



## Navigating the Efficacy Gap: An Exploration of Training Programs and Service Delivery Challenges in Nigeria's Public Service

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**Abstract.** Amidst persistent service delivery challenges in Nigeria's Public Service, reformative measures in the latter part of the 20th century, notably the adoption of training programs, were initiated to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. However, the anticipated improvements in service delivery remained elusive. This study delved into the nexus between Human Capital Development (HCD) interventions and their tangible impacts on service delivery, spanning the period from 2003 to 2014 within Nigeria's Public Service. This qualitative study sought to explore the complex dynamics between Training programmes and their impact on service delivery in the Nigerian Public Service from 2003 to 2014. Drawing on interviews and document analysis, the study engaged with staff from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) who had undergone training between 2003 and 2014. Findings suggested that while ASCON's training programmes contributed positively to Human Capital Development, they had not yielded the desired level of impact on service delivery. Multiple factors, such as inadequate infrastructure and role duplication among Management Development Institutes (MDIs) appeared to limit the effectiveness of these programmes. Considering these findings, the study recommends that the Nigerian government should institute policies to make training with ASCON mandatory. Furthermore, a comprehensive Training Needs Assessment should precede any training initiatives to tailor the curriculum more closely to real-world needs. Finally, a substantial upgrade of ASCON's existing infrastructure is imperative for the betterment of future training outcomes.

**Keywords:** Service delivery, Public Service, ASCON, HCD, Training

### 1. Introduction

Human capital development is indisputably a catalyst for national development and a significant factor in the economic growth of any nation. The increasing importance of human capital in driving modern knowledge-based economies places an impetus on nations to invest in the development of their human resources continuously. As asserted by Schultz (1961), human capital includes the skills, knowledge, and abilities that are embedded in people, which can be enhanced through education and training. Such an investment, in turn, directly contributes to an individual's productivity and a nation's economic growth (Becker, 1993). While human capital has universally been acknowledged as a catalyst for national development, there is increasing recognition of its significance within the sphere of public service, particularly in emerging economies like Nigeria.

Nigeria's public service sector, as the operational arm of the government, shoulders the significant responsibility of policy execution, thus forming the bedrock of the nation's pursuits towards sustainable development (Anenene, & Oyewole, 2020). This strategic position underscores the necessity for continuous human capital development, as the sector's effectiveness rests heavily upon the capacity of its human resources. Indeed, a robust and well-trained workforce can significantly amplify service delivery efficiency and overall productivity (Babalola & Adebisi, 2016).

As common with other less developed countries with colonial heritage like Nigeria, the departure of the colonialists created a vacuum which required educated personnel to take over the functions of government. Education became crucial in the development of these countries. Those who had education at that time, no matter how minimal gained access to clerical, administrative and teaching jobs.

They became the "creme de la creme" of the society (Zibima, et al., 2023). However, it did not take a long time before it became apparent that performance on a job schedule is more than acquisition of certificates, rather training is of great importance in acquiring required skills to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Fettes, et al., 2020).

Despite substantial investments in human capital development programs, Nigeria's public service continues to grapple with a reputation for inefficiency and ineffectiveness. This contradiction raises important questions, given the significant financial allocations towards training initiatives like those conducted by the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON). Many public servants across the nation have participated in these programs, yet a persistent perception of the public service as a hub of inefficiency remains. ( Ojogiwa, 2021)

Historical attempts to ameliorate these inefficiencies—such as the Dotun Philips reforms in 1988, the Allison Ayida reforms in 1995, and the Obasanjo Civil Service Renewal Program in 2000—appear to have had limited impact ( Oyelude & Fatile, 2018). This study, therefore, aims to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics that mediate between ASCON's human capital development efforts and the actualized efficiency in Nigeria's public service delivery. By engaging in a qualitative exploration, we seek to understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges that may shed light on this persistent disconnect between investment in human capital and expected outcomes in service delivery. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To explore the perceptions of public service employees regarding the impact of training on their competence, courtesy, and credibility in service delivery.
- To identify and understand the challenges that stakeholders view as barriers to the effective delivery of ASCON's human capital development programmes.

## 2. Conceptual Review

### 2.1 Public Service

The public service is an indispensable instrument through which the government implements its policies and programmes. The former head of the Nigerian civil service, Stephen Oronsaye, describes it as the bridge between the government and the governed, stressing that an inefficient public service, therefore, constitutes a barrier between the

government and the people (Oyedele, 2015). At its core, the Civil Service, comprising employees in ministries and certain extra-ministerial departments, is responsible for policy formulation and execution at the national and state levels. Supplementing this are government-backed agencies or parastatals designed for specific functions. The nation's security is ensured by the Armed Forces and the Police, while the Judiciary, operating independently, undertakes law interpretation and justice delivery. Additionally, the public service envelope encompasses government-funded educational and health institutions, grassroots-focused local government service, and personnel supporting legislative activities (Olaopa, 2008).

### 3. Historical Background of Nigeria's Public Service

The origin of the Nigerian civil service can be traced to the beginning of the twentieth century with the introduction of British rule in Nigeria. The Nigerian public/civil service was the creation of British colonial rule to assist the colonial administration in its exploitation of the resources of the country (Koehn, 2019). The colonial masters introduced a dual system of administration: direct rule in the South and indirect rule in the North. A more formal civil service emerged only in 1914 when the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated to form the present geographical space called Nigeria. This, however, did not immediately lead to a unified civil service until 1945 (Ogunrotifa, 2012). Nigeria became a federation through the instrumentality of the 1954 Constitution, made up of a Federal Government at the centre and three regional governments. Correspondingly, this led to the emergence of the federal civil service at the centre and the regional civil services for each of the regions. As expected, the Public Service Commission was set up to coordinate each of the services (Adewunmi, 2012). Overtime, there has been several reforms in the public service; civil service reform refers to the purposeful modification of governmental human resource management system with the goal of maximizing important administrative values (Anazodo, 2009). According to World Bank (2002), there is a strong consensus in the international development community on the need for Civil Service reform in developing nations. Before and after independence, the Nigerian government carried out series of reforms and before the efforts of the Obasanjo administration, there has been 14 previous major attempts through commissions, committees, and teams, beginning with Hunt's Commission of 1934, at addressing the state of the service,

incorporating both conditions of service, staff performance and service delivery (Adegoroye, 2006). A major part of most of these reforms was to address the challenge of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the Public service with training and re-training of her human resources

#### 4. Training Programs in Public Services

Globally, training programs in public services have been recognized as vital for enhancing employee skills and service quality. Countries like Singapore and the United Kingdom have invested significantly in continuous learning and development initiatives for their public service employees (Van Der Wal, & Demircioglu, 2020). Training methods vary but often include a combination of classroom learning, online courses, and experiential learning. Research has shown that well-implemented training programs can significantly improve service delivery and employee job satisfaction (Obinna, 2022). However, the impact of such programs is heavily dependent on the quality and relevance of the training content, as well as the effectiveness of the delivery methods.

The importance of an efficient public service is understated by the fact that policies and programmes of government may not be realized without an efficient public administration. Put differently, the best policies and laws of government may remain as mere paper declaration of intent if the administrative machinery does not function efficiently. Service delivery in Nigeria has been variously described as “chaotic” “epileptic” “unsatisfactory” “shoddy”, “deplorable”, “sensitive”, “inflexible”, “non-cost effective” etcetera and has been characterized by such negative attitudes and traits as insensitivity towards customers and their complaints, lateness; absenteeism, needless delay and red-tapism (Oyedele, 2015; Ndema, 2022). An efficient public administration avoids waste, correct errors; limits the consequences of incompetence, while executing laws and public policies (Ahmed, 2012). The exit of the Colonialists created a void, hence emphasis was laid more on getting education which was focused on providing knowledge to the beneficiaries. This led to the availability of a much improved number of highly educated persons in the public service but who did not possess the necessary skills to excel in their jobs. Thus, the phenomenal increase with educated person, came without the corresponding high performance as reflected in various Civil service reforms. On the strength of these reforms the Public service have made remarkable efforts towards the training and retraining of public servants (Aluko & Aluko, 2012).

Basically, according to Olaopa (2012) public service training institutions can be said to have four basic tasks, the first is to impart knowledge to public servants by training them for the challenges they have to grapple with in the course of performing their duties, the second role is practical engagement, public service training institutions provide opportunity for public servants to come together and by so doing exchange ideas by which they can influence one another to adopt better practices. In the course of this, trainers are expected to serve as critics and stimulants who can further introduce ideas, new ways of thinking and new ways of working, the third task of public service training institution is that of analysis and research. Training institutions exist to provide rigorous analysis of ideas and actions in order to come out with the best possible solutions and the fourth duty of the public service training institutions is that they serve as the bridge between, and interpreter of theory and practice (Clarke, 1998; Olaopa, 2012; Berman, et al., 2021).

#### 5. Empirical Review

Human capital development is an asset that enhances organizational and national value. The concept encompasses not just education and skill acquisition but also retraining and alignment with an organization's shared vision. The effectiveness of human capital development policies hinges on how well they're tailored to meet the specific needs and challenges of an evolving economic landscape.

Ibok & Ibanga, (2014), carried out an empirical research that examined the impact of human capital development and economic empowerment in the socioeconomic development in Akwa Ibom State. The study revealed that from 1999 to 2012, the government through her human capital development efforts made the public sector more vibrant, efficient and result-oriented. The study revealed the immense contribution of training to efficiency and effectiveness even in the public service. It is revealed in literature that scholars frequently make the mistake of measuring efficiency and effectiveness in the public service as it is done in the private sector, which is mostly on profitability basis. The private sector seeks the economic effectiveness on a short-term basis, while most public sector investments generate results over a longer period of time, this salient factor is rarely considered in analysis Mihaiu, Opreana & Cristescu, (2010). These factors were put into consideration in the evaluation of the training impact of ASCON.

An empirical study by Agboola (2016) study analysed the role of Service Compact (SERVICOM) on service delivery in selected federal parastatals in Southwestern Nigeria and examined the strategies adopted by SERVICOM in realising its objectives. It also examined the extent of implementation of SERVICOM policy in the study area and analysed the challenges facing SERVICOM in the discharge of its functions in the selected parastatals in Southwestern Nigeria. These were with a view to providing information on the effect of SERVICOM as one of the variants of New Public Management (NPM) on service delivery of federal parastatals in Southwestern Nigeria. Primary data used for analysis included questionnaire and interviews while secondary data also included journals and extracts from the internet sources on service compact and service delivery. The results showed that SERVICOM played significant roles in service delivery and impacted positively on citizens in Southwestern Nigeria. The results also revealed that the strategies adopted by SERVICOM in realising its objectives enhanced service delivery in Southwestern Nigeria. Furthermore, the results showed that the extent of implementation of SERVICOM influenced positively service delivery in the Southwestern Nigeria. Finally, the study identified some of the challenges facing SERVICOM in the discharge of its functions which incapacitated SERVICOM, the performance of its functions in Southwestern Nigeria. The study concluded that inadequacy of human and material resources led to poor implementation of service compact policy in Southwestern Nigeria.

The study carried out by Obaje (2015) sought to identify services delivered by local government and to ascertain the impact of the services on the wellbeing of the people. Two sets of questionnaires were designed and administered, one to the inhabitants of the area and the other to the employees of the local government, so as to capture both the views of the inhabitants of the area and the employees of the local government. In addition interviews, focus group discussions, personal observation were utilised in the study. The study revealed that, mismanagement of funds, joint account system, lack of transparency and accountability and restricted revenue sources available to local government and inability to effectively utilize its internal sources of revenue generation had impacted negatively on the provision of public goods and services at the local level. This is evidence in the poor educational facilities, poor healthcare centres, roads and several other problems.

This study by Nwachukwu (2015) examines the opportunities and challenges of utilizing Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a means of public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service. The study adopted the communications theory as its theoretical framework and argued that ICTs present enormous opportunities to enhance public service delivery in the Nigerian Federal civil service. The study revealed that the utilization of ICTs for public service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service presents a sustainable and innovative approach to addressing traditional problems of service delivery in the country. The study also revealed that ICTs initiatives for public service delivery in the federal civil service is hampered by many challenges and problems such as lack of ICTs infrastructure; low ICTs literacy and usage; problem of digital divide; inadequate ICTs funding by the government; Nigeria's epileptic power supply; poor institutional governance structure to drive ICTs, etc. Nevertheless, the study argued strongly and concluded that ICTs remain a veritable instrument of enhancing public service delivery in the federal civil service. ICTs have the great potentials to saving costs while improving quality, response time and access to services; improving the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of public administration; increasing transparency in administration due to ease of access to government information, rules and procedures, resulting in openness and accountability; reducing corruption and increasing popular participation; making governments more competitive and reducing bureaucracy; re-engineering administrative processes and modernising service delivery; and bringing about social and economic development.

Sowunmi, Eleyowo, Salako & Oketokun (2015) recognized training and development as the critical variables in the achievement of optimal service delivery. They added that the investment in human capital is the major way through which the knowledge, skill, and attitudes required for the running of organisations are passed on to the people who make up the organisations in order to achieve their goals. The realisation of this fact has made organisations, especially those interested in attaining and maintaining excellent performance, to pay close attention to training

## 6. Theoretical Framework

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, originally formulated in the context of strategic management, posits that organizations gain and sustain competitive advantage through the deployment of valuable, rare,

and non-substitutable resources. First put forth by scholars like Barney (1991), Wernerfelt (1984), and Grant (1991), and popularized by Penrose (2009). The RBV has been widely applied in business contexts (Utami & Alamanos, 2023). However, its relevance and applicability extend to the public sector, particularly when investigating the link between human capital development and service efficiency. The theory identifies four main attributes of strategic resources: Valuable: Resources that contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Rare: Resources that are not common or widely distributed. Inimitable: Resources that are difficult for competitors to copy or acquire. Non-substitutable: Resources for which there are no equivalent alternatives. (Lubis, 2022).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) offers a robust theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between human capital development and public service efficiency. By classifying human capital as a strategic resource, this theory can elucidate the conditions under which investments in human capital development programs like those offered by ASCON can yield significant improvements in service efficiency. As such, RBV presents a compelling lens for analyzing and understanding human capital development within Nigeria's public service sector.

**7. The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria**

The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) is Nigeria's leading Management Development Institute (MDI) with a regional influence in West Africa. Founded in 1973 by Federal Government Decree No. 39, following the

recommendations of the 1967 Wolle's Commission, ASCON serves as a pivotal institution for human capital development in Nigeria's public and private sectors. Its objectives encompass advanced management training, comparative studies in management techniques, and facilitating scholarly research and dialogue. The college also offers grants, maintains a library, organizes educational events, and publishes research to further these aims.

ASCON has three core functions: Training, Research, and Consultancy. It facilitates experiential learning, supports a functional library, and disseminates knowledge through publications. In the public sector, ASCON is mandated to build human capacity for effective policy development and service delivery, serve as a governmental think tank, and act as a management consultant across all government tiers. Strategically, ASCON's mission is to offer excellent management training and consultancy services for performance improvement across all economic sectors. It aspires to global leadership in management development, guided by core values such as integrity, professionalism, and accountability.

Located in Topo, Badagry, Lagos State, the facility features 22 training rooms, lecture theaters, a library, 292 guest apartments, and recreational areas. Its curriculum addresses Leadership, Management, Project and Financial Management, among other subjects, tailored to meet diverse training needs. It boasts a faculty of experienced public officers and consultants, supplemented by guest lecturers from various sectors. ASCON has trained over 500,000 senior managers in diverse fields such as general management and policy analysis and trains approximately 15,215 public servants annually, according to 2015 data.

**ASCON Staff by Grade Level and Category**

CONRAISS	Faculty Staff	Support Staff	Total
Director General	1		1
13-15	42	10	52
10-12	25	50	75
06-09	68	168	236
02-05	-	26	26
Total	136	254	390

Source: ASCON, 2016

**8. Research Methodology**

This qualitative study aims to probe the intricacies of human capital development and its influence on service delivery within Nigeria's public sector. It situates itself within the framework of "Navigating the Efficacy Gap: An Exploration of Training Programs and Service Delivery Challenges in

Nigeria's Public Service (2003-2014)." The research design builds upon and derives its foundational strength from earlier empirical investigations conducted by the author (Oyelude, 2017; Oyelude, 2023) on ASCON's role in human capital development

### 8.1 Sample Selection

The sample for this study consists of public service employees who have undergone training programs at ASCON, their supervisors, and ASCON staff, and those who make use of the services of the MDA. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of sample units, these are employees of government who have had a minimum of five years of experience in the public sector and should have undergone at least one training program conducted by ASCON.

### 8.2 Data Collection Methods

Structured interviews were conducted in person with the help of research assistants. The interviews focused on capturing the experiences and perspectives of the participants regarding the effectiveness of human capital development programs in improving service delivery. Document Analysis A review of official documents, policy statements, and training documents. Data Analysis Strategy. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and documents were coded and categorized to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to human capital development and service delivery efficiency.

### 9. The perceptions of public service employees regarding the impact of training on their competence, courtesy, and credibility in service delivery

To determine the effect of the training program on competencies, courtesy and credibility of the public servants who went through training from 2003-2014. A five-point Likert Scale that consists of seven items to assess the level of satisfaction derived by the customers from the services rendered to them by the MDAs was utilized in the evaluation. The perception of the customers (customers here refer to the all those who utilize services provided by the government) of the MDAs regarding competence, courtesy and credibility in service delivery since the past 11 years showed that there has been very minimal improvement in the services being rendered in terms of the underlisted variables under consideration as shown in the weak correlation obtained

- time taken to deliver service,
- the manner in which services are delivered,
- the mechanism in meeting discrepancies in requested service.
- The value of the service rendered
- Reduced bureaucracy

Majority of the trainees rated themselves "averagely" improved after training on customer service, but a divergent view was obtained from the survey on customers. Competence, courtesy and credibility in this context refers to the end product assessment. How do the public, the users of the services view the services rendered to them from the aforementioned perspectives? 84 per cent of respondents are of the opinion that services being delivered by the MDAs and in essence the Nigerian public service is not satisfactory, 11 per cent believe that there has been minimal improvement in the last eleven years. It is important to note that the answer to this question stems basically from the viewpoint of the customers of the MDAs, in other words, the public; they believe that majority of the public officers have remained rude, sloppy, do not take criticism respectfully, act without paying premium to time and most importantly renege on the promise of delivering valuable services. This study showed that the inability to improve on the job may not be entirely due to faulty training on the part of ASCON, this is because majority of the trainees believe they learnt enough to improve their customer service skills, however it must be noted that the public sector does not always have a common unifying objective, rather varying objectives exist in the different MDAs which makes implementation of training imbibed difficult to localise in the respective MDAs, this does not however rule out the fact that the basic checks of good service delivery especially as it portrays competence, courtesy and as listed above has not significantly improved in most of the MDAs

It was also observed in the course of this study that citizens/customers do not register their demand for better services appropriately hence making the challenges more complex by limiting the MDAs responsiveness in terms of focusing on filling the gaps identified. As we aim to answer the question on the impact of training on competence, courtesy and credibility, in consonance with literature, the field work made it crystal clear that as much as work ethics, values, attitude and behaviour can be positively influenced through interventions like training, motivation et cetera, people cannot be compelled to change since some of those values are intrinsic in nature; this is in alignment with the public choice theory, where self- interest is the central tenet. The Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) (2015) asserts that the primary purpose of any government is to improve quality of life of its citizens and to achieve this goal, it stated that government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) were established to provide quality services to the people of Nigeria. Good quality education involves

educating for character, good moral values and civic responsibility. This is what shapes the character of nations (Achimugu, H, Stephen M.R. & Aliyu, A., 2013).

This leads to the conclusion that investment in human capital development through training may not yield the expected result even with an updated curriculum in the area of competence, courtesy and credibility as the case is with ASCON, if the necessary institutional structures that compels officials to conform to certain standards are not in place and in instances where they are in place in principle and not in practice, expected results would always be insignificant

Factors inhibiting the effective delivery of human capital development programmes of ASCON

This is also in consonance with one of the specific objectives of ASCON as an institution which is "to act as management consultant to all tiers of government in order to improve work processes and systems as well as initiate planned change to address turbulence in the socio economic and political environment". This study would have been incomplete without this part of the work. The researcher was amazed to observe that "training" to most public servants is seen as a period of vacation and therefore they want to get to choose where they would enjoy some "perks" rather than a place where their skills would be honed and prepared for the next level. There is also what is called the "welfare approach" which is very common in the public service; this is a situation whereby the public servants views training as a form of compensation or time off the regular call of duty, this is in consonance with the public choice theory, that is, as long as the benefits of training to the advancement of a public servant's career is not stated, then training will most certainly not achieve its objectives. Therefore, despite the fact that ASCON was established majorly for the public service to improve the delivery of services to the citizens, there has been a gradual decline in subscription to ASCON's training programmes by MDAs. This has been a source of concern for ASCON as an institution since for about a decade and in the last four years where subscription has nosedived by about 83 percent. Seventy percent of respondents (trainees interviewed) stated clearly that they would rather go to places like LBS (Lagos Business School), overseas, and even private consultants, not necessarily because they would get better or relevant training but because they get some added incentives. ASCON as a Management Development Institute (MDI) makes an effort to ensure that all staff is given the opportunity to develop capabilities and competencies, but the funds

made available by the Federal government are grossly inadequate, thereby making them lose many training and development opportunities, especially regional and international programmes. Another major challenge common among respondents are the instances when they are transferred to other departments soon after a training; this implies that training here will not achieve its purpose.

In recent times, ASCON has been able to increase the number of its training rooms, but they are still not adequate and definitely not ideal for an Institution that wants to make a massive difference in the service delivery of the nation. The classrooms are also the typical "traditional classroom," which makes it inappropriate for participatory adult learning methods.

The general lack of good infrastructures is a major challenge to ASCON, power supply to ASCON is extremely poor making the college rely on generators for almost 24 hours daily. Also, the deplorable state of the Lagos Badagry Expressway has posed a serious challenge to ASCON. Most respondents describe their journey to the college as a "nightmare". The researcher made several journeys to the College from different areas of Lagos State, and none can be described as pleasurable, the terrible state of the road is enough to dissuade trainees from the College. The research undertaken by Atanga (2012) revealed a lopsided relationship between human capital development and economic growth in Nigeria; an indication that, other sectors desire equal attention. He concluded that for a good return on investment in training, a total infrastructure build up is needed to improve human capital for economic growth and development.

Another major challenge to ASCON in the task of improving service delivery progressively through training is the conflict of roles among government agencies responsible for human capital development in the country. For instance, CMD (Centre for management development) was reformed and authorized to statutorily play the role of supervisory/regulatory agency to training institutions, they are to "train the trainers"; rather they also get directly involved in training and compete to train MDAs, this makes it difficult for them to focus on their mandate and to ensure that quality and standards are not compromised which is very detrimental to human capital development.

The researcher also observed that PSI, Abuja (Public service Institute) plays the same role as ASCON. This duplicity of roles gives the impression of lack of

focus by the Federal government on the issue of human capital development and in essence good service delivery which was why ASCON was established in the first place. The researcher was at PSI in Abuja which is located on a very expansive piece of land with several massive buildings which is grossly underutilized. Unlike ASCON which is statutorily established through Decree No. 39 of 1973 now ASCON Act, PSI is not established by ACT. The officers of PSI interviewed insist that there are no duplicity of roles as they focus on Senior management from levels 13 and above while ASCON is expected to focus on the levels 8-13. However, in practice, they both perform similar roles which is a major constraint to the activities of ASCON. This is a major challenge as the college appears to be a victim of politics.

The approach to human capital development in the public service has largely been uncoordinated and programmes undertaken by MDAs are not based on identified needs, the implication of this is that performance can hardly resonate enough to be felt by the citizenry. Trainings are sometimes taken up as chore that must be performed grudgingly rather than an investment that should be nurtured. Respondents stated that decisions on what training to attend are mostly made in response to advertised programmes of ASCON and such does not always meet the desired impact.

Training institutions exist to provide rigorous analysis of ideas and actions in order to come out with the best possible solutions (Olaopa, 2012). A major part of ASCON that has not been explored by the MDAs as revealed in this study is the area of research and consultancy, which is a major objective of ASCON. Most of the MDAs have a lackadaisical approach to research and consultancy in problem solving, this is based on lack of confidence in the competence of local consultants/ researchers, subsequently research and consultancy activities have been kept low in ASCON.

In agreement with literature, especially in the developing nations, this study confirms that training is perceived as a "cost" rather than an "investment" in human capital development; this is contrary to the Human capital theory that insists that education/training is an investment in the human capital. Respondents say even when provisions are made for the trainings, it may be diverted or slashed when there is a financial constraint for what is considered "imperative" thereby neglecting training

Evaluation of human capital development efforts are rarely carried out in the public service. Monitoring and evaluation are very important elements of human capital development. It was observed that training/human capital development rules are often ignored. For instance, DTOs (Departmental training officer) are meant to painstakingly ensure that attention is given to details in training matters but hardly is this adhered to. Also guidelines the *Revised Guidelines for Training in the Federal Civil Service*, Lagos (1995) states that –“in implementing training programmes, ministries and departments should, whenever desirable, feel free to utilise the services of reputable private management consultancy firms. Such firms and their principals should be registered members of recognised professional bodies. This study revealed that one of the major reasons why there has been a decline in the subscription to trainings facilitated by ASCON is the engagement of incompetent consultants rather than competent and experienced specialist for various reason such as corruption, nepotism et cetera.”

This study showed that ASCON has not been able to achieve its mandate of improving work processes and systems and initiating planned change to address turbulence in the socio economic and political environment as they are still grappling with everyday issues that ought to have been resolved by the government in the creation of enabling environment through infrastructures, policies etcetera. This shows that for any training institution established by the government to achieve its mandate, the relationship must be symbiotic.

## 10. Conclusion

In conclusion, despite investments in training programs aimed at enhancing competence, courtesy, and credibility among public servants, the perception of service quality remains "below standard" according to customers of the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). This divergence between self-assessment by trainees and customer feedback suggests that even with a robust curriculum, such as that provided by ASCON, the desired outcomes may not be achieved without adequate institutional structures to enforce standards. Additionally, the study identifies several impediments to ASCON's effective delivery of human capital development programs, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, low subscription rates, and political interference. These challenges hinder ASCON's ability to serve as a solution provider for governmental issues, underscoring the need for an enabling environment to

optimize the impact of human capital development on public service delivery.

### 11. Recommendations

While the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) introduced commendable initiatives like the Structured Mandatory Assessment Based Training Programme (SMAT-P) and Leadership Enhancement and Development Programme (LEAD-P) in 2015, these programs have since languished in visibility and impact. We recommend the urgent involvement of ASCON in these initiatives to drive implementation across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). The OHCSF and ASCON can collaboratively develop a more skilled, innovative, and leadership-oriented workforce, better equipped to meet the evolving demands of public service in the 21st century.

**Mandatory Career Development Programs:** In order to foster a culture of continuous learning and career advancement in the public sector, we propose the institution of mandatory career development programs. These should be aligned with ASCON's training modules and be prerequisite for career progression within public service.

To actualize tangible improvements in human capital development, the government should augment budget allocations directed towards this sector. Given that training is an "investment," not a "cost," ASCON requires adequate financial resources for essential infrastructure, such as custom-built training rooms.

Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) should be mandated to comply with established training policies. It is imperative that budget allocations for training are not minimized under the guise of them being less critical to departmental objectives.

To maximize the benefits of training, we recommend a policy preventing the transfer of public servants from their posts within one to two years following training.

**Infrastructure and Utilities:** The immediate repair of the Lagos-Badagry road and stabilization of power supply are critical for leveraging ASCON's full capabilities. Consideration should also be given to alternative energy sources, such as solar power.

To ensure effective human capital development, a governmental review of the roles and responsibilities of Management Development Institutes (MDIs) like ASCON is advised. This would aid in preventing role

conflicts and resource wastage, thereby streamlining efforts in public service development.

A comprehensive reassessment of existing training policies should be expedited to identify obstacles and offer solutions. This exercise will enhance the operational effectiveness of institutes like ASCON.

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