

TRAINING IN THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE OF NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF TRAINING CENTERS AND AFFILIATES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: The Federal Civil Service of Nigeria plays a pivotal role in implementing government policies and delivering public services. To maintain efficiency and adaptability, continuous training and development of civil servants are essential. This paper examines the evolution, current state, and challenges of training within Nigeria's federal civil service, focusing on key training centers and their affiliates. Institutions such as the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), Federal Training Centres (FTCs), and the Federal Civil Service Online Academy have been instrumental in capacity building. Despite their contributions, these institutions face challenges including outdated curricula, inadequate funding, and limited technological integration. Through qualitative analysis of existing literature and institutional reports, this study identifies gaps in the current training framework and offers recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of civil service training programs. Emphasizing the need for curriculum modernization, increased investment, and adoption of digital learning platforms, the paper advocates for a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the federal civil service's capacity to meet contemporary governance challenges.

Keywords: Training Centre, Federal Civil service, Affiliate.

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Introduction

The effectiveness of any government largely depends on the competence and efficiency of its civil service. In Nigeria, the federal civil service is the backbone of policy implementation and public service delivery. Recognizing the importance of a well-trained workforce, various training institutions have been established to enhance the skills and knowledge of civil servants. These include the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), Federal Training Centres (FTCs), and the recently launched Federal Civil Service Online Academy. These institutions aim to provide continuous professional development to ensure that civil servants can effectively respond to evolving administrative and governance demands. However, despite the existence of these training centers, the Nigerian federal civil service continues to grapple with challenges such as inefficiency, corruption, and inadequate service delivery. Studies have highlighted issues like outdated training curricula, insufficient funding, and lack of technological integration as significant impediments to effective training (Ewoh, 2014; Okereka & Okolie, 2022).

Civil service training in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial era, during which basic orientation and clerical training were provided to indigenous staff. However, with the expansion of governmental functions and the increasing complexity of public administration post-independence, there was a growing need for structured and specialized training programs (Olaopa, 2020). Consequently, several institutions, such as the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), and the Centre for Management Development (CMD), were established to meet these training demands. These centers have continued to play a central role in capacity building,

fostering ethical values, and promoting a culture of professionalism within the civil service.

A critical review of existing training centers and their affiliates reveals variations in institutional capacity, infrastructure, and program delivery. For instance, ASCON, established in 1973, has been instrumental in executive-level training, yet it has suffered from reduced budgetary support and limited digital integration (Ikeanyibe, 2016). Similarly, while PSIN was envisioned as a comprehensive training hub for public servants, it has struggled with underutilization and bureaucratic bottlenecks (Pillah, 2023). Meanwhile, private and international affiliates, such as university-based training units and donor-supported initiatives, have emerged to complement government efforts, but questions about quality control and sustainability persist.

The importance of continuous and effective training in the Nigerian civil service cannot be overstated, particularly in light of the country's aspirations for institutional reform, transparency, and sustainable development. Recent reforms, such as the introduction of the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS), underscore the need for training programs that equip civil servants with digital literacy and change management competencies (Okotoni, 2018). Furthermore, as the federal government increasingly embraces a knowledge-driven economy, the strategic development of human capital through structured and responsive training systems becomes even more critical.

The effectiveness of any civil service is largely dependent on the continuous development of its human capital. In Nigeria, the training of federal civil servants is central to administrative efficiency, yet often under-emphasized. Institutions such as the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), and various sector-specific

training centers play pivotal roles. According to Pillah (2023), despite structural reforms, training remains underfunded and poorly coordinated, leading to a mismatch between training and actual job requirements.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data sources to analyze the training landscape of Nigeria's federal civil service. Data were collected from academic journals, institutional reports, official government publications, and reputable online databases such as ResearchGate. Key sources include works by Ewoh (2014), Okereka & Okolie (2022), and Pillah (2023), which provide in-depth analyses of public administration education and training in Nigeria. Additionally, information from official websites of training institutions such as ASCON, PSIN, and the Federal Civil Service Online Academy was reviewed to gain insights into their programs, objectives, and challenges. The collected data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and opportunities within the training framework of the federal civil service.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the establishment of various training institutions aimed at enhancing the capacity of Nigeria's federal civil service, significant challenges persist. One major issue is the outdated nature of training curricula, which often fail to address contemporary administrative challenges and technological advancements (Ewoh, 2014). This disconnect results in a workforce that is ill-equipped to handle modern governance demands.

Funding constraints also pose a significant challenge. Many training institutions suffer from inadequate financial resources, limiting their ability to update training materials, invest in infrastructure, and attract qualified trainers (Okereka & Okolie, 2022). This financial shortfall hampers the delivery of effective training programs and undermines the overall objective of capacity building.

Furthermore, there is a lack of integration of modern technology in training programs. While initiatives like the Federal Civil Service Online Academy represent steps toward digital learning, many institutions still rely heavily on traditional, in-person training methods. This limits accessibility, especially for civil servants in remote areas, and fails to leverage the benefits of e-learning platforms.

These challenges collectively contribute to a federal civil service that struggles with inefficiency, low productivity, and poor service delivery. Addressing these issues is crucial for building a competent and responsive civil service capable of meeting Nigeria's development goals.

Issues for Determination

- **Curriculum Relevance:** How can training curricula be updated to reflect current administrative challenges and technological advancements?
- **Funding Mechanisms:** What sustainable funding models can be adopted to ensure adequate resources for training institutions?
- **Technological Integration:** How can training programs effectively incorporate digital tools to enhance learning and accessibility?

- **Trainer Competency:** What measures can be implemented to ensure that trainers possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective training?
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** What systems can be established to assess the impact of training programs on civil service performance?

Curriculum Relevance: Updating Training Curricula for Modern Administrative Challenges

In today's rapidly evolving work environment, training curricula must be regularly updated to reflect current administrative challenges and technological advancements (Keengwe, 2018). Outdated curricula can lead to skill gaps, decreased productivity, and reduced competitiveness. Updating training curricula is essential to ensure that learners acquire relevant skills and knowledge. To update training curricula, stakeholders should conduct thorough needs assessments and industry analysis (Bates, 2019). This involves identifying current and emerging trends, challenges, and technologies in the field. Stakeholders can gather insights through surveys, focus groups, and expert consultations.

Curriculum updates should prioritize critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability (Kop & Hill, 2017). Learners should be equipped with skills to navigate complex administrative challenges and leverage technology effectively. Curriculum designers can incorporate case studies, simulations, and project-based learning to foster practical skills. Technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital communication, require training curricula to be adaptive and forward-thinking (Kop & Hill, 2017). Curriculum designers should integrate emerging technologies and trends, ensuring learners are familiar with industry-standard tools and software. Effective curriculum updates involve stakeholder engagement and feedback (Bates, 2019). Industry experts, educators, and learners should collaborate to ensure curricula meet industry needs and learner expectations. This can be achieved through regular reviews, feedback sessions, and advisory boards.

Funding Mechanisms: Sustainable Models for Training Institutions

Training institutions require sustainable funding models to ensure adequate resources for effective operations and delivery of high-quality training programs (Zideman, 2018). With the increasing demand for skilled workers and the need for continuous upskilling, funding for training institutions has become a critical issue. Various funding mechanisms can be adopted to ensure sustainable funding for training institutions. One potential funding model is government funding and subsidies. Governments can provide financial support to training institutions through grants, subsidies, or tax incentives (Lauglo, 2017). This funding model can help ensure that training institutions have a stable source of funding, enabling them to plan and deliver programs effectively.

Another funding model is public-private partnerships. Private sector organizations can partner with training institutions to provide funding, expertise, and resources (Patrinos, 2019). This funding model can help leverage resources and expertise, enabling training institutions to deliver high-quality programs that meet industry needs. Training institutions can also explore income-generating activities, such as offering consultancy services, conducting research, or providing customized training programs (Johanson, 2018). This funding model can help diversify revenue

streams, reducing dependence on government funding or private sector support.

In addition, training institutions can adopt cost-sharing models, where learners or employers contribute to the cost of training (Ziderman, 2018). This funding model can help ensure that training programs are demand-driven and relevant to industry needs. Effective funding models for training institutions should prioritize sustainability, flexibility, and accountability (Lauglo, 2017). Funding mechanisms should be designed to ensure that training institutions have adequate resources to deliver high-quality programs, while also promoting efficiency and effectiveness.

Technological Integration: Enhancing Learning and Accessibility in Training Programs

Technological integration is crucial for enhancing learning and accessibility in training programs (Keengwe, 2018). Digital tools can facilitate personalized learning, increase flexibility, and expand reach. Effective integration requires careful planning, implementation, and evaluation.

According to Bates (2019), technological integration involves:

- Selecting appropriate digital tools and platforms
- Designing engaging and interactive learning experiences
- Providing technical support and training
- Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity

Technological integration can also improve accessibility by:

- Enabling remote learning and flexibility
- Providing accessibility features for learners with disabilities
- Increasing affordability and reducing costs

By effectively incorporating digital tools, training programs can enhance learning, accessibility, and flexibility, ultimately improving learner outcomes and satisfaction.

Trainer Competency: Ensuring Effective Training Delivery

Trainer competency is crucial for delivering effective training programs (Knowles, 2015). Trainers must possess the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate learning, engage learners, and achieve training objectives. To ensure trainer competency, several measures can be implemented. Firstly, comprehensive training programs for trainers can be developed, focusing on adult learning principles, instructional design, and facilitation skills (Knowles, 2015). These programs can include workshops, mentorship, and coaching to enhance trainers' skills and knowledge. Secondly, certification programs can be established to recognize trainers' expertise and competence (International Society for Performance Improvement, 2019). These programs can set standards for trainer competency, ensuring that trainers meet specific criteria and demonstrate expertise. Thirdly, ongoing professional development opportunities can be provided to trainers, enabling them to stay updated on industry trends, best practices, and new technologies (Merriam, 2017). This can include attending conferences, workshops, and webinars, as well as participating in online forums and communities. Fourthly, trainer evaluation and feedback mechanisms can be implemented to assess trainers' performance and identify areas for improvement (Kirkpatrick, 2019). This can include learner evaluations, peer reviews, and self-assessments.

Finally, organizations can establish clear competency frameworks and standards for trainers, outlining the necessary skills, knowledge, and behaviors required for effective training

delivery (International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction, 2018). These frameworks can guide trainer development and evaluation. By implementing these measures, organizations can ensure that trainers possess the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective training programs, ultimately enhancing learner outcomes and organizational performance.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Assessing the Impact of Training Programs

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are essential for assessing the impact of training programs on civil service performance (Kirkpatrick, 2019). Effective M&E systems enable organizations to determine whether training programs are achieving their intended objectives, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions about future training investments.

To establish a robust M&E system, organizations can use the Kirkpatrick model, which includes four levels of evaluation:

- Reaction: assessing learners' satisfaction with the training program
- Learning: assessing learners' knowledge and skills acquisition
- Behavior: assessing changes in learners' behavior and application of skills on the job
- Results: assessing the impact of training on organizational performance and outcomes (Kirkpatrick, 2019)

Other M&E frameworks and tools can also be used, such as:

- Logic models: illustrating the causal links between training inputs, activities, and outcomes (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004)
- Performance indicators: measuring specific aspects of civil service performance, such as productivity, quality, or customer satisfaction (OECD, 2019)
- Surveys and feedback mechanisms: gathering data from learners, supervisors, and other stakeholders (Phillips, 2017)

History of Some Nigeria Federal Civil Service Training Center Institutions

Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON)

The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) was established in 1973 by the Federal Government of Nigeria through Decree No. 39, now known as ASCON Act Cap 6, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990. Located in Topo-Badagry, Lagos State, ASCON was modeled after similar institutions in the United Kingdom and India. The College was created in response to the identified need for a professional and dynamic training institution that could help reform and strengthen administrative practices across Nigeria. ASCON's mandate centers around training, research, consultancy, and management education for personnel in the public and private sectors. Its primary goal is to build the capacity of civil servants at all levels of government, especially at the federal level, by equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective service delivery. Over the decades, ASCON has evolved into a cornerstone of public service transformation in Nigeria. The College offers a wide range of programs, including senior executive courses, intermediate and junior courses, workshops, and seminars. It also collaborates with international

institutions to provide cross-border learning experiences and best practices in public administration.

ASCON's significance extends beyond training to include research and policy consultancy services. It has carried out major institutional reviews, organizational restructuring, and capacity-building projects for numerous government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). In the 1980s and 1990s, ASCON played a prominent role in shaping Nigeria's civil service reforms by advising on the implementation of recommendations from the Udoji and Ayida panels. Despite challenges such as funding shortages, infrastructural decay, and outdated curricula in some areas, ASCON has remained a vital institution in Nigeria's administrative landscape. Its ability to adapt to new administrative trends, including digital governance and e-government training, positions it as a critical player in public service renewal.

Recently, ASCON has embraced reforms aimed at revitalizing its operations. These include digitalizing course delivery, updating training materials, and exploring partnerships with development agencies. Its efforts align with broader civil service reforms spearheaded by the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation. ASCON's alumni network spans all sectors of the Nigerian economy, with many graduates occupying top positions in government, business, and academia. As Nigeria continues to tackle governance and capacity issues in the civil service, ASCON's role as a premier training institution remains more important than ever.

Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN)

The Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) was established in 2004 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a premier institution for the continuous learning and development of civil servants. It emerged from the realization that the effectiveness of the public service depends heavily on the competence and professionalism of its workforce. The vision was to have a state-of-the-art training hub dedicated to building the capacity of public servants to meet the dynamic demands of governance in a globalized environment. Located in Abuja, PSIN was designed to be more than just a training center. It was conceived as a comprehensive learning and research institution for leadership development, innovation, and public sector transformation. The Institute operates under the supervision of the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) and aligns its programs with federal government reform initiatives.

PSIN's core mandates include providing leadership training, fostering innovation, conducting research in governance and public administration, and serving as a think tank for the civil service. The Institute offers a variety of programs ranging from executive leadership development, ICT proficiency, project management, public policy formulation, and strategic planning. These are targeted at officers across various levels in the public sector, including permanent secretaries, directors, and administrative officers. A major milestone in PSIN's development came in 2013 with the establishment of the e-Learning Department aimed at mainstreaming information and communication technology into civil service training. This led to further collaboration with institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), and other international donors to modernize curriculum and training methods. One of the Institute's most significant achievements in recent years is the development of the Federal Civil Service Online Academy in collaboration with the OHCSF. This initiative has further expanded PSIN's reach by

allowing civil servants across Nigeria to access training remotely, a necessity that became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite its potential, PSIN has faced challenges similar to those encountered by other public institutions in Nigeria, including irregular funding, understaffing, and inadequate infrastructure. However, proactive leadership at the Institute has helped in navigating these obstacles through strategic partnerships, especially with development partners and the private sector. PSIN continues to adapt and evolve by embracing technological advancements and expanding its curriculum to cover new areas such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, cybersecurity, and climate change policy. Its holistic approach to training reflects the Federal Government's vision of a modern, efficient, and ethical civil service.

Federal Training Centres (FTCs)

The Federal Training Centres (FTCs) are among the earliest formal training institutions established to support the Nigerian civil service. Their origin dates back to the colonial and immediate post-independence period, when the need for a competent indigenous administrative workforce became apparent. Initially founded as Regional Staff Development Centres, these institutions were reorganized and rebranded in the early 1970s as part of the Federal Government's effort to centralize and improve civil service training. FTCs were strategically established in major urban centers across Nigeria, including Lagos, Enugu, Kaduna, Ilorin, Bauchi, and Calabar, with a mandate to train junior and middle-level personnel for effective service delivery. These centers were intended to serve not only federal government ministries and agencies but also state and local government officials.

The primary mission of the Federal Training Centres has been to provide vocational and administrative training for civil servants. Their programs have traditionally focused on areas such as office procedures, public administration, accounting, clerical skills, records management, and personnel management. Over time, the curriculum expanded to include computer literacy, ICT training, and customer service, reflecting the modernization of government operations. In the early decades of their existence, FTCs played a critical role in shaping the administrative capacity of Nigeria's burgeoning civil service. They were the training grounds for thousands of clerical officers, executive officers, and secretarial staff who formed the backbone of public administration during the 1970s through the 1990s. Many of the graduates of these centers went on to hold important roles in government ministries and agencies.

Despite their initial success, the FTCs began to face numerous challenges starting in the 1990s. These included neglect by successive administrations, decaying infrastructure, obsolete training materials, and poor funding. As attention shifted toward higher-level executive training offered by institutions like ASCON and PSIN, the FTCs lost some of their strategic relevance and visibility. Several efforts have been made in recent years to revitalize the FTCs, recognizing their unique role in building grassroots administrative capacity. Reforms under the Public Service Reform Agenda and the 2010–2020 Transformation Agenda sought to resuscitate these centers by updating their curricula, improving facilities, and introducing e-learning components. The Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) continues to oversee the operations of the FTCs, emphasizing their relevance to the federal government's vision of a performance-oriented public service. In the

contemporary setting, FTCs are increasingly being repositioned to deliver short-term and specialized refresher courses, especially for junior and middle-level workers who form the majority of the civil service workforce.

Federal Civil Service Online Academy (FCSOA)

The Federal Civil Service Online Academy (FCSOA) represents a major digital leap in the training and development framework of Nigeria's civil service. Launched officially in December 2022 under the leadership of the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), the Academy was conceived as a response to the urgent need for scalable, accessible, and technology-driven capacity-building solutions for public servants across Nigeria. The idea of a virtual training platform was first introduced in the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan (FCSSIP 2020 and later 2021–2025). The Online Academy aligns with global trends in e-learning and reflects the growing consensus that traditional classroom-based training models are insufficient to meet the demands of a fast-evolving public sector. The core objective of the FCSOA is to democratize access to training for all cadres of civil servants, regardless of their geographic location. Prior to its establishment, many civil servants, especially those stationed in remote areas, faced limited access to continuous professional development due to logistical constraints, travel costs, and the limited capacity of physical training centers like ASCON and PSIN.

The FCSOA provides an integrated digital learning environment offering courses in leadership, ethics, performance management, data analysis, policy formulation, digital literacy, and public service values. It is built on a cloud-based Learning Management System (LMS), allowing users to register, learn, complete assignments, and receive certifications online. Importantly, it offers self-paced modules that enable flexibility in learning while ensuring consistency in training delivery across MDAs. The development of the Academy was driven by collaboration between the OHCSF, the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), and several development partners, including the World Bank and European Union. PSIN played a significant role in the curriculum design and technical implementation of the platform. The platform was especially impactful during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the need for remote learning infrastructure. The FCSOA served as a key tool for continuing training efforts during lockdown periods, proving the feasibility and effectiveness of digital learning within the public service.

Since its inception, the Academy has trained thousands of civil servants, and uptake continues to grow as MDAs adopt the platform into their annual training plans. The system allows HR departments within ministries to monitor staff progress, track learning outcomes, and generate reports for performance evaluation purposes. This is aligned with the Federal Government's larger goal of building a performance-oriented and digitally literate civil service. While the FCSOA has made significant progress, it still faces challenges such as internet connectivity issues, digital literacy gaps among older staff, and limited access to devices. However, the OHCSF has committed to ongoing investments in IT infrastructure and digital sensitization to improve platform usage.

Recommendations

- **Curriculum Modernization:** Regularly review and update training curricula to align with contemporary

governance challenges, incorporating modules on digital literacy, ethics, and public sector innovation.

- **Enhanced Funding:** Establish dedicated funding streams for training institutions, possibly through public-private partnerships, to ensure consistent financial support.
- **Digital Learning Platforms:** Expand the use of e-learning platforms like the Federal Civil Service Online Academy to increase accessibility and flexibility in training delivery.
- **Trainer Development:** Implement continuous professional development programs for trainers to enhance their teaching skills and subject matter expertise.
- **Impact Assessment:** Develop robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure the effectiveness of training programs and inform continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The training of civil servants is a critical component in building an efficient and responsive federal civil service in Nigeria. While institutions like ASCON, PSIN, FTCs, and the Federal Civil Service Online Academy have made significant contributions, challenges such as outdated curricula, inadequate funding, and limited technological integration hinder their effectiveness. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive strategy that includes curriculum modernization, sustainable funding, adoption of digital learning tools, and continuous evaluation of training outcomes. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can strengthen its federal civil service, ensuring it is well-equipped to meet the demands of modern governance and contribute effectively to national development.

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