

**ENHANCING PUBLIC PERSONNEL COMPETENCE THROUGH TRAINING: THE  
ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTE OF NIGERIA (PSIN)**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Improving the competence level of public personnel is very imperative for efficient service delivery. Governments world over has as its key objective the rendering of prompt and efficient services to its citizens and at the same time be as accountable and transparent as possible while carrying out these responsibilities. For a government to fulfil its objective to its citizens it must ensure that its workforce is well and able to live up to the demands of fulfilling these objectives. This cannot be achieved without a competent, efficient, effective and result-oriented public service. The public service is constantly evolving with increasing service delivery demands from the citizens. The importance of equipping public servants with the right training to satisfy the citizens' demands can only be met when the public servants have the required competence to meet these challenges. This paper relied on documented secondary data as its source of data collection and adopted the qualitative review analysis as its methodology. The paper also used the Expertise Theory as the framework for explaining how public personnel competence can be enhanced through training and human resource capacity building. Constant training and human capacity building development have been proved to be the best, widely accepted and most efficient solution to the problem of enhancing competence in the Nigerian public service. This is in view of the importance of constant training and human resource capacity building as expressed by scholars and the Nigerian government in various committee reports, recommendations, and White papers on public service reforms. The focus of this paper is to examine the role of Public Service Institute of Nigeria in enhancing public personnel competence in the public service. The findings show poor funding and lack of political will on the part of the government to implement several reform recommendations on public personnel training. The paper therefore, recommends increased funding of the Institute and enhanced political commitment to address the training needs in the public service.*

**KEYWORDS:** personnel competence, public service, training.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of enhancing public personnel competence is very obvious given the growing complexities of the work environment and the demand of citizens from different levels of

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government. Rapid changes are recorded daily in the organization of states, governments and the demand of the citizens on their government to be more objective in providing their needs and at the same to be more transparent, prudent and accountable in the use and management of public funds. Everybody now demands value for every money spent from the government coffers. New and evolving technology, globalization and the universality in the globally accepted best practices have brought the need for public servants to be constantly trained in order to be able to meet these challenges.

Not until recently, there had been huge resistance to the appropriation of funds for the training of public servants in Nigeria. This was as a result of the preconceived notion that employees hired under the merit system were presumed to be qualified and are already trained for the jobs and that if not it is evidence the initial selection process was faulty (Stahl, 1976: 26). This misconception has thrown away the need for constant training and retraining of employees which has become more obvious especially in the public service. Both the government and private organizations have come to realize that training offers the only way of developing employee skills and capacity for better delivery of public services. Jones, George and Hill (2000:87) contends that training and human resource capacity building ensures that public servants acquire the needed knowledge, expertise and skills to perform their jobs efficiently, assume new responsibilities and adapt to the ever-changing conditions of their work environment and improve service delivery. They further argue that through training public servants improve their capacity to serve, the citizens are more satisfied and the government's objective of providing prompt and quality service to citizens is achieved. The Internal Labor Office in its 2000 Human Resource Capacity Building Development Report for Sub-Saharan Africa, affirmed that periodic human resource capacity building and training development is key to improving the level of competence and the prospect of finding and retaining jobs. The Public Service Review Commission (PSRC) report 1974 retreated the importance of constant training and human resource capacity building in the reformation and creation of a robust civil service in Nigeria.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the role of Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) in enhancing public personnel competence through training. According to Ademolekun (1983:37), improving staff, competence involves the following: training, education and the development of the career of members of staff. In his view, the aim of training and development is identified as follows:

- Creation of a readily available pool of adequate replacement for personnel that may leave or progress in the organization thereby enhancing the organization's ability to use and adopt new technological innovations and advancements based on the vast knowledge and highly competent staff.
- It also involves the creation of more efficient, effective, competent, professional and highly motivated workforce which enhances positive competition, moral improvement and ensures sufficient human resource for growth and diversification into new areas and programs (Ademolekun, 1983).

Mullins (1999) gave the most accepted summary on the impact of training in enhancing personnel competence. Accordingly, the primary purpose of training is the advancement of

knowledge, human resource development and mastery of skills applied in a job situation and change in attitude to work. In his views training has the capacity of producing the following benefits:

- Increasing the confidence, motivation and commitment of staff to their jobs;
- Improve mastery and proficiency on the required skills applied in a job, efficient, effective and timely completion of tasks in accordance with the accepted standards;
- Provision of recognized and enhanced assumption of responsibilities and the possibility of increased pay, promotion and productivity among civil servants;
- Gives a feeling of personal satisfaction and achievement among the civil servants, and broadening opportunities for career progression (Mullins, 1999).

An important question that often arises among public administration practitioners is whether the international convention of on-the-job training and education provide enough practical and contextualized rationality to meet the objective that makes training mandatory for the response to enhancing competence, global competitiveness and human resource capacity development among public servants. The reason for the above question is that government propelled training and human resource capacity building, especially in Nigeria, do not appropriately cater for the increasing demand for high level, up to date skills and competencies required by civil servants due to its approach and learning structure (Wessels 2006: 507).

There is every need for a paradigm shift in the approach, purpose and learning structure of government propelled training and human resource capacity building programs in the developing countries. Ordinarily, training and human resource development programs should produce learning and enhanced competence building and not mere provision of instructions. A purposeful learning environment should be created in contrast to just a mere offering of programs and awarding of certificates. High quality learning should take place rather than just passing down of instructions. Without these points taken into consideration the change in knowledge, technological advancement and the speed at which information become outdated will in no time making a mess of routine training and specific educational programs propelled by the government with the aim of improving human resource capacity building in the public service. The character and contents of these specific training programs introduced to the public service by the government should be cross-disciplinary and inter-departmental in nature and not independent disciplines. These training programs must have specified learning objectives, intended results and outcomes and not complete learning packages. The training programs must have in-built mechanisms for external evaluation and should not only be evaluated internally, but it must also constitute pre, post and work in progress assessment mechanisms (Wessels 2002: 5). Training programs for public servants must reflect progress on current and critical issues that affect productivity, competence, and optimal service delivery. The curriculum must be open and adaptive to current acceptable global best practices and trends of providing solutions to those areas of high national needs, demands and concerns that need support efforts in mainstreaming challenging issues that will aid competence development in the public service.

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## CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

Competence is the ability to do something and do it well according to globally accepted standards. It signifies adequacy, ability, authority, skill, knowledge and quality that will amount to a person being able to do something well or in accordance to an acceptable standard. The ability, authority, knowledge, skill and quality expressed in the definition of competence are measured against pre-determined acceptable standards that are acquired over time through training and experience (Sanjana & Patsy, 2009). From the legalistic viewpoint, competence implies the quality or condition of being legally qualified to perform an act (Cardy, 2004). The above definitions outline clear facts about competence. First is being legally qualified to perform an action and the ability to do something well and show quality in doing it against pre-determined measurable standards.

Horton (2000:306) traced the concept of competence to the Medieval Guilds. According to him apprentices in the medieval guilds acquire skills by working with a master who at the end of the period of apprenticeship and attainment of standard workmanship associated with the trade are given a certificate of freedom that empowers them to practice or establish their own workshops. In the words of Bhatta, competence is a term used for identifying a person with efficiency and able to perform a task to an expected standard in a particular trade, profession or career (Bhatta, 2000: 194). A very common feature of the concept of competence indicates focus on adequate qualification, capability and ability defined in specific knowledge, skill and ability to perform a given task according to pre-determined standards (Mayer, 1996).

Jackson and Slocum (1999:4) are of the opinion that competence is a behaviour based on the ability and the possession of attributes that relate to the performance of tasks. These attributes according to them are acquired over time through the acquisition of knowledge, experiences and skills channelled towards completing tasks or assignments in accordance with set standards or acceptable levels of expertise. An individual's competence on a job manifests in his ability to demonstrate the required and acceptable level of performance as far as that particular job or assignment is concerned. A worker's level of competence stands for the proficiency or expertise in the work environment and to the demands or requirements of the work at the workplace. Noordegraaf (2000:322) views that competence should not be treated without an in-depth knowledge of the work environment in the study of employee performance enhancement. However, he advocates that any the study on employee performance enhancement must take into consideration real-life daily behaviour of the average worker. These dimensions of competence point to the fact that the concept of competence cannot be treated in isolation as indices that surround the term and the conditions in which various levels of competence can be achieved are spelt out. According to Noordegraaf (2000), it is obvious that with the right apparatus and training, the highest level of competence is achievable especially in the public service. The need for continuous training and learning as the major means of enhancing employee competence is very instructive. A fundamental aspect of improving competence is the ideology to constantly train and enlighten public servants on how to identify the needs of the citizens, fulfil their expectations, and to emphasize the value of the role of public servants in enhancing service delivery and achieving the objectives of the government. Organizations that engage in human

resource capacity building investment based on proper training need analysis are able to out-perform those that do not.

The contributions of well-planned training programs in enhancing employee competence and efficiency are very amazing. Training also unveils lucrative opportunities, enhances productivity and translates into improved service delivery and productivity. Training, therefore, should be seen as an integral part of the human resource capacity building development process (Mullins, 2002). The public service is a multi-disciplinary field aimed at providing services to the people with the goal of creating fulfilment and satisfaction for the needs of the society. It compresses workflow activities which are fundamentally geared towards the formulation and implementation of public policies. It has a very strong interrelated relationship between the community and the government that revolves around providing solutions to identified societal needs and problems (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Ababio, 2009). Microsoft Encarta (2009) defines training as a program or process designed for the teaching and learning of skill or job with the aim of improving the skill or competence of the learner on that particular job. Training is either private or public programs that provide direct education applicable to particular jobs. Training includes programs like an apprenticeship, on the job training, career counselling, adult education for those already employed in the workforce and career rehabilitation exercises etc. Jones, George and Hills (2015:48) argue that training improves quality, productivity, management succession, customer satisfaction, profitability, business development and service delivery etc. Stahl (2008:58) also argues that training helps to prepare employees for jobs that require unique skills, especially in the public service. Okotoni and Erero (2005) maintain that the 1974 Public Service Review Commission outlined the importance of training and development in the public service as follows:

- A result oriented public service need to recruit and train specialized personnel and requires well-trained professionals who possess the requisite knowledge, skill, and proficiency and that constant training must be part of a robustly planned educational programme for public servants;
- The most important thing for the Nigerian public service is training;
- Mandatory, obligatory and periodic training for Nigerian public servants.

All these notwithstanding, the emphasis on the importance of training and development by human resource experts and governments have always been on the front burner in most public service reforms in Nigeria. Despite these emphasis, manpower training and development has not been given the needed attention in public service.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper uses the Expertise theory (Ericsson & Smith, 1991) to explain the importance of training in enhancing competence in the public service. The Expert theory sets out the rules of how talents develop across specific fields and domains. The theory concentrates on the analysis of cognitive tasks, instructions, practices and states clearly that specific learning outcome and

competence can be measured objectively and improved over time through continuous training and retraining (Csikszentmihaly, 2018: 26). The expertise theory is the recent update and review of the classical learning behaviour. It is also traced to Pavlov, B. F. Skinner and other classical learning behavioural theorists. The study of how adults succeed in their jobs and careers moves massively towards the trait-oriented theories. Tests for hiring and talent identification were directed heavily towards the development of personality and general cognitive ability which based its measurement on the big five personality traits. These tests generated supportive researches using selective classification on decisions (Clark, 2016).

Anders Ericsson, who partnered with Herbert Simon in his studies was introduced to the major ideas of cognitive psychology and the emerging broader field of cognitive science. Ericsson set up a lab at the Florida State University that studied the processes that led to the development of expertise which assumed that the use of talents in careers and workplace depended not primarily on traits (cognitive, personality, or otherwise) but rather on the acquisition of skills and knowledge through constant learning and practice. He carried out a number of studies, reported in journals and edited in volumes of write-ups which collectively established that expertise and talent appear generally to conform to orderliness as the laws of classical learning theory (Ericsson, 1996). Accordingly, the particular amount of practice which an individual engages in, together with high-quality curriculum and expert tutoring, predicts the rate of development of expertise within a given domain over a given period of time. Simply doing a job is a cognitively effortful activity in which one is thinking about what one is doing. This includes a reflective component, plus the opportunity to obtain feedback on the quality of one's performance through an expert instructor or coach. Ericsson argued, that to document the development of expertise, one must have clearly specified learning outcomes against which one can objectively measure his or her development in that domain.

Malcolm's book, 'the Outlier' made the expertise theory very popular and introduced the key concepts of the theory to the foreign readership. Richard Clark of the University of Southern California also pursued a research program which had very close agenda to that of Ericsson. Clark's approach focuses basically on the method for identifying the cognitive structure of skills required to complete a set of tasks to be performed within a narrow domain by an expert. His methods allow one to use interview methods with a handful of subjects, and then reconstruct the basic structure of skills that one must acquire (and in which order) to perform at a reasonably accepted expert level in a particular job. Clark's approach provides a relatively well-organized technology for determining the curriculum through which employees can be trained to become experts. While Ericsson's approach plots out the amount of practice time required by an employee to achieve expertise performance (Clark, 2012: 47). The theory is therefore, used to explain the role of Public Service Institute of Nigeria in enhancing public personnel training for improved performance.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

In the views of some authors in personnel administration, the word training and development are used as alternative vocabularies. However, some have different opinions about the two concepts.

Jones, George and Hills (2000:24) argue that training focuses fundamentally on teaching members of an organization how to perform their assigned duties than helping them to acquire the required knowledge and skill needed for them to be more effective and efficient in their chosen career. According to them, human resource development is directed towards building the needed knowledge and skills of the members of the organization in a bid to preparing them for new responsibilities and challenges in the course of their duties. Ijeoma and Okafor (2015: 111) emphasizes that training in the public sector remains imperative in responding to the developmental and service delivery needs and challenges of any modern society.

Ademolekun (1983:37) maintains that staff training and development involves the following: training, education and development of the career of members of staff. In his view, the aim of training and development is identified as follows, creation of a readily available pool of adequate replacement for personnel that may leave or progress in the organization thereby enhancing the organization's ability to use and adopt new technological innovations and advancements based on its vast knowledge, highly skilled and competent staff. Training and development also involves, the creation of more efficient, effective, skilled, competent, professional and highly motivated workforce which enhances positive competition, moral improvement and ensures sufficient human resources for growth and diversification into new areas and programs. Training and Human Resource development in Nigeria dates back to 1896 when the educated Nigerians in Lagos proposed the establishment of a training college and industrial institute. Though they had the support of the British government, they were not willing to make a financial commitment to the proposed project. The inability of the initiators of the project to raise funds for the project brought about the end of the idea. Other efforts were later made to establish institutions of learning in the country to take care of the severe lack of manpower in the country. Efforts towards the development of training programmes in the Nigeria public service led to the setting up of Professor C. P. Wolle's survey in 1967 (Okotoni & Erero, 2005). The post-independence efforts to develop a human resource development program and training system for the Nigerian civil service was propelled by the 1967 survey of professor C.P. Wolle on the training needs of the public service. Based on the recommendations of the survey the government came up with a White paper on the report of the survey in April 1969 (Statement of government policy on staff training and development in the public service). The White paper outlined the following key points:

- Creation of a department of staff training with officers charged with the responsibility of designing training programs in line with the human resource needs of the public service;
- Assessing staff training and human resource capacity development needs;
- Preparing and implementing programs to meet these needs;
- Establishment of a standing committee on staff development and encouragement of ministry/ departments to establish training units to commensurate with the size and functions of the ministry.

The 1974 Public Service Reform Committee (PSRC) report in recognition of the need to solve skill and competence deficiency in the Nigerian civil service recommended the establishment of the Administrative and Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the Centre for Management

Development (CMD). Subsequently, the establishment of institutes and departments of Public Administration in almost all the tertiary institution in Nigeria followed and grew very rapidly.

There is a need for a paradigm shift in the approach and structure of training and human resource capacity building development programs in developing countries like Nigeria. Training and human resource capacity building development programs should be aimed at producing both contextual and practical opportunities for improving skill and competence development among public servants and not mere instructions. It must provide opportunities for the trainees to rediscover themselves, reconstruct and apply the knowledge elicited from the programs in their daily activities rather than the traditional transfer of knowledge from teacher to student (Rabi'u, 2013). Training programs for public servants must reflect progress on current and critical issues that affect productivity, competence and optimal service delivery. The curriculum must be open and adaptive to current global best practices and trends and should be directed to providing a solution to collective issues of high national needs and concern that demands support efforts in the process of improvement and development across the different levels the government. It has been advocated by human resource experts that for human resource development and capacitive building programs for civil servants to be very effective and achieve the required result must include the following:

- General and holistic learning and development;
- Reading and writing to support the development of essential competencies;
- Culture, competences and accepted best practices, covering formal, non-formal and informal education;
- ICT curricula and inclusive teachings contributing to the relevant and effective learning outcome;
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics curricula that will foster sustainable technological development;
- Curricula for citizenship education (patriotism, peace, human rights, values, ethics, culturalism and conflict resolution etc.);
- Assessment mechanisms that will enhance and support continuous learning opportunities (Marope, 2016).

## **ISSUES OF PERSONNEL INCOMPETENCE**

Incompetence is lacking the ability to do something properly in accordance with acceptable standards or global best practices. It includes lack of skills, quality, knowledge, information and the technical ability to carry out required task or assignment (inadequate or unsuitable for particular propose, duty or assignment). The word incompetence is not intended to be an insult but a means of recognizing a lack of knowledge, experience, expertise or skill in a particular area (Microsoft Encarta, 2009). Public servants, especially in Nigeria, are characterized as being, incompetent, inefficient, unproductive, and unresponsive to the needs of the citizens. Incompetence is a very big issue in the Nigerian public service. About 65% of the civil servants in Nigeria perform below expectations but with identified significant areas of improvement if properly trained. Under-performance has been a long-standing source of frustration for many



administrations. According to Nigro (2009:32) incompetence is very difficult to identify in jobs that are commonly done in public service e.g. in areas of policy formulation, policy development, implementation and research. It is common in Nigerian public service for underperforming staff to access certified sick leave as a strategy either to avoid certain tasks that can create stress-related conditions or as a means of hiding their incompetence when tasks that demand high-level skills are assigned to them or during performance evaluation and appraisal (Nigro, 2009).

The public service is a safe haven for crooks, lazy and incompetent officers who are given taxpayer funds freely, golden handshake or are allowed to retire generously because most government ministries, departments and agencies do not want to tackle the issue of low performance or incompetence among its staff (Rabi'u, 2013). There is glaring evidence from studies on performance management processes in the Nigerian public service that about 30% of the public servants are of the opinion that their bosses handle issues relating to low performance and incompetence among their colleagues very ineffectively. These studies show that about 65% of the public servants in Nigeria are underperforming. Identifying the gap in performance can be difficult in some of the types of work, assignment, duty and schedule commonly carried out in the public service. It is a common occurrence in the Nigerian public service for underperforming staff to access certified excuse duty on health grounds as either an avoidance technique or because of the fact that his or her underperformance can be attributed to the claimed health condition, particularly mental health, pre-natal and post-natal trauma and stress-related conditions associated with the job or assignment.

According to the Nigerian Public Service Management, it is difficult to draw out results of under-performance in a complex process of the public service. This impinges on judgement and decisions to be made on how best to tackle the issue (Greenberg, 2009: 208). Under-performance in the public service is generally not effectively dealt with in performance evaluation and appraisal processes, especially during probationary periods. These reports also highlighted the fact that probation periods were not generally used to test robustly the suitability of new appointees with regards to issues of qualification, competence, skills and under-performance. Seventy percent (70%) of the managers and supervisors in the public service avoid addressing issues relating to incompetence, lack of skills and under-performance among staff due to political reasons, lack of incentives and support from the management and their personal capacity deficiencies. Causes of under-performance in the public service include behavioural issues, ineffective training and human resource capacity building programs and faulty recruitment processes that failed to identify the staff with the required capabilities and qualifications for the jobs at the point of entry (Greenberg 2009: 211). Eric Abetz (2006:47) is of the opinion that incompetence in public service is a waste of taxpayers' funds and that it needs to be properly addressed. In his views taxpayers expect the public servants to be supportive, efficient, effective and more focused on service delivery. Instead, public servants should be made to be vibrant and to see their jobs as the life wire of the government. They should rather be re-focused to becoming output-based.

## **THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICE INSTITUTE (PSIN)**

The 2003 Public Service Reform of President Obasanjo gave birth to the establishment of the Bureau for Public Service Reforms. This was aimed at championing the reforming and repositioning of the Nigerian public service to make it more efficient, robust and effective. In the bid to achieve this, the Public Service Institute, Abuja was also established by the same administration to provide professional and high-level human resource capacity building and development for Nigerian public servants. One of the main arguments of the administration for setting up the institute was the need to change the orientation of the civil servants and the perception of Nigerians towards the civil service. The ideals of the Institute include:

- High performing and competent workforce;
- High quality programmes for meeting the needs of the public service;
- Transitional research that leads to world-class learning, leading, innovating in the public service;
- Provision of high-quality consultancy and advisory services;
- Provision of high quality facilities and support services;
- Networking and partnership building with relevant subject-leading institutions and professionals, within and outside Nigeria (PSIN, 2012).

It is on record that 80% of the federal civil servants in Nigeria are officers on grade level 01-06 and that these category of the public service workforce are the first point of contact of the citizens with the government. The quality of service rendered by this category of civil servants to the public snowballs into the perception of the public about the government. The need to improve and train the civil servants adequately is very paramount for the overall improvement of performance, service delivery, and the development of a robust and functional public service. In the same vein Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are mandated by the 2003 Public Service Reforms to ensure that they institute comprehensive training, capacity building and manpower development programs and courses in the most cost-effective manner. Most ministries, departments, agencies and private corporations have taken advantage of the high-quality services of the Institute to achieve its staff training and human resource capacity development needs. A large percentage of the public servants have either benefited directly or indirectly from training programs organized by the Institute. Some of the programs organized by the public Institute are sponsored directly by the ministries, departments and agencies and other non-governmental organization both local and foreign-based (Bovard, 2017: 23).

The Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) is the central learning institute for the Nigerian civil service. The Institute plays a paramount role in the development of an efficient, effective and robust public service. The Public Service Institute of Nigeria offers a wide range of programs that are intended to aid the building of planned capacity development in the public service which focuses on the core areas of need. (Yearbook of the Public Service Institute, 2016: 7).

The Institute's objective is targeted towards the promotion of national ethics as embedded in Nigerian's constitution. The Public Service Institute works tirelessly towards the training and

development of human resource capacity and competence among public servants in Nigeria in line with its core values of Stewardship, Trust, Engagement and Professionalism (STEPS). It applies internationally accepted best practices and code of ethics in the conduct of government business by providing timely, fair, honest and transparent services to the public. The vision of the Institute is to be a world-class centre of excellence in transforming the public sector, governance, management and leadership development in Nigeria. The Institute over the years have strived to continuously engage modernized management practices and leadership competencies for the top level, middle and low level manpower in order to develop and strengthen organizational capacity of the Nigerian public service through the provision of trainings aimed at improving the competence and capacity of civil servants in the Nigerian public service (NPSI website, 2018).

According to the enabling Act of the Public Service Institute of Nigeria, its role is very clear especially in providing high standard training, competence and human resource capacity building and development programs to the public servants both in Nigeria and abroad. The Institute encourages and gives personal support to trainees in other to help them in receiving an indispensable part of each training exercise. The Institutes treats participants with courtesy and respect by its friendly and concerned staff and the training modules are designed in line with the core training needs of clients.

The Institute has well-trained facilitators with versed knowledge and experience that are always delighted in finding solutions to trainee's needs and problems. The Institute also offers consultancy services such as designing organizational structure, workflow charts and schedules, recruitments, promotional exams, interviews and in-plant training, human capacity building and development programs, computer-based tests, organizational restructuring and development, lectures, conferences and seminars (Public Service Institute of Nigeria Brochure, 2018: 12). The training programmes are categorized into three. These are "Regular programmes, Short programmes and Long programmes".

Table 1 PSIN Graduates (2009-2019)

Year	Regular	Short	Long	Grand Total
2009	-	706	-	
2010	-	1,914	-	
2011	-	2,815	-	
2012	-	3,211	-	
2013	-	3,961	-	
2014	923	3,103	-	
2015	408	2,963	-	
2016	607	4,031	-	
2017	1,371	4,431	-	
2018	1,406	3,621	-	
2019	2,105	3,902	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,820</b>	<b>34,658</b>	-	<b>41,478</b>

Source: Public service Institute of Nigeria, Records Archives (collections of files containing records of tracing), 2019.

## **CHALLENGES**

The Institute is expected to train and re-train at least ten thousand (10,000) civil servants in the three programme categories per annum. Table 1 clearly shows that the regular and short programmes are running whereas, the long programmes are yet to commence. However, there is average deficit of approximately 70% from 2009 to 2013 and almost 60% from 2014 to 2019, given the 10,000 yearly benchmark. This also shows a huge training gap in the country's public service of estimated nine hundred thousand (900,000) at the federal level. The major problem identified is lack of funds. The management of the Institute clearly states that from inception in 2009, the Institute has not received more than fifty five (55%) of its statutory allocation from the federal government. This has seriously hindered training activities. This is because most of the funds go into recurrent expenditure like payment of salaries and other running costs. In addition, the Institute is having problems generating funds on its own due to low level of patronage from government ministries, departments and agencies (MDA's).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The public service is very unique and plays an important role in the smooth running of every government. It is not an overstatement to say that the civil service is the action part of the government (drivers of all governments' actions and policies) and is the government's buffer zone that shields the executive in times of crisis. No government can achieve its aspirations and duties to its citizens without an effective, efficient, competent and functional public service. Incompetence has been identified as one of the major problems of the Nigerian public service, which is the cog in achieving the dreams, aims and desires of the government. It is mind-blowing that the Nigerian government is not doing enough to stem this tide and has failed to adopt and implement to the letter all the reforms and proposals outlined therein especially the aspects of constant, strategic and systematic training, retraining and human resource capacity development of public servants. The 1988 and 1989 Public Service Reforms clearly stipulates the dedication of 10% of the total annual personnel emolument of all ministries, departments and agencies on staff training and human resource capacity building. Unfortunately, no MDA has spent up to 2.5% of the annual personnel emolument releases on staff training and human resource capacity development.

The implementation of the recommendations of these reforms must be properly monitored and taken seriously in order to turn the Nigerian public service into an effective, efficient, robust, and competent organization. The training and human resource capacity building programs must be properly planned, systematically organized and made mandatory with the aim of achieving very high-level of specialization, professionalism and competence among the public servants and without interfering with the regular workflow in the public service.

In the light of the foregoing, this paper recommends for strong government commitment in fostering competence through training. It is rather unfortunate to note that government consciously pays less attention to various reform recommendations that have overtime placed

emphasis on constant training and re-training of public servants. At this point it is imperative to emphasise that political will is required to compel MDA's to comply with these recommendations. Secondly, government have to adequately fund the Institute to function properly. If the Institute is constantly deprived of funds, it shall continue to function bellow average. There is also the need for regular review of the training programs of the Institute to ensure that they are in line with to the country's manpower needs and challenges of improving the level of competence in the public sector.

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