transfer of learning, especially when it requires a particular effort on the part of the person being trained.

Multiple studies highlight that learners' personal and professional characteristics play a crucial role in the successful transfer of skills after training. According to Burke, Baldwin, and Goodwin (2006), traits such as intrinsic motivation, self-confidence (self-efficacy), autonomous learning capacity, and perseverance directly influence the

ability to apply acquired knowledge in the professional context. Indeed, these individual skills promote engagement in the learning process, facilitate the transfer of skills, and increase the likelihood of sustaining the effects of training. Therefore, developing these skills from the initial stages of training should be considered strategic to ensure effective transfer of acquired knowledge.

The transfer of acquired knowledge during training constitutes a major challenge for the effectiveness of capacity building systems. Considering the individual skills of learners and their role in the sustainability of acquired knowledge must challenge all training professionals. We believe that, since the individual is the main vector of acquired knowledge transfer, taking this variable into account is of significant benefit. It would either play a leveraging role to maximize transfer, or have a negative effect on this transfer. Thus, to effectively integrate individual skills into the transfer strategy in the workplace, it is essential to first diagnose existing skills in order to adapt training to the needs of learners (Salas et al., 2012). Preliminary understanding of skills also allows for the identification of potential barriers to putting what has been learned into practice. Then, targeted support allows for the adjustment of support to the specific needs of each learner, thus promoting concrete application in the professional context (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). In this strategy, Holton (1996) shows that post-training coaching and mentoring reinforce the mastery of skills. Finally, autonomy in learning, highlighted by Deci and Ryan (1985), increases the ability of individuals to transfer and apply their skills. Zimmerman's (2002) research shows that autonomy in learning encourages better internalization of skills, facilitating their transfer. Training must therefore include meta-cognition and self-assessment strategies (Schunk, 2005).

CONCLUSION

This article shows that individual factors of learners during training have an influence on the transfer of training acquired by ENA agents. The factors that were analyzed in the article are: representations and individual skills. Thus, the results can be summarized in the following points:

- ENA staff's perceptions of training have an impact on the transfer of skills acquired through continuing vocational training. These perceptions relate to the staff's motive for training and their perceived usefulness of the training.
- The cognitive skills (or individual competencies) of ENA staff promote or hinder the transfer of training knowledge.

In a constantly changing environment, the effectiveness of

continuing education in the public sector depends largely on the transfer of acquired knowledge to professional practice. Indeed, the successful transfer of acquired skills in training is a major challenge for any capacity building program, particularly in the public sector where the sustainability of skills remains fundamental. Thus, since the individual is at the center of professional development, understanding the influence of individual factors helps guide training programs.

This research, conducted in a National Public Institution, highlighted the importance of integrating individual factors such as individual representations and skills into continuing education processes to enhance the successful transfer of acquired knowledge to the context of continuing professional training in Public Administration. The representations that training agents have of themselves, as well as the perceived usefulness of the latter, condition the motivation to transfer. In addition, the development of cognitive skills constitutes a solid foundation for the practical application of acquired knowledge.

However, this article has limitations that allow us to consider avenues for future research. On a theoretical level, this study cannot provide exhaustive answers to the question raised. The data collected are based solely on the perception of a limited number of participants. The exploration of the variables could have been more in-depth through a cross-analysis. It is therefore desirable, in our opinion, to establish links between them in order to better understand the factors that maximize the transfer of training skills. However, the relationship between representation, cognitive skills and transfer remains complex and requires in-depth exploration through longitudinal research in the specific context of Public Administration. The establishment of monitoring indicators could allow us to better measure these effects.

Ultimately, it should be noted that this research has been beneficial. As responsible for the continuing training of agents, it has enabled:

- to concretely target two individual factors involved in the transfer of acquired skills by ENA agents;
- to rethink the design, implementation and monitoring of training systems at the ENA in order to maximize the transfer of acquired knowledge;
- to collect data that will enable the construction of a draft assessment of the transfer of acquired knowledge in the Continuing Education activities of the ENA.

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