

Bridging the Skills Divide:

Rethinking Capacity Development in Nigeria's Public Service



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THE BIG PICTURE



Nigeria's public service has played a central role in shaping national development — acting as the implementation engine for government policy and public programs. Over the years, several reform efforts have aimed to strengthen this machinery, such as SERVICOM, the National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR), and initiatives by the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN). These efforts reflect a clear recognition by policymakers of the importance of an efficient and responsive public sector.

However, as global governance standards evolve and the demands on public institutions grow more complex, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that public servants are equipped with the right skills, tools, and mindset to keep pace. While progress has been made, there remains room for improvement — especially in closing the knowledge and skills gaps that affect policy implementation, service delivery, and institutional resilience.

This piece explores why now is the time to re-evaluate Nigeria's capacity development strategy, and how drawing on international models could help build a smarter, stronger public service.



CAPACITY

THE CAPACITY CONUNDRUM

Capacity development isn't just about training workshops or more degrees. It's about cultivating responsive, adaptive, and future-ready public institutions.

Nigeria's public service has long been burdened by structural and functional inefficiencies. While reform programs like SERVICOM and the National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR) have attempted to revamp service delivery, many of these efforts fall short due to:

- *Fragmented implementation*
- *Poor alignment with actual skills needs*
- *Lack of sustainability in training outcomes*

As global governance standards evolve driven by technology, transparency, and citizen demands the urgency to equip public servants with the right tools and mindset becomes paramount.



WHAT'S REALLY MISSING?

Research shows that public institutions in Nigeria suffer from critical gaps in areas like:

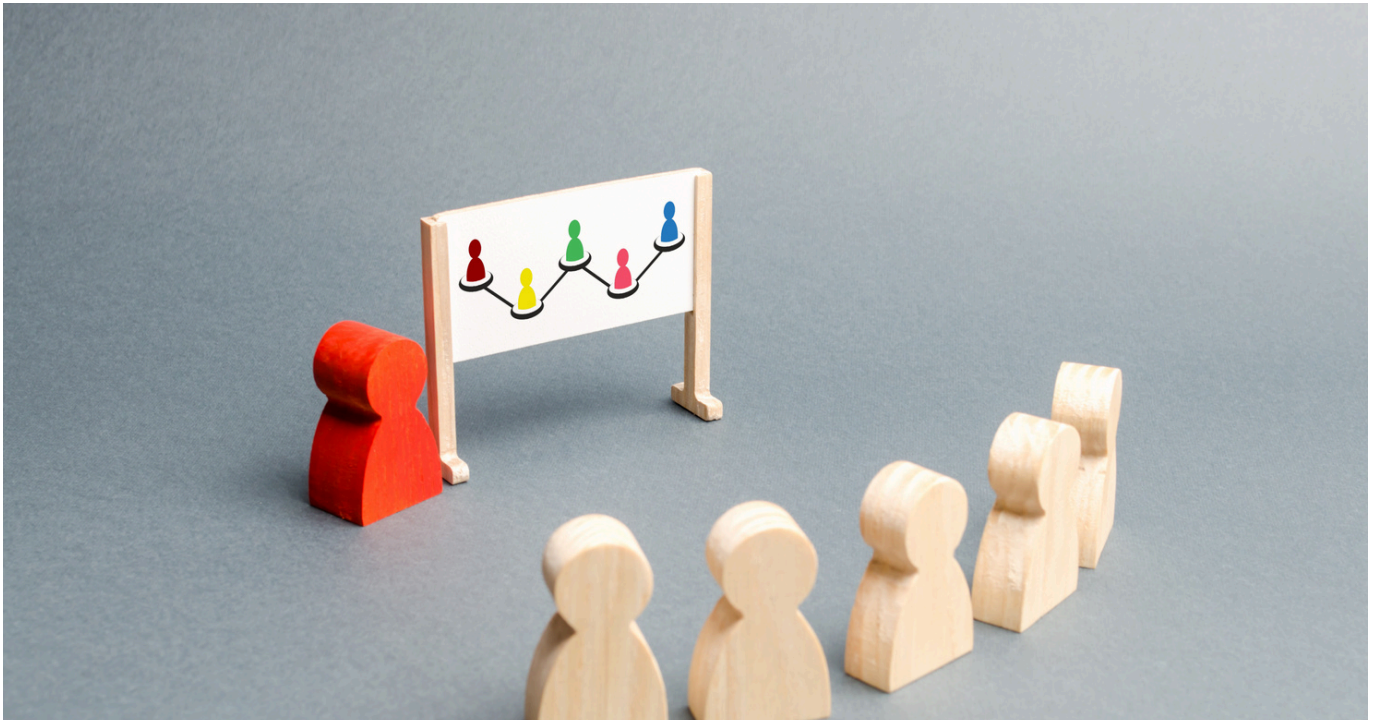
- Policy planning and execution
- Data-driven decision-making
- Performance monitoring and evaluation
- Leadership and strategic thinking

But identifying what's missing is just one side of the coin. The other is understanding how to fix it contextually and sustainably.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: GLOBAL LESSONS, LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Countries like Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa have faced similar governance challenges. Yet, through deliberate capacity-building efforts, they've begun to turn the tide. Here are a few lessons Nigeria can draw from:

- **Kenya's Huduma Centres:** These one-stop government service shops improved citizen satisfaction through workforce retraining and digital integration.
- **Ghana's Civil Service Training Centre Revamp:** Focused on continuous professional development, especially in ICT and change management.
- **South Africa's National School of Government:** Introduced mandatory, career-based training to build competency pipelines within government roles.



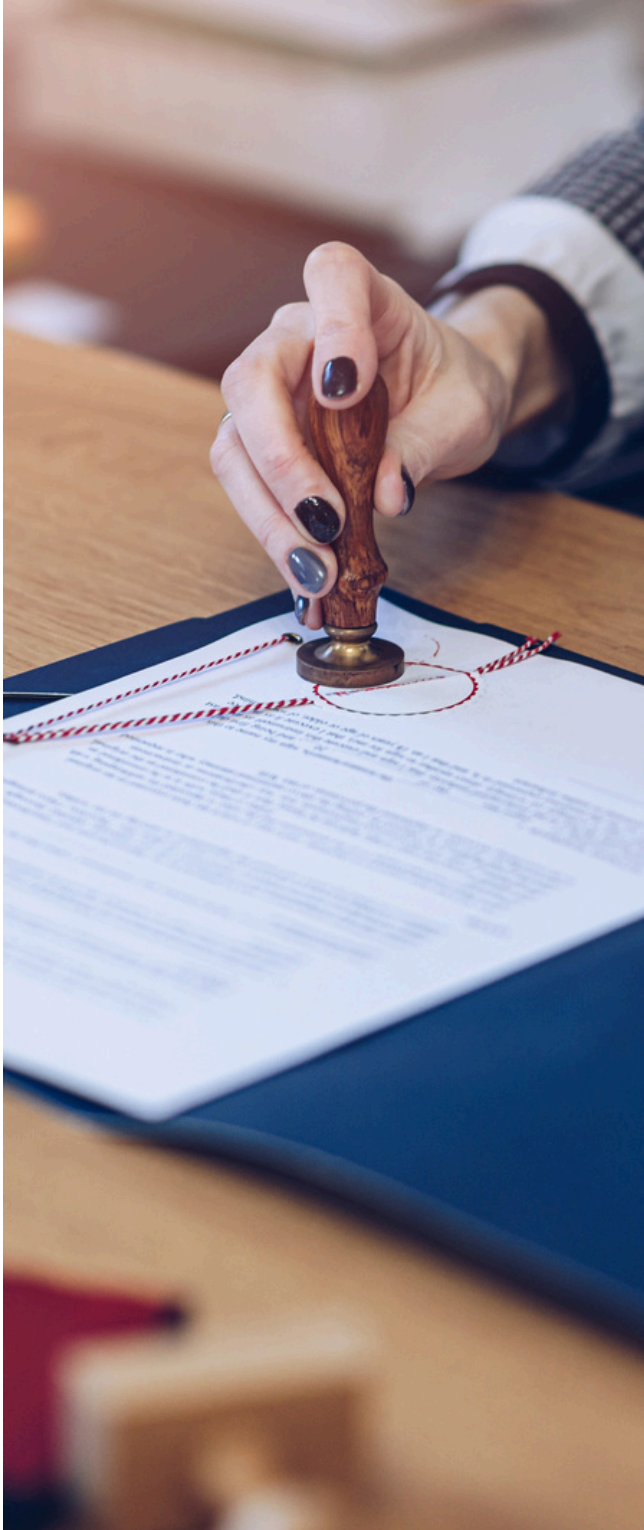
TOWARD A SMARTER, STRONGER PUBLIC SERVICE

So, what can Nigeria do differently?

1. Conduct a comprehensive capacity audit to identify where the real gaps lie not just in knowledge, but in behavior, leadership, and accountability.
2. Tailor international models to fit Nigeria's unique political and institutional landscape.
3. Invest in institutional learning not just training individuals, but strengthening systems for knowledge retention and performance evaluation.

These shifts require strong political will, better data, and coordination across government agencies and development partners.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW



A competent public service isn't just a bureaucratic ideal, it's the bedrock of public trust, the engine behind policy implementation, and a key driver of national development.

As Nigeria faces complex challenges from economic restructuring to digital transformation it cannot afford a workforce that's out of sync with 21st-century governance.

Investing in smart, sustainable capacity development is no longer optional. It's the next frontier in rebuilding a public sector that works for the people.

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