Rethinking civil service human capital in a developing context: A capability development perspective

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Faculty of Humanities

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Kelechi John Ekuma

School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED)
Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM)
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>AEO</td>
<td>African Economic Outlook</td>
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<td>AfDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>Capability/capacity development</td>
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<td>CDRs</td>
<td>Capacity development reforms</td>
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<td>CMD</td>
<td>Centre for Management Development</td>
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<td>CSRs</td>
<td>Civil service reforms</td>
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<td>DCs</td>
<td>Developing countries</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>ECA</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign direct investment</td>
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<td>FGN</td>
<td>Federal Government of Nigeria</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Human capital</td>
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<td>HCD</td>
<td>Human capital development/human capability development</td>
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<td>HCT</td>
<td>Human Capital Theory</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information communications technology</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>K4D</td>
<td>Knowledge for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>MINT</td>
<td>Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEEDS</td>
<td>National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy</td>
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<td>NFCS</td>
<td>Nigerian Federal Civil Service</td>
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<td>NPC</td>
<td>National Planning Commission</td>
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<td>NSPRRS</td>
<td>National Strategy for Public Sector Reforms</td>
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<td>NUC</td>
<td>National Universities Commission</td>
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<td>NV2020</td>
<td>Nigeria Vision 20:20:20 Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>OHCSF</td>
<td>Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation</td>
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<td>SKAD</td>
<td>Sociology of knowledge approach to discourse</td>
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<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>TD&amp;M</td>
<td>Talent development and management</td>
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<td>TM</td>
<td>Talent management</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</td>
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Abstract

In recent years, a research consensus has coalesced around the notion that human capital development and an efficient public service are critically important determinants of societal transformation, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). However, there is no similarly wide agreement on how to systematically drive improvements in the quality of a nation’s human capital or its public service. This thesis contributes to this debate and adds to the literature on strategies for effective civil service human capital development and management in a developing context. Specifically, the study interrogates and explores the experience of a developing country – Nigeria, to illustrate the dynamics of a typical civil service human capital and capability development (CD) strategy. I critically examine the social and relational complexities of the policy process and how dominant neo-liberal logic is constituted, forming part of the metanarrative in state identities that perpetuate unequal power relations, elite interests, and ineffective institutional arrangements.

Influenced by post structural and social constructivist philosophies, the research challenges the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy on human capital. In this regard and utilising a case study approach, the study critically explores and reveals how the standards for human capital development are negotiated in the Nigerian federal civil service (NFCS), and examines the discourses and practices they produce. I utilise the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD) as well as policy documents and semi-structured interviews with senior policy planners, to capture the nuanced realities and everyday meanings that are lost in dominant metanarratives of civil service human capital reforms in SSA. These explorations are positioned within the broader development debates about the need to adopt social constructivist research frames to better understand contextual issues in the capability development (CD) process.

The research findings indicate that while most reform programmes in the NFCS have been captivated by the capacity development and service delivery rhetoric, the complex interplay between the dearth of human capabilities and the politicisation of the implementation process means that the impact of such policies have been very minimal. The study reveals that the relational complexities between policy agents have been engendered largely by the nature of Nigeria’s political economy, which appears to have produced dynamic and interweaving unequal power relations that have helped constitute discourses centred on institutional inefficiencies, including: ‘patronage’, ‘intense rent-seeking’, and ‘personalisation’ of the policy process that are currently ongoing. These discourses are actively navigated, produced and reproduced according to Nigeria’s social and political contexts. I argue that this socially constituted and re-constituted locale creates a complex and uniquely challenging context for reforms, such that developing civil service capacities has become a major challenge, because ‘reform’ policies tend to serve the interests of a few powerful elites, who are bent on maintaining the status quo. The thesis makes key recommendations that recognise these challenges and provides policy options and a framework to help the Nigerian federal service embark upon a capability development initiative that will help improve the efficiency of the Service and lead to accelerated national development.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Kelechi John Ekuma
July 2015
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Almighty God for the gift of ‘understanding’, which ‘is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it’ (Proverbs.16:22). And to my late mother, Rose Nwoba Ekuma, who made me understand that ‘better is a little with righteousness than great revenue without right’ (Proverbs.16:8), and for all her sacrifices to see me receive quality education.
Acknowledgements

Many people have helped make writing this thesis both possible and a worthwhile experience. Many names do not appear here, but I am very grateful to everyone who supported me in personal and professional ways during my stay in the United Kingdom. I would like to thank especially my supervisors Dr. Beverly Metcalfe and Dr. Sharon Morgan who spent countless hours reading the draft chapters and contributed valuable comments throughout the entire process. I am deeply indebted to them both. This thesis was in part, based on six months of field work which took me into the everyday work lives and corporate environments of several senior civil servants, administrators and policy makers in Nigeria. These individuals must remain anonymous, but each knows their identity within the text and they have my heartfelt thanks. I am also greatly indebted to all those authors from whose books and works references have been made.

My own capability in relation to writing this text was influenced in positive ways by many of my PhD colleagues, especially Dereck Arubayi and Loliya Akobo as well as many academics at the Institute for Development Policy and Management. I wish to offer them my warm thanks for providing me with both a rich store of ideas and suggestions on how to refine a rough idea and develop it into a research project, and for providing key, timely references and moral support.

I am profoundly grateful to His Excellency, the immediate past Governor of Ebonyi State, Chief Martin Nwanchor Elechi and the Government of Ebonyi State, Nigeria for the award of a postgraduate scholarship that facilitated my pursuit of this PhD programme. The same level of gratitude goes to Prof. Mike Otuma, Mr. Nicodemus Egwu and Hon. Celestine Nwali, who were all very instrumental to the actualisation of this sojourn.

I owe overwhelming gratitude to my family, particularly my brother Dr. Chinedu Ekuma for their relentless support, love and ceaseless encouragement. Finally, and most important, I want to acknowledge and thank my wife – Franca, who made the greatest sacrifices and endured me in my most impatient and frustrated moods. She comforted me during the stressful and lengthy but exciting PhD journey and was always encouraging and understanding. I would definitely have despaired at times without the reinforcement provided by a caring and loving family. Above all else, I am eternally grateful to Almighty God, for granting me the grace and wisdom required to complete this thesis and for protecting and keeping me in good health throughout the duration of this programme.
Chapter 1

Raison d’être, themes and issues

‘Adaptability is not imitation. It means power of resistance and assimilation.’

– Mahatma Gandhi

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter sets out the general background and the overarching aim of this thesis by briefly highlighting the general rise in the concern around effective civil service human capital development and management in national contexts of developing countries (DCs). I further outline the research aims and objectives that provide the intellectual and theoretical boundaries for subsequent analyses. The chapter also highlights the significance and contributions of this thesis, as well as provides an overview of the methodological approach that underpins the study. The chapter finally concludes by providing the thesis structure and outline for the rest of the chapters.

1.2 Background to the themes and issues

There are several reasons why DCs fail to harness their growth potentials, accomplish development agendas and facilitate improved human development for the majority of their citizenry in contemporary times. Central among these, is perhaps, the lack of capacity and pragmatism to meaningfully respond to the threats and opportunities associated with rapid globalisation (UNDP, 2012; Dauda, 2010). This is particularly true with regards to the provision of an enabling environment for the development and utilisation of creative individuals who possess the relevant skills set necessary for survival in an increasingly unpredictable global economy through innovative human capital development (HCD) initiatives (Mbhalati, 2013; Okeke-Uzodike & Chitakunye, 2014).

This assertion is bolstered by the idea that knowledge driven globalisation has created a global labour market, in which only ‘knowledgeable nations’ are most likely to succeed; because people, along with their skills and knowledge, are an indispensable element of economic development in contemporary times (Brown, 2001; OECD, 1997). This latter point is what Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle and Collins (2001) allude to as the thinking assets of nation-states. What is more, in a knowledge-based globalising world of changing economic and social conditions, skills and knowledge – human capital – have become a central issue for policy makers and development practitioners, both at national and regional
levels, (OECD, 2001; Johnson, 2011). As Gonzalez, Karoly, Constant, et al. (2008: 2) succinctly put it, ‘human capital assets of a nation are one of its most important tools for growth…more skilled workers permit countries to lower their production costs and be more competitive, but they also generate knowledge that drives adaptability and economic growth.’

The civil service is also increasingly identified as pivotal to national competitiveness and rapid development. This is in line with the growing realisation that the effectiveness of the state in policy design and implementation and in the delivery of public goods/services accounts for the modest gains recorded in recent economic restructuring and poverty alleviation, especially in developing countries (Bangura & Larbi, 2006). Indeed, as stressed by the state capabilities literature (see for example: Adamolekun, 1999a; Levy, 2004; Haque, 2001), the effective functioning of the civil service is an important determinant of poverty, inequality, and economic growth and development. The UNDP (2013: 1) concurs with this position, when it argues that ‘the effectiveness and efficiency of a country’s civil service is vital to the success of development activities’.

This implies that any society that is serious about rapid development must necessarily be willing to redesign and restructure its civil service(s), through renewed approaches to human capital and institutional capability development in line with emerging global realities (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2012). Effective realisation of this would expectedly transpose to increased productivity, accelerated growth, good quality service delivery, purposeful governance and improved social well-being of the populace (Mbhalati, 2013; OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2012). The benefits of effectively developing and managing civil service human capital through a robust capacity development framework in which quality education, technical capabilities, knowledge for development (K4D), skills acquisition and training are strategically tailored to meet the challenges and demands of a developing economy cannot be overemphasised.

It is this realisation that largely explains why human capital development and civil service reforms have been an increasingly popular objective for developing countries in recent years (Batley & Larbi, 2006). In contemporary times, this trend continues to manifest, as governments and development partners have come to recognise the critical role of country capacities and skilled national human resources in the adjustment of inequalities, poverty alleviation and improved service delivery in the global South (Bangura & Larbi, 2006).
Yet, whilst this development is certainly encouraging, it appears that many DCs still struggle with adequate foundation needed to plan, implement and review these objectives, largely due to a number of inter-related and somewhat ‘peculiar’ reasons, including but not limited to: inadequate supportive strategies, well-functioning institutions, educated and skilled people and a profoundly ineffective civil service (Hope, 2011). Indeed, there is a broad consensus in many quarters that the civil service in many DCs lack the critical capabilities necessary for quality and efficient service delivery and for effective implementation of government policies, due largely to the unavailability of skilled (wo)manpower (Adeyemo & Salami, 2008). In the specific case of Africa, for example, the African Governance Forum– AGF¹ (2007: 25) succinctly argues that:

The Continent has not been able to recruit and retain the needed well-trained and skilled personnel due to a host of challenges that include low salaries; poor conditions of service; over-centralization; dilatory and outdated procedures; loopholes in administrative procedures leading to difficulty in maintaining objectivity, accountability and transparency in decision-making; and, consequently, a largely uncompetitive working environment.

This rather infelicitous situation becomes very disturbing when considered against the backdrop that building the capable state is currently one of the most compelling development challenges in Africa, as in other DCs (AGF, 2007; Osaasa, 2007). What is more, experiences of developing countries during the past decades have indicated that shortage of talents and skills needed for development can decisively retard economic progress and national development (World Bank, 2014). It could be argued then, that as DCs strive to mitigate their socio-political, governance and economic challenges, ‘the task of reinforcing the effectiveness of its systems, institutions and civil services is pivotal to the overarching task of delivering development’ (AGF, 2007: 6). DCs’ continued human capacity challenges, therefore, underlines the need for deeper reflection on innovative and context driven approaches that recognizes and gives primacy to the centrality of the human factor in improving civil service capabilities (McCourt, 2013).

It is against this background that this research aims to critically explore the context and nature of the human resource capability challenges facing the civil service in a developing context and discuss various areas of change that must be addressed to remedy the situation, or at least mitigate its consequences. Specifically, the research interrogates and explores the

¹ The AGF is the flagship governance programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Africa. It was established in 1997 in partnership with UNECA with one its specific objectives being ‘encouraging the development of concrete programs of action to promote good governance and facilitate the mobilization of programme resources’ (AGF, 2007: 2).
experience of an important developing country – Nigeria to illustrate the dynamics of a
typical civil service reform policy implementation and human capability development
efforts as a complex process influenced by several contextual factors, including politics,
economics, dominant discourses, culture and several others. In this regard and using the
Nigerian Federal civil service (NFCS)\(^2\) as a case study, the overarching purpose of the
research is to critically assess how the processes of civil service human capital development
and management processes in SSA can be improved upon from a capability development
perspective.

1.3 Raison d’être: Significance and justification of study

It has become imperative for the requisite human capital in SSA, especially those in the civil
services to be abreast of new ideas, ‘best practices’, techniques, inventions, and new
planning and implementation methods (Okpara & Wynn, 2007; Olaopa, 2012). The urgent
need for SSA countries to strengthen their institutional frameworks that support good
governance, knowledge for development (K4D) and enterprise development, as well as the
ability to provide efficient delivery of public services and transparent operations of the civil
service, adds a critical dimension to this imperative (Scott, 2011; Grindle, 2010). This
arguably places greater urgency on the need to address the human resource capability
challenges currently faced by the civil service in many SSA countries through appropriate
human capital development initiatives (ECA, 2010; Okpara & Wynn, 2007).

The increasing emphasis on human capital, especially in the national contexts of developing
countries, reflects a view that ‘comparative advantage among nations derives less and less
from natural resources and cheap labour endowment and increasingly from technical
innovations and the competitive use of knowledge’ (World Bank, 2002: 8). What is more, in
the wake of the exigencies and unpredictability of the global economy, a country’s adaptive
capability for the future is largely dependent on approaches to the development of its human
capital (UN, 2002), which must necessarily be innovative, result oriented and strategic.

The internationalisation of the labour market through continuing globalisation also means
that the effective management of the already developed human capital has also become a
major concern (Aluko & Aluko, 2011). Perhaps, it is for this reason that human resources

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\(^2\) The Civil Service in Nigeria is currently decentralised and is organised into federal, state, and local
government civil services. However, the adoption of the same public service rules across the various tiers of
government, means that the autonomous nature of the various public services that exist across these three
levels, are usually narrowed down to a single homogenous Service. Despite this homogeneity, it is important to
state that my analysis in this thesis relates exclusively to capability development in the Nigerian Federal Civil
Service (NFCS).
and the human factor in general, are playing an increasingly important role in the economic competitiveness of regions, and the necessary frame of reference for developing and managing human capital is constantly being enlarged (OECD, 2001; Dauda, 2010). In contemporary times therefore, human capital development has become an increasingly dominant discourse in recent management and development literatures. As a result, it is assumed that its elements are well understood, rational and executable in most contexts (CIPD, 2010).

However, a critical assessment of much of the work on human capital suggests that it has been pursued largely at a prescriptive level, with little consideration for differing contexts and/or national factors (e.g., Huselid, 1995; Lawson, & Hepp, 2005). Much of these works also appear to be obsessed with measurable outcomes, which ignore the practical processes that lead to skill formation in a given context (Brown et al., 2001). This tendency in human capital literature to focus on rates of return has almost inevitably led ‘to a somewhat narrow definition of both the knowledge embodied in people and its economic role’ (OECD, 1996: 20). In line with its neo-classical foundations, HC seems to treat schooling and skills development as a demand and supply function, which merely expresses technical relationships between inputs and outputs (Brown et al., 2001; Mehrotra, 2005). This development Brown et al. (2001: 25) argue, remains ‘a black box revealing precious little about skill formation in motion’.

Similarly, while research has examined human capital development at both national and organizational levels, it appears that there has been a rather disproportionate focus on private sector organisations, especially in SSA – although a few exceptions exist (e.g. Paauwe & Boselie, 2003; Beattie & Osborne, 2008; Burke, Noblet & Cooper, 2013; Daly, 2012). Methodologically, most of the little studies that focus on public service human capital in DCs have been undertaken mainly using quantitative data sets, which by their design, removes the ‘lived experiences’ of human capital development processes (see for example: Oketch, 2006; Isola & Alani, 2012). Consequently, how a human capital approach is designed, implemented and experienced within the context of the civil service in most DCs remains relatively unknown. These create knowledge gaps in the development and management literature, and hampers efforts at improving public service effectiveness and inclusive development in DCs.

It is the purpose of this current study to help address these gaps and contribute to refining the current understanding of the processes of human capital development in the civil services of developing countries, using Nigeria as an example. This becomes important and
indeed critical, considering the dynamics of global skills requirements and the complexities associated with skills formation efforts in developing countries’ civil services. As Brown et al (2001: 25 - 26) succinctly observe, ‘the importance of process has become more important because of the pace of economic innovation and changing skill requirements in knowledge-driven economies. Moreover, in respect to national skill formation policies the emphasis on process is not only a question of the social construction of individual skills, but of building societal capacity that includes the collective (as well as individual) dimensions of skill formation (Brown et al., 2001). These issues are very significant for national development, especially in Nigeria, and herein lies the justification for this study.

1.4 Research, aim, objectives and questions

In the context of the issues raised so far in this chapter, this study aims to critically explore the complex interconnections between political and economic contexts in relation to civil service human resource development reforms in SSA. In specific terms and using the Nigerian example, the research explores how power, dominant discourses, interests, incentives, institutional arrangements and other structural/quasi-structural features of a State intersect to influence human capital development policies in a developing country’s civil service. The main purpose of this exploration is to help advance knowledge on the underlying reasons why current approaches to capability development and skills development efforts have not been very effective, and thus, have failed to address the burgeoning need for a pool of competent and efficient human capital in the civil service of many SSA countries, in an age of rapid globalisation. Towards this end, the study focuses on the following central objectives:

- To critically explore the concepts of capability development and talent management and access their linkages and implications for improved human capital development in the civil service of DCs, using the Nigerian experience.
- To explore the interplay and positioning effects between people, the environment and the state in the development of human capital within the civil service in Nigeria.
- To reframe the discourse and build theory in explaining how human capital and skills development can be furthered amidst institutional voids and structural constraints in developing contexts; and
- To assist in defining future public policy agendas for innovative and workable capability development processes, that accelerates enterprise development, innovation and enhanced knowledge for development (K4D) in the civil service of DCs.
In achieving these identified objectives, the research addressed the following critical questions:

i. What are the human capital and capability challenges facing the Nigerian federal civil service (NFCS)?

ii. What discourses underpin approaches to human capital and capability development in the NFCS?

iii. How and to what extent has the features of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic structures, systems, processes or skill-sets impacted on civil service human capital and capability development?

iv. What strategies and new agendas could meaningfully help in resolving the human capital challenges facing the Nigerian federal civil service?

Considering the practical realities of a research of this nature as well as the need for the contextualisation of theory, these questions have been framed in an evaluative and methodologically consistent manner that helps in accomplishing the research objectives by exploring the underlying dynamics of human capital development in the Nigerian federal civil service on the one hand, and the ways and degree in which capability development and TM practices can contribute towards improving the process on the other. These issues are considered especially within the constraints imposed by the socio-economic and political contexts of the Nigerian state. This kind of evaluative approach to research is consistent with recent calls in the literature for greater consideration of contexts in development and management research (see for example: Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Johns, 2006; Griffin, 2007, etc.).

1.5 Overview of methodological and analytical approach

To accomplish the objectives listed above, this thesis adopts an exploratory case study strategy and takes a different approach from the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy. This implies that Western theories and concepts, including the human capital and its utility in developing countries (DCs) contexts are treated critically. The study which develops out of a poststructuralist and social constructivist tradition of context-sensitive systemic learning for endogenous capability development, seeks to supplement anecdotal evidence and add to the currently limited empirical analyses on constraints to civil service reforms, particularly human resource development reforms in DCs, with emphasis on SSA.

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3 See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion on methodological choices and the design that guided the research.
Data collection was primarily from two main sources: First, a documentary analysis of official government policies and civil service documents was undertaken, in order to understand the policy frameworks underpinning current approaches to civil service human capital development in the country. This was followed by semi-structured expert interviews with senior civil servants, human resource practitioners in the federal civil service, middle and junior level managers and some regular employees mainly from two core agencies within the federal service: the Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) and the Centre for Management Development (CMD).

Whilst it is recognised that several variables influence the implementation of development policies, as the policy implementation research literature (e.g. Saetren, 2005; O'Toole, 2000; Saetren, 2009) has identified, the study however, focused on the political economy dimension and the role of structures, institutions and power relations in the implementation of civil service reforms and human capital development programmes in the country. Yet, although the arguments in this thesis are influenced partly by research in political economy analysis, it is important to point out however, that it is not restricted to the analyses of economic issues, nor are the identified relevant actors always political (UNDP, 2012a).

Indeed, while the investigation closely examines the political and economic factors that play significant roles in human capital development and civil service reforms in Nigeria, it goes beyond these dimensions to highlight a more holistic understanding of the unique and discursive contexts of the Nigerian state, including the role of religion, gender relations, informal institutions and the influence of other embedded historical and cultural factors on human capital development and civil service reforms. This approach is akin to what the UNDP (2012a: 1) describes as ‘institutional and context analysis’, and is consistent with Edigheji’s (2008) argument that any critical analysis of reforms in DCs, must focus on how it addresses the key social, economic and political challenges facing these countries. Overall, the analyses in this thesis are positioned within the broader development debates about the need to sufficiently understand the contextual conditions that facilitate or retard transformative reforms in DCs.

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4 The Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) has the constitutional oversight of providing general direction, guidance, and leadership to the federal civil service in Nigeria. The CMD is the operational arm of the Nigerian Council for Management Development and a parastatal of the National Planning Commission, which is the Ministry that has responsibility for driving the vision, plans and programmes of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The centre has the responsibility for training senior civil servants and conducts research projects on public policy and capacity building for the Nigerian Government.
1.6 Why Nigeria?

There are a number of reasons why Nigeria is a suitable context for a research of this nature. First, apart from its strategic socio-economic and political importance to the global economy, the country also shares many important characteristics with most other DCs, including: a lower human development index (which measures a country’s performance in three areas: education, health and society purchasing power), a lower level of industrialization, a lower level of per capita income, increasing population growth and an inefficient civil service (UNDP, 2013; World Bank, 2014). Further, Nigeria is also Africa’s largest economy in GPD terms, a major exporter of crude oil and one of the most important destinations for global foreign direct investments (FDI) (UNCTAD, 2011 IMF, 2014). Nigeria’s administrative system and the character of its federal civil service are therefore, emblematic of what obtains in most DCs, particularly SSA states.

It is also the case that in spite of Nigeria’s challenging political and economic contexts, some of the policy and institutional reforms that are necessary for development have begun to take place since the country’s return to democratic governance in 1999. However, as Utomi et al. (2007) were quick to point out, these reforms have been largely sporadic and limited mainly to economic management at the Federal government level, with very minimal progress recorded. Yet, in the context of Nigeria, they are nonetheless very significant, considering the country’s chequered political and economic history and many years of mismanagement under various military regimes. These efforts arguably provide useful lessons and templates which succeeding Nigerian governments and other SSA governments can call upon to shape their reform space. Nigeria is therefore, a leading context in which to understand how the standards for HCD are negotiated in the civil services of DCs, and why current approaches to civil service reforms and skills development efforts have not yielded the desired results in many SSA countries.

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5 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into Nigeria have been growing enormously over the course of the last several years (UNCTAD, 2011). From USD 1.14 billion in 2001 and USD 2.1 billion in 2004, Nigeria’s FDI reached USD 11 billion in 2009 according to UNCTAD, making the country one of the most important destination of FDI in Africa and the world (UNCTAD, 2011).
1.7 Contributions to knowledge

This research makes significant contributions to the field of development research, particularly human resource development (HRD) research in a number of ways, as briefly described below:

First, methodologically, this thesis opens a new vista in the analysis and interpretation of HCD processes in the civil services of DCs, particularly in the context of Nigeria. This is so because no known previous study has attempted to utilise the SKAD methodology in analysing the processes of human capital development in the Nigerian civil service. Through the adoption of an exploratory, discourse-based qualitative approach, I am therefore, able to contribute to the small but growing body of context driven empirical work in the HRD field. In this regard, by focusing on in-depth accounts of senior civil servants who have responsibility for designing human capital initiatives and middle managers and employees who have been recipients of these initiatives, and on the policy foundations of these interventions, the macro, meso and micro-processes of human capital development in the Nigerian civil service can be drawn out and critically assessed.

Second, this study also responds to calls by a number of scholars (example: Ayee, 2008; DFID, 2010; ECA, 2010; Minogue, Polidano & Hulme, 1998) to develop a more context sensitive understanding of human capital development processes as a critical component for effective and sustainable civil service and administrative reforms in DCs. Therefore, by exploring the ‘taken for granted’ reform policy agenda and illuminating on how human capital development can be furthered amidst institutional voids and structural constraints in Nigeria, through the SKAD, this thesis is both innovative and inventive.

Third, the research helps illuminate the processes that develop between civil service human capital policies and the discourses that shape the contents of such policies and their implementation frameworks within the context of DCs. In previous studies, the challenges of developing civil service human capital were largely considered to be failures of design, communication, cost or project slippage (see for example: Bulmer, 2000; Briggs, 2007). However, in this thesis, a number of other fundamental dimensions are identified, including the nature of the governance system, positioning effects, issues of power and patronage, elite capture, as well as HRM rhetorics and the sense-making activities of civil servants. The study presents a framework in which these issues are integrated in order to help in rethinking the approaches to civil service human capital development in DCs, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.
From this standpoint, the thesis makes a **fourth** important contribution to HRD theorising. By critically exploring the interplay and the positioning effect between people, the environment and the Nigerian state in development retrospect, I am able to reframe the discourse and build theory in explaining how human capital and skills development can be furthered in developing countries amidst institutional voids and structural constraints, using Nigeria as an example. This effort at theorisation is critical for a number of reasons: In the context of the Nigerian economy, it will afford practitioners, policy makers and the government with alternative practicable strategic framework to consider when establishing future framework for effective human capital development in the country. This is very critical for Nigeria’s national development, considering that there are evidences (e.g. Ogujiuba & Adeniyi, 2005; Oketch, 2006; Dauda, 2010, McCourt, 2013) to suggest that it is extremely difficult for DCs to achieve much meaningful socio-economic development without adequate investment in, and effective development and management of their human capital.

This latter point leads to the **fifth** contribution of this thesis, which is policy contribution. In this regard, the thesis delivers recommendations on the policy and practical implications of the research by providing some information and a framework to help the Nigerian federal civil service embark upon a capability development and talent management initiatives based on contextual realities. In doing this, the study sets a new agenda for civil service human capital development and administrative change in Nigeria, to spur innovation, entrepreneurship and further deepen the efficiency and competitiveness of the Nigerian economy.

The Nigerian governments at all levels (federal, state and local) will therefore, find this research very resourceful, as they struggle to improve the efficiency of public sector workers to respond to the demands and challenges of a developing economy in a rapidly globalising world. Suffice to say that this research will also be of tremendous value for resourcing and development practitioners, policy makers, NGOs, donor agencies, the civil society, development partners, multinational organisations and other stakeholders in Nigeria seeking to develop indigenous human capital competencies as a strategy for improving operational impacts. In addition, the study will also be very useful to workforce planners, learning and development professionals, HRD and HRM scholars/practitioners, as well as other academics in Nigeria and the entire sub-Saharan Africa, as they struggle to comprehend the dynamics of the country’s socio-political and economic climate and improve the skills and competencies of the Nigerian workforce, especially public sector workers.
1.8 Overview of thesis structure

Apart from this introductory chapter, this thesis consists of seven (7) other chapters and two (2) appendices, with Appendix ‘A’ containing additional materials for chapters 1 to 8; while Appendix ‘B’ contains samples of instruments used for the empirical research. Figure 1.1, provides a diagrammatical illustration of the thesis structure and the direction of each chapter is summarised as follows:

- **Chapter 2** which is literature review chapter provides a natural history of the research by critically exploring the underlying issues that provide the academic and practical justifications for this study, with the aim of situating the research in broader development and management contexts.

- **Chapter 3** which is the second review chapter critically explores and integrates the key concepts underpinning the study. It examines the interconnections between HC, TM and capacity development with the aim of integrating the knowledge territories that provide the conceptual and theoretical foundations for this study; and by so doing, outline the theoretical framework that guides the empirical chapters of this study.

- **Chapter 4** constitutes both a discussion of the associated key theoretical issues in post structural discourse analysis, as well as a descriptive account of how the study was developed and conducted in practice. In this regard, the chapter highlights the methodological and design framework that guided the practical conduct of this study in terms of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

- **Chapter 5** utilises document analysis and some interview data to discursively explore the issue of capability development in the NFCS highlighting the nature of current human and institutional capability issues facing the Service. The chapter also explores the discourses of human capital and capability development in the NFCS, and argues that current approaches to people development in the Service seem inadequate to the needs of a modern public service.

- **Chapter 6** critically engages with the issues raised from the discussions in chapter five and analyses the main structural, institutional and other contextual issues that influence the contents and implementation trajectories of reform policies in the NFCS. The chapter utilises interview data, documents and relevant literatures to explore issues of power relations and the incentives that influence the decisions of governing elites and other powerful interest groups in Nigeria, in order to understand
how favourable policies for rethinking human capital in the NFCS development can be constructed.

- Finally, **chapter 7**, which is the concluding chapter of this thesis, tries to reframe the discourse on skills, institutional and policy development in Nigeria, by building theory in explaining how civil service human capital and skills development can be furthered amidst institutional voids and structural constraints in the Nigerian civil service. A key feature of this chapter is the introduction of a normative framework for transformational civil service capability development in DCs, using the Nigerian example. The chapter also highlights key recommendations derived from this study.

**Figure 1.1: Structural diagram of thesis chapters**

![Diagram of thesis chapters](Image)

Author, 2014
Chapter 2

Contextualising civil service human resource challenges in Nigeria: The capability and TM imperatives

The changing role of the State as well as new international forces have resulted in the need for new skills, attitudes and behaviours among public officials at all levels. It is not surprising then that the core competencies for the public sector of the 21st century differ in many ways from the past, especially as the demands placed on public servants, in terms of skills, knowledge and capacities, are rapidly increasing and becoming more complex.

– Alberti and Bertucci (2005: 9).

2.1 Introduction

The fundamental aim of this chapter is to critically explore and integrate the underlying contextual issues that provide the academic and practical justifications for this study. In doing this, the chapter takes an innovative approach to the review of literatures. Therefore, in place of the conventional literature review chapter, I have instead opted to give a ‘natural history’ of my study. Through this, I seek to position the critical issues that inform this thesis, as well as the main research agendas and critical gaps that emerge thereof. It also enables me position myself as an audience and part of the construction of the knowledge that I seek to report in this chapter and throughout the rest of the thesis. Overall, this approach is intended to help situate the research in broader development and management contexts.

It is crucial to note however, that providing a ‘natural history’ of the research instead of a conventional literature review does not in any way diminish the utility of the arguments raised here or in any part of this thesis. This is especially so considering that insights and influences of relevant literatures are drawn out throughout the chapter. Moreover, consistent with the narrative discursive approach to data analysis that underpins this thesis (See Chapter 4, 4.12), reference to the literature is also made throughout the empirical chapters to augment the research data and illuminate the knowledge conveyed in this study (Silverman, 2013).

The chapter is developed in three parts, and takes a problematizing approach. The first part critically assesses the concept of civil service and some of the key trends influencing the service in contemporary global contexts. Further, there is also an attempt to highlight the implications of the changing role of the state and that of the knowledge imperatives on the modern civil service. Part two places these issues in the context of SSA, with the aim of
positioning the human capital and capability challenges currently facing the civil service in the sub-continent. Finally, part three outlines the agenda and the key research gaps that drive this thesis by providing a brief critical overview of the imperatives of capability development (henceforth CD), highlighting some of the limitations in current CD literature and research.

2.2 Contextualising the civil service

2.2.1 Theorising the civil service: Meanings and conceptualisations

There is no standard definition of what constitutes either the ‘civil service’ or ‘civil servants’ (McCourt, 2013; Ayee, 2008). As a term however, its origin could be traced to the mid-eighteenth century (c. 1785), when the British Administration in India used it to describe a system that emphasises selection on the basis of merit (Olaopa, 2012; Ayee, 2008). As a phenomenon, the first generation of civil servants appear to have emerged in England during the nineteenth century, through the activities of ‘court servants’ or ‘court clerks’, who replaced persons of the royal household in performing several government works (Olaopa, 2012). This largely explains why the civil service is widely considered as one of the great political inventions of nineteenth century England (see Olaopa, 2012).

In contemporary times, the service is increasingly conceptualised as the nucleus of a country’s public service, and current definitions are influenced largely by domestic laws, practices and conventions (Olaopa, 2012; Lienert & Modi, 1997). As Rao (2013: 1) notes, the civil service is ‘usually understood as a subset of the wider public service’. If this position is correct, then it becomes crucial here, to be clear about the meaning being ascribed to the term ‘public’. In this study and following Ayee (2008: 9), it is simply used to imply ‘the invocation of the power of the state’. This explains why the existence or powers of civil service institutions usually derive solely on the varying degrees of authority conferred on them by the State, through some formal processes and/or legislations (Ayee, 2008, ECA, 2010).

The endowment of this State power however, varies from one institution to another, depending on their role and the system of governance operational in a particular country (ECA, 2010; Ayee, 2008). It is this ability to invoke (to a greater or lesser degree) the compulsive power of the state and the control of these powers through recognised processes of political control, which brings the civil service within the purview of the public sector and the public service in particular (Ayee, 2005; McCourt, 2013). Ayee (2008: 9 – 10) identifies three broad groups as follows:
Bodies, which are readily recognisable, as obviously exercising governmental functions: ministries, departments, agencies, local government units and similar public bodies. These are clearly governmental bodies in the fullest sense, most with long histories.

Bodies such as state enterprises, boards and corporations, ‘parastatals’, such as electricity and water enterprises, the governmental sanction of which lies in the legislation which determines their institutional structure, finances, powers and duties; but whose external façade rests on long established professional or technical personnel and practices, and which mainly began life as private ventures. Generally, the compulsive power inherent in this group relates to the enforcement of a monopoly or a sole duty; and

Institutions whose activities concern citizens pursuing their individual personal interests, but which can enforce certain of their decisions by sanction of a governmental power conferred on them. Examples of this group are professional regulatory bodies; in which state power is usually conferred to enable a body to have an ultimate enforcement role, considered to be of public benefit.

The civil service as an integral part of the public service, can thus be said to represent ‘a group of institutions, which have in common some reliance on the power of the state, from which they can justify their activities’ (Ayee, 2008: 9). Perhaps, this is why some authors (see for example: Haque, 2001; ECA, 2010) extend the definition of the civil service to incorporate the entirety of the public service, including the military, the police, health workers, and employees of public enterprises (Rao, 2013). While there is some value in this kind of definitional approach, the problem however, is that it tends to lead to conceptual confusions and misunderstandings concerning the meaning and roles of the civil service, especially in DCs.

It is important at this juncture therefore, to make a distinction between the public service and the civil service. This is consistent with Aeberhard’s (2001) semantic distinction between the French *function publique* – a generic term that covers all permanent state personnel and municipal employees, and *le service public*, which refers to public utilities of general benefit to the citizenry, usually regulated by governments. And although there is no clear distinction between both terms in the academic literature, it would appear however, that the public service is a broader term that encompasses the activities of the civil service (Maikudi, 2012; Minogue et al., 1998). As Maikudi (2012) points out, the public service comprises of government ministries, extra-ministerial departments and statutory agencies and
corporations, while the civil service constitutes the inner core, or the heart of the public service. The civil service is therefore, ‘made up of a well organised body of permanent paid officials of MDAs under the executive arm of government, charged with the responsibility of implementing government policies and programmes in accordance with laid down rules and procedures’ (Anifowose & Enemuo, 1999: 279).

This suggests that there are some subtle differences, as well as overlapping meanings between the two terms (i.e. public service and civil service). The current trend in terminology seems to increasingly lean towards the general term ‘public service’ (Olaopa, 2012). This is perhaps, because the ‘public service has a dominant characteristics, regardless of the terms used to describe it’ (Olaopa, 2012: 26). This notwithstanding, for the purpose of this thesis however, while the meanings ascribed to these terms are very flexible and are used somewhat interchangeably, the unit of analysis remains the **civil service**.

In this regard, and following Rao (2013: 3), my usage of the term ‘civil service’, ‘refers to the core, permanent administrative arm of government, including officials working in government MDAs; as well as those who advise, develop, and are responsible for implementing government policies and programmes and managing day-to-day government activities’. This kind of conceptualisation is useful, considering that the many functions performed by governments make it essential to distinguish between the civilian corps and the industrial or commercial corps, because these categories of public servants are usually entitled to different conditions of service, including: rates of pay, labour relations and are controlled by different statutory regulations (Olaopa, 2012).

### 2.2.2 Ethos of the civil service

The ethos of the civil service is an ideology that is usually applied to the administrative character of the State, and has largely been influenced by the view that civil servants represent the universal interest of a society (Dror, 2001; Caiden, 1981; Plant, 2003). Although the nineteenth century England is usually credited with the evolution of the modern civil service, the ideologies underpinning the basic features of the service can be traced to early western democracies, and to as far back as classical philosophers such as Plato and Hegel (Das, 1998; Redman-Simmons, 2009; Plant, 2003). Plato in his *Republic* for instance, introduced the idea of the *Guardian*, who is supposed to pursue the public good without recourse to private interests. For Hegel, in *The Philosophy of Right* (1820/1976), the idea of civil service represents a universal class, synthesising the particularism of the civil society with the general interests of the state (Redman-Simmons, 2009). Hegel argued
that the most important state institution was the bureaucracy – a transcendent entity, which the exercise of its power should be a mission to be performed for God or society (Knox, 1952, cited in Olaopa, 2012).

This line of reasoning resonates with the Benthamite view of a benevolent guardian state. Propounded by Jeremy Bentham in the nineteenth century, this influential idea conceptualised civil servants as benevolent social guardians who are generally committed to achieving the common good (Das, 1998; Redman-Simmons, 2009). As Das (1998) points out, the idea of a benevolence guardian state has a long tradition in economics, and has had remarkable influence on discussions concerning public policy in the modern era. Its assumptions are premised on the idea that civil servants are somehow morally and intellectually above the system in which they operate and selflessly seek the welfare of the people, even in situations where the people are ambivalent of what their best interests should be (Das, 1998; Plant, 2003).

Max Weber’s concept of bureaucracy reflects a similar philosophy to Bentham’s. Weber (864-1920), popularised the idea of bureaucracy and his analysis is generally acknowledged as the foundation for modern sociological study of bureaucracy and the civil service. Premised on the notion of organisational permanency and structural sanctity, this model asserts that domination should be exerted through charisma, tradition and rational-legal authority (Olaopa, 2012; McCourt, 2013).

The idea of civil service bureaucracy as enunciated by Weber promises a stable organisation, irrespective of the incumbents or workforce composition (Das, 1998). This arrangement was to be guaranteed by an impersonal, hierarchical, rule-based organisation, where administrators exercise authority in accordance with a clearly defined framework, and only by the virtue of the office they occupy (Olaopa, 2012). To facilitate this, Weber argues that continuity, precision, discipline/strictness, reliability, objectivity, division of labour and functional specialisation, should be the defining characteristics of both the civil service and its civil servants (Redman-Simmons, 2009; McCourt, 2013). Bureaucracy, in other words, emerges as a uniquely impersonal, neutral, passive and instrumental process, and is located in an organisation’s basic structural characteristics, including:

- A well-defined hierarchy of authority.
- Division of labour based on functional specialisation.
- A system of rules covering the rights and duties of incumbents of various positions in the organisation.
iv. A system of procedures for dealing with work.

v. Impersonality of interpersonal relationships.

vi. Selection for employment and promotion based on technical competence (See Olaopa, 2012: 10 – 11).

Weber wrote so approvingly of the virtues of bureaucracy, so much so that modern literature started depicting the bureaucrat as a benevolent social guardian, who maximises general welfare and promotes the objectives of the state (Plant, 2003; Olaopa, 2012). The benevolent social guardian discourse dominated the discourse on the nature and ethos of the civil service for a long time. However, it should be observed that the emphasis and reference is to ‘ideal type’ bureaucracy, which never materialises in real life situations (Plant, 2003; Olaopa, 2012).

In recent times therefore, the benevolent social guardian view of the civil service has been challenged by different theorists, including public choice theorists (see for example: Olsen, 1982; Nisakanen, 1971; Mueller, 2011); transaction-cost economics and agency theorists (e.g. Williamson, 1985); development theorists (e.g. Sen, 1999) and by New Public Management perspectives (e.g. Larbi, 1999; Walsh, 1995; Hood, 1991). In particular, the Weberian model has been criticised as being too ‘idealistic’ and ‘unrealistic’, because it ignores the place of self-interest, value systems and politico-economic dynamics in social interactions (Mueller, 2013). Public choice theorists for instance, have used the self-interest perspective, to highlight and explain how and why civil servants pursue selfish personal interests at the detriment of the common good; and how government programmes create avenues for rampant rent-seeking and clientelistic behaviours among civil servants (Olaopa, 2012; ECA, 2010).

While these critical insights have admittedly broadened the understanding of the nature of the modern civil service, the principles guiding the operations of the civil service have however, remained relatively the same since its evolution in the nineteenth century (Rao, 2013; McCourt, 2013). In contemporary times therefore, the modern civil service, connotes the idea of professionalization, where civil servants have common recruitment conditions, development prospects and similar terms and conditions of service; and a political belief which accords greater merit to collective over individual action (Olaopa, 2012).
2.3 Contemporary trends influencing the Civil Service in a global context

Table 2.1 summarizes some of the major trends influencing the civil service in a global context. As the table highlights, the changing role of the State, demographics and advances in information and communications technology (ICT), appear to be the main trends influencing the modern civil service globally (Bourgon, 2005; Soni, 2004; Robinson, 2014). And while by no means exhaustive or prescriptive, these issues are indicative of the major challenges that the civil service is facing in most countries – whether developed or developing. For the purpose of analysis and to ensure lucidity, I have grouped these trends into two broad groups: the changing role of government and the knowledge imperative. These issues are briefly discussed in the next sub-sections.

**Table 2.1: Trends to influence the civil service**

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<th>Nature of Government</th>
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<td>Greater reliance on information and communications technology</td>
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<tr>
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<td>New and more systems for reporting, tracking, and monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age distribution and diversity</td>
<td>Managing older people working in the civil service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>More diversified civil services across countries: cultural, religious, gender, sex and all types of differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information and Communications Technology (ICT)</td>
<td>Newer, faster and more intuitive ICT will enable clearer and more accurate communication and encourage social interaction and collaborative planning and implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Younger workers, referred to as Generation Y (Gen Y) will represent substantial amount of the civil service workforce in the future. Many Gen Y workers indicate that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They intend to work for more employers over the course of their career;</td>
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<td>• They want to be challenged and engaged;</td>
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<td>• They prefer to collaborate in teams;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They want some choice in their work arrangements including;</td>
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<td>flexibility and input into their own training and development;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They are prepared to accept more responsibility for their retirement planning; and</td>
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<td>• They seek constant feedback.</td>
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Source: Adapted from Robinson (2014: 2).
2.3.1 The changing nature of Government and the role of the Civil Service in contemporary contexts

Over the past recent years, the role and institutional character of the State have been questioned, and the civil service has been under pressure to devise new forms of public administration and innovative service delivery systems to overcome social and economic deficiencies in both developed and less developed countries (Lane 1993; Ayee, 2008). This development has arguably resulted in new roles for the civil service (McCourt, 2013). It is not surprising then that the core functions of the civil service of the 21st century differ in many ways from the past, especially as the forces of globalisation continue to induce many social, economic and political changes affecting all regions of the world (Alberti & Bertucci, 2005; Ayee, 2008). Alberti and Bertucci (2005: 9 - 11) identify and describe four trends that are influencing the changing role of the State and the transformations of public administration in different parts of the world:

- Construction or re-construction of a State that operates according to the rule of law: The challenge here is to dismantle old State institutions and to bring them in line with new values of openness, participation, and transparency.

- The modernization of the State: This is a challenge that affects all countries and is related to the process of re-adjustment of State institutions and public management to the need for greater cost-effectiveness, quality, simplicity and participation in government.

- The reconfiguration of the role of the State: With the spread of globalization and the changes occurring at both the domestic and international levels, the functions and role of the State have been transformed substantially. Governments have also been motivated to learn to continuously re-evaluate government performance in relation to citizen demands and global pressures.

- Growing demand to make democracy more meaningful and to allow for more opportunities of participation in policy-making: Citizens are asking that government be reformed in order to enhance public participation, to expand political opportunities, and to improve its operations as well as the quality of services provided. In some other parts of the world, the difficulty of governments to deliver adequate services, especially in the social sphere, and promote better living conditions for all has also resulted in a widespread disappointment among the population for the current forms of governance.
Given the foregoing, it would appear that the changing role of the State has led to increased awareness among citizens. There is now a greater demand for more participation in key spheres of public policy decision making processes, including how taxes should be spent and on what, and for better and more effective public services (Olaopa, 2012). In contemporary times therefore, especially since the beginning of 21st century, governmental functions across the globe has witnessed an unprecedented extension, and the civil service has assumed greater responsibility for the direction and effective utilisation of human and natural resources and the fast-growing technology of the modern world for the creation of an environment conducive for rapid socio-economic and human development (Ayee, 2008).

The civil service has also become the principal organ used by governments for achieving the economic, political and social goals of the state (Monye-Emina, 2012). The service also provides continuity in governance and serves as a repository of knowledge/experience of the procedures of governance. Indeed, the relevance of the civil service to the socio-economic and human development of nations-states cannot be overemphasised (ECA, 2010). Schiavo-Campo and Sundaram (2001) cited in Rao (2013: 5) succinctly summarise six (6) importance of the civil service in contemporary contexts to include:

a) Governance: A necessary, but not sufficient condition for good governance is a skilled, motivated and efficient civil service with a professional ethos. By contrast, an ineffective or inefficient civil service is sufficient to produce bad governance.
b) Public goods and services: Access to public services and their quantity and quality largely depend on the skills and motivation of the civil servants who provide or oversee the services.
c) Economic policy improvements: Some reforms in this area depend particularly for their implementation on competent and motivated civil servants.
d) Management of public expenditure and revenue: The civil service is critical for the responsible management of public expenditure and revenues. Responsible management requires the provision of sustainable employment opportunities for competent and motivated personnel.
e) Fiscal sustainability: The civil service can help maintain the sustainability of public finances. A well-chosen combination of measures affecting the number of employees and their salaries can improve the effectiveness of the government apparatus while also reducing its cost.
f) Institutional development: This is a move from a less efficient to a more efficient set of rules and incentives. An example could be better implementation of regulatory
frameworks: a skilled and motivated civil service can work with external organisations to help them better interact with the relevant regulatory frameworks and entrench better ways of working.

Practically therefore, the contemporary civil service comprises the entire arrangements which constitute government’s mechanism for executing policies and programmes, and delivering services to adequately meet the needs of the citizenry (Olaopa, 2012; ECA, 2010). It could be argued thus, that the civil service not only determines the framework of government policies and programmes, but also directs the trajectory of national development and impacts on the roles/responsibilities of different stakeholder groups (Adewumi, 2012; Evans, 2008; Bunse & Fritz, 2012; Jooste, 2008).

2.3.2 Innovation, the ‘knowledge imperative’ and human capital trends

Over the last two decades or so, globalisation, information technologies and innovation have transformed conventional thinking about governance, the role of government and the work done by the civil service (Public Service Commission - PSC, 2009). In both developed and developing countries, there have been wide-ranging reforms in all sectors of the economy – including the civil service, with some remarkable success stories as well as some abysmal failures (McCourt, 2013; Soni, 2004; PSC, 2009; Bourgon, 2005; Alberti & Bertuci, 2005). But whatever the outcome, what is clear however, is that there has been ‘progress on many fronts in different parts of the world, and we have also made enough mistakes that it should now be possible to look back and assess the lessons learned, as we turn our attention to the challenges ahead’ (Bourgon, 2005: 13).

The need to focus on the challenges ahead immediately becomes apparent, considering that despite the diversity of governance experiences and the rapid societal changes of the past recent years, all countries of the world appear to still face many similar challenges (Bourgon, 2005; Robison, 2014). Indeed, as Bourgon (2005: 14) points out, ‘it has become customary to talk of:

1. The transformation brought about by the forces of globalization;
2. The impact of information and communication technologies; and
3. The emergence of knowledge-based economies and societies.’

Against the backdrop of these common challenges and in the context of this thesis, it has become imperative therefore, to explore how to improve the functional capabilities of the civil service in all contexts, in order to reposition the service to bring more value-added to
society in the coming years (PSC, 2009; Robinson, 2014). This need assumes a somewhat critical dimension against the realization that the bureaucratic organizational model in the civil service and the industrial management model in the private sector, which have characterized the organization of work for most of the last century, no longer work (Bourgon, 2005). These approaches, which were built around clearly defined and predictable tasks and relied on a strict division of labour, are now grossly insufficient in organising modern workplaces.

The implications of this paradigm shift are especially significant for the civil service, considering that the idea of the knowledge society (Drucker, 1969; Castells, 1998; Gibbons et al., 2004) has become a dominant discourse and an embedded pervasive practice. As Bourgon (2005: 17) succinctly argues, ‘a profound transformation took shape in the private sector during the 70's, 80's and 90's as the knowledge-based economy started to take shape. When the assets of an organization become intellectual, the old management model starts to break down.’

The Public Service has been slower to adapt, but it must, in order to provide value-added, remain relevant to citizen’s needs, and continue to be an attractive workplace (Bourgon, 2005). This transformation will arguably be critical to the ability of the civil service to attract and retain its fair share of the best talent in the future (Soni, 2004; ECA, 2010). The validity of this argument becomes clearer, when juxtaposed against the realisation that the nature of work in the civil service is ‘shifting from tangible to intangible services (building a road vs. providing information), from mass production of the same service to citizen-centred services (issuing checks vs. assisting start-ups)’ (Bourgon, 2005: 17). Importantly, and as many scholars (e.g. Bourgon, 2005; Robinson, 2014) note, the organization of the work and the structures of authority are also changing and this has serious implications for the future of the civil service.

Indeed, it is now becoming customary to talk of the ‘non-hierarchical’ learning organisation (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Senge, 1994), where the organisation of work is increasingly dependent on the use of networks reaching inside and outside, well beyond the traditional boundaries of the organization. These shifts arguably require new ways of thinking, and the power of the office must now necessarily co-exist with the power of ideas, the power to innovate, and the power to discover new and better ways of doing things, in order to effectively promote and respond to the broad range of public interests in a cohesive and coherent manner (Bourgon, 2005).
What is more, the conventional idea of ‘training’, as it was done in the past, only works when the content of the work is predictable and repetitive (Wilson, 2012). Learning, on the other hand, is central to the ability of an organization to innovate, and will be key to the future of the civil service in all contexts (Bourgon, 2005). At the practical level, this implies preparing highly competent and qualified ‘knowledge workers’ who will have the added characteristics of being learners, innovators and entrepreneurs (Wilson, 2012).

Despite this realisation, it nonetheless remains an open question whether, and to what extent, will the civil service be able to adapt to the ‘knowledge imperative’ and encourage innovation and enterprise development, especially given that the consequences of failures can be very damaging. Civil service innovation is arguably a complex undertaking and some countries will choose a more modest approach, considering that unlike the private sector where failures in innovation only impacts on a firm’s reputation or its shareholder’s return, the consequences of failure in the public sector are borne by citizens and has wide-ranging implications for societal advancement.6

Given the above, there is some sense to suggest therefore that the way in which the Civil Service adapts to the ‘knowledge imperatives’ and innovation will set the context for future human capital and capability development reforms. This assertion becomes self-evident against the realisation that the competition for talent will be fierce among countries and between the private and public sectors in the coming years. Indeed, considering the personal preferences of the ‘Generation Y’ earlier highlighted in Figure 2.1, it could be argued that people will be attracted to the Civil Service if they are given the chance to make a difference, and the opportunity to use their skills and reach their full potentials (Bourgon, 2005). Corollarily, a Civil Service whose job description is limited to repetitive and predictable tasks will arguably attract a different kind of workforce, with wide-ranging implications. It is plausible to argue then that innovation will be difficult to achieve in the civil service without some degree of tolerance for failure and reasonable risk taking (Bourgon, 2005; Soni, 2004).

What is more, the old ‘psychological contract’ of offering lower compensation in the civil service than the private sector, in return for greater job security, is no longer a valid approach in dealing with ‘Generation Y’. Instead, a reasonable pay, opportunities for

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6 Securing innovation in the public sector represents a major challenge. As Bourgon (2005: 18) succinctly argues, ‘the tolerance for failure and even for reasonable risk-taking is low. The current public service management systems do not encourage innovation, favouring instead predictability in a given range of activities. On the other hand, failure to transform bureaucratic organizations into “intelligent” and “learning” organizations, able to explore and find new and better ways of achieving their mission, might signal their declining relevance in the future.’
personal development, acquisition of new skills and lifelong learning appear to have become key factors to a sense of personal security, employability and ultimately influences career choice. Perhaps, this is why Bourgon (2005: 18) asserts that ‘one must learn a living to earn a living’ in today’s world. Considering this phenomenon, it becomes imperative therefore, to pay close attention to some of the major human capital trends that are likely to affect the civil service in the future, in order to respond appropriately in due course.

2.4 Theorising global Civil Service human capital trends into the future

Identifying future opportunities, rather than solving problems of the past, appears to have become a more productive approach in dealing with the many challenges of the contemporary world of ‘shifting paradigms’ (William, 2014; PSC, 2009). This identification requires vigilance with respect to trend-spotting and examination (PSC, 2009). In this regard, trend experts (e.g. Naisbitt, 2006) note that change is often the result of a ‘confluence of forces’ and that ‘what is most critical is to determine whether there are enough different forces at play pushing in the same direction’ (PSC, 2009: 4).

It is important to highlight that in identifying trends, pieces of information may appear incoherent, or contradictory and may obviously not be directly related (PSC, 2009; William, 2014; Naisbitt, 2006). Yet, the most revealing conclusions or questions arise from the dynamics of these interconnections (no matter how partial) and, as such, ‘the better we understand the connections, the more accurate the picture will be’ (Naisbitt, 2006: 43). However, in line with the argument of the Public Service Commission – PSC (2009: 4), it is also important ‘to resist the temptation to find causality between factors when a correlation might be the only conclusion to draw’.

It is worth bearing in mind also, that although unpredictable and cataclysmic changes can often disrupt our current social realities, the world appears to move more slowly than we sometimes assume (Heclo, 1994; Hope, 2011). In a civil service context, especially in SSA, this is arguably the case. For instance, warnings about a ‘tsunami’ of skilled-emigration and the so called ‘brain drain’ paralysing the civil service in SSA have been with us for over two decades and have not yet materialised – and is unlikely to do so.

Against this backdrop therefore, it makes more sense to say that departures are undoubtedly happening in the civil service – as in all social systems, but in a rather gradual and often unexpected fashion (PSC, 2009). Admittedly, an unexpected event can result in the need to change the civil service or restructure its processes very quickly to remain responsive. This is especially so, considering that certain unpredictable events of the past (e.g. economic
depression, war, changing skills requirements and globalisation) have certainly produced cataclysmic influences on the civil service and on the public service generally (Olaopa, 2010; McCourt, 2013).

Given the unexpected changes that have become characteristic of the contemporary global political economy, the need to understand some of the emerging future human capital trends influencing the civil service has some merit. And while I acknowledge that the future cannot be predicted with certainty, a sophisticated trend analysis can however, help raise significant questions and provoke a more meaningful discussion about possible directions and anticipated outcomes (PSC, 2009; Naisbitt, 2006). In the context of this study and consistent with emerging discourses in the broader HRD field, four (4) major trends appear to be particularly significant (see: KPMG, 2012; Soni, 2004; PSC, 2009; Johnson, 2014 and etc.). These four trends are briefly discussed below:

2.4.1 Glocalisation

Following Vorhauser-Smith (2012: 16) glocalisation here and for the rest of this thesis is taken to mean ‘the point at which global and local approaches and practices intersect’. Simply put, it is the art of balancing the global and the local. The challenges of balancing these forces in the civil service can be great and has been shown to affect national development (see Lavigna & Hays, 2005). Unsurprisingly, globalization is affecting all organisations – whether public or private, and today’s workforce is increasingly global. Therefore, managing, hiring and identifying talent globally, while retaining important local insights have become a critical issue for the 21st century Civil Service (Robinson, 2014).

2.4.2 Enterprise development and technology

Resistance to change in government agencies is not an uncommon phenomenon (McCourt, 2013). For the civil service, grappling with rising customer demands and expectations is a new challenge, which has been heightened by the increased accessibility that new technology brings. New technologies require skills lacking among many civil servants globally and this has serious consequences. As pointed out by the PSC (2009: 8). ‘HR trends suggest a move toward greater talent and knowledge management and more porous personnel systems, as opposed to systems that are often "sluggish, rigid and closed" with very narrowly defined career paths’.

This development is arguably more pronounced in the private sector, which has benefited immensely from technological advancements. However, technology also has tremendous
benefits for the civil service. The use of Web 2.0 Platforms and crowdsourcing for instance, has been shown to enhance the HCD process and also has the potentials of improving the overall effectiveness of the Civil Service\(^7\) (Robinson, 2014). Technology also has the potentiality of promoting greater meaningful decentralisation and enterprise development in the Civil Service, because networks of entrepreneurs bring creativity and offer greater relevance (PFF, 2009; Robinson, 2014).

It is important to point out however, that while technology has its uses and organisations are having success with HR self-service platforms and other management tools (e.g. internal skills databases), relying exclusively on it to the exclusion of "human touch" can be counterproductive (PFF, 2009; Robinson, 2014). For example, and as the PFF (2009: 8) warns, ‘the use of technology should not be overestimated when it comes to identifying talent; while e-recruitment may be useful for handling large volumes, it is not necessarily effective at finding and selecting the right or best fit’.

2.4.3 **Lead, develop and retain the best talents**

It is a truism that people challenges are greater than ever before for all organisations, irrespective of size, location or sector, thanks to globalization, demographic shifts, and employee desires for work-life balance. This has invariably reinforced the need to attract, develop and retain individuals with high potentials – regardless of whether they are managers, specialists or individual contributors (CIPD, 2014; Strack, Dyer, et al., 2008). This largely explains why the issue of recruiting, developing and retaining the best talents is at, or very near the top of the agenda in every region of the world and in every industry. As the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) (2008: 13) argues, ‘companies may soon find talent scarcer than funding, as individuals gain more employment options’. To tackle this challenge, companies are expected to consistently and deliberately improve their leadership competencies (Crawshaw, Budwar & Davis, 2014).

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\(^7\) Introducing Web 2.0 platforms in the civil service like Canada’s ‘GCpedia’, enhances horizontal collaboration among and between departments and agencies. Web 2.0 applications provide opportunities for engagement and collaboration in the public service, the government can use them to elicit innovative solutions to problems, like a slow bureaucratic hiring process, through a coordinated horizontal collaboration of online communities or crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing is a process for connecting online communities, through several media tools in pursuit of solutions. (see Robinson, 2014: 4 – 5).
2.5 The SSA context: Situating the Civil Service human capital and capability challenges

As already indicated, the civil service has arguably become indispensable to the implementation of government policies and programme of all countries and regions – whether developing or developed (Bunse & Fritz, 2012; Minogue, 2001). The unprecedented extension of governmental functions in SSA, as in many other DCs, means that the civil service has assumed responsibility as the agency to meet critical and urgent demands of curbing poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and inequalities (Ayee, 2008). The service is therefore, expected to devise new forms of public administration and service delivery systems to overcome social and economic deficiencies in many SSA countries (Lane 1993).

Even though the role of the civil service in SSA has been deliberately downplayed for decades, a paradigmatic shift since the 1990s means that there have been a growing recognition of its importance in the development process and in the quest for a more capable state, especially in SSA (ECA, 2010). Braibant (1996:163-176) summarises the role of the civil service in national development in SSA to include:

1) The regulation of economic life and promotion of social cohesion.
2) Protection of minorities and the safeguarding of law and order in complex, multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.
3) Control of international migration flows and integration of foreigners within the national community.
4) Town and country planning, nature conservation, and the safeguarding of historical and cultural heritage and scientific research.
5) Responsible for solidarity between generations and sustainable development, safeguards and manages the collective memory of a country, and prepare its future.
6) Provides checks and balances: fundamental elements in complex societies.

Given the above, it will not be misplaced to contend that the civil service is the locale for the articulation and management of what could be considered the entire development process in SSA, because the service not only formulates and implements government policies, but is also responsible for rendering related critical services to the public (Adewunmi, 2012; Minogue, 2001; Batley & Larbi, 2006). The validity of this argument becomes self-evident, considering that it is through the instrumentality of the service that government policies are translated into services for the people (Maikudi, 2012).
Therefore, consistent with the arguments of many scholars (e.g. Ayee, 2008; ECA, 2010, McCourt, 2013) that no nation develops beyond the capacity of its civil service, it is plausible to suggest that the destiny of the SSA sub-continent and its civil services are tied, in the sense that an effective civil service makes for an effective and developmental state (Olaopa, 2010). This is especially so, in the light of ECA’s (2010: 32) argument, that the civil service in SSA is a ‘principal instrument of the state as well as an organ of employment, governance and policy making. It is seen as both a cause and a consequence of economic growth, and as an essential condition for the emergence of the modern state’. It can hardly be contested therefore, to suggest that the civil service in SSA is central to resolving the development crises currently plaguing the region.

Despite this realisation however, there is a broad consensus in many quarters however, that the service in most SSA countries has become inefficient and dysfunctional in many respects and unable to fulfil many of its basic objectives (OHCSF, 2010; ECA, 2010). As Adeyemo and Salami (2008) and Maikudi (2012) point out in their different works, the civil service in many of these countries have struggled to provide quality and efficient service delivery to all stakeholders, even as its capacity to meet socio-economic and other objectives have been grossly undermined.

With the benefit of hindsight, it could be argued, that this state of affairs is due largely to a number of inter-related and somewhat ‘familiar’ reasons including but not limited to: low institutional capacity, the brain drain phenomenon, mismanagement of natural and human resources and structural and policy issues. These challenges are briefly discussed below:

2.5.1 Institutional voids and low institutional capacity

March and Olsen (2006: 3) describe institutions as an ‘enduring collection of rules and organised practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances’ There are constitutive rules and practices, as well as normative and regulative structures that regulate appropriate behaviour for specific actors in specific situations (Burki, 2012; March & Olsen, 2006). Institutional voids could therefore be taken to mean gaps between rules and their purpose and the effectiveness of their implementation (Mair & Marti, 2009). As North (1990)
notes, institutions are embedded in identities and belongings, country-specific and are categorised as formal and informal.\footnote{Formal institutions refer to written laws, policies, rules and regulations that justify and legitimate behavioural codes, and govern socio-economic and political aspects of a society. Informal institutions on the other hand, ‘refer to the social factors shared by the members of a society that serve as constraints and/or standards, and the violations of that entails social rather than legal penalties’ (Burki, 2012: 101).}

In real life contexts, it would appear therefore that formal institutions are effective in those economies where there are high institutional capacities for the enforcement of the rule of law, including a sound regulatory framework and an exchange environment that is relatively free from corruption (Khanna and Palepu, 1997). On the other hand, informal institutions become pertinent in those economies where exchange actors and stakeholders anticipate that both regulation and accountability is going to be an issue, due to deficient legal and enforcement frameworks (Khanna and Palepu, 2000). This later point appears to be the case with SSA.

Indeed, most of the economies in the sub-Continent are increasingly characterised by the absence of much-needed institutional arrangements to regulate market exchange, mobilize economic resources, and coordinate social activities, including: the absence of adequate physical infrastructure (e.g. good roads and constant electricity), legal/enforcement and regulatory voids, and policy instabilities. The consequences of these voids, means that developing countries’ public services also suffer from limited institutional capacity to carry out their objectives (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006).

### 2.5.2 The brain drain phenomenon and the internationalisation of the HR function

Recent volatile shifts in the global economic and political environments, underpinned particularly by advances in information and communication technologies, means that the production, distribution and use of human capital have also become a global phenomenon (UN, 2002; 2010). This paradigm shift is what many analysts (e.g. Edward & Rees, 2006) describe as the internationalisation of HR. In present times, and largely through the activities of the so-called ‘transnational corporations’ (TNCs), this trend has become an embedded pervasive practice and a defining characteristic of the ‘new’ global economy (Olayode, 2006). Without going into much detail, it is easy to understand why Dicken (2003), believes that the activities of TNCs constitute a fundamental distinction in identifying what is novel in the contemporary period.
This development is arguably beneficial in so many ways and might help promote knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, innovation and in fact, capacity development. Yet, it inadvertently contributes enormously to the brain drain phenomenon. This in turn accentuates the advantages of some nations with ‘capable’ workforce over others; and subsequently encourage what many scholars (e.g. Dos Santos, 1970; Ake, 1981; Epelle, 2005, etcetera) have characterised as ‘dependency relationship’ among nation-states. As Teferra and Altbach (2004) argue, one of the most serious challenges facing many developing countries is the departure of their best scholars and scientists to the West. When this argument is placed in the context of this study, it will not be misplaced to posit that an urgent priority for SSA countries, should be to develop a strategy that enables them effectively manage and retain their already developed skilled performers (especially in the public service) who are capable of adapting to global challenges and making a difference to the quest for sustainable national development (CIPD, 2006, 2010; Brown et al., 2001).

2.5.3 Structural and institutional issues

Most of the problems faced by many SSA countries in contemporary times revolve around what many scholars have described as ‘structural and policy constraints’ to development (Larbi, 2006). This assertion finds justification in the realisation that implementing any policy or making any development intervention in SSA, as elsewhere, faces a range of embedded contextual challenges, particularly for policies endeavouring to change the status quo (Mthethwa, 2012). This is especially so, considering that reform policies are influenced by the historical, cultural, socio-economic and political contexts in which they are developed, including the policy content, the nature of the policy process and the interest of the actors involved in the formulation and implementation processes (Mthethwa, 2012).

These influences are somewhat peculiar in the context of SSA, and usually encompass several other complex dimensions, including the dynamics of power relations, mechanics of patronage and the systems of incentives; as well as the influence of diverse dominant conceptual discourses operating at endogenous and exogenous spheres (Mthethwa, 2012). Other important contextual peculiarities of the sub-continent also include high poverty levels, increasing inequalities, high mortality rates, poor education systems, corrupt governments, conflicts and insecurity, and political and policy instabilities (UNDP, 2010). It is the combination of these factors and several others, which the World Bank (2010) alludes to as ‘poverty traps’, and ensures that many SSA countries remain in a very weak position in the global economy.
In addition to impeding economic and human development, the constraints described above have also presented serious challenges for development policy implementation and public service capability development in SSA. These problems have arguably led to a constantly declining level of efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service and the State in the delivery of public goods to the citizens (McCourt, 2013). This has inadvertently precipitated the crisis of underdevelopment that has equally made the governments in many SSA countries largely illegitimate in the eyes of the people (Ayee, 2005; Ayee, 2008; Olaopa, 2010). Significantly, this unfavourable assessment of the bureaucratic nature of the civil service in SSA coincided with the growing call, at the global level, for a redefinition of the state in the light of their functioning capacity to meet the growing needs of the citizens within a democratic dispensation (Olaopa, 2010; Rao, 2013). These are the issues that gave birth to the idea of civil service reforms in SSA, as in many other DCs.

2.6 The idea of Civil Service reforms in SSA: Objectives, pathologies and the crises of inefficiency

In general terms, the idea of reforms recognise the inevitability of constant changes in human societies and enable social groups accommodate new and unexpected changes, through the adjustment of old ideas or processes in line with new exigencies or visions (Olaopa, 2008). In this regard, civil service reforms (henceforth CSRs), as an aspect of broader efforts aimed at repositioning the public sector in SSA – as elsewhere, is primarily ‘concerned with improving the capacity of institutions to make policy and deliver services in an efficient, effective, and accountable manner’ (ADB, 2005: 139). The need for civil service reforms in SSA is therefore borne out of the need to reposition the State to be able to better meet the needs and aspirations of citizens (Olaopa, 2008; McCourt, 2013). The ultimate goal is to raise the quality of public services delivered to the population and to enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions (ECA, 2010). As Rao (2013: 1) points out, ‘civil service reform activities have included efforts to make government more organised, affordable, honest, and responsive; to bring government closer to the grassroots; and to make government perform and deliver better’.

Reforming the civil service is particularly relevant for SSA, considering that the process is crucial ‘in improving governance, service delivery, economic policy and public financial management’ (Rao, 2013: 1). As Olowu (1999: 2) aptly points out, ‘central to the notion of an effective state is an effective civil service’. In the context of SSA therefore, and consistent with Das (1998: 40) CSR ‘…should aim at not merely cutting the flab from an
obese civil service but also at building enough capability in the civil service for assuring that services such as education, health, poverty alleviation, security and infrastructure are provided efficiently and at an affordable cost.’

It is important at this juncture, to highlight that CSR is not in any way peculiar to SSA or even to DCs for that matter. Indeed, as Olaopa (2012: 130) points out, CSR is a phenomenon ‘which is very much in line with global trends’ or what Kettl (2000: 68) describes as ‘the global public management revolution’. As Kettl (2000: 68) aptly argues, this revolution is essentially aimed at addressing the ‘core issues of the relationship between government and society’, as a means of not only enhancing service delivery, but also of generating trust (Olaopa, 2012). The defining elements of this global trend as identified by Rao (2013: 1), include ‘efforts to make government more organised, affordable, honest, and responsive; to bring government closer to the grassroots; and to make government perform and deliver better.’

It is important to point out also that CSRs are not just about techniques and processes, but are highly emotional and complicated exercise, which are bound up with ideology, values, and key societal issues (ECA, 2010). Therefore, to make sense of the current human capital and capability challenges currently facing the civil service in SSA, it is crucial to understand the objectives and conceptual underpinning of CSRs in SSA.

2.6.1 Conceptual approaches and objectives of current CSRs in SSA

An assessment of the general literature on CSR (see for example: Caiden, 1991; Ayee, 2008; ECA, 2010, and etc.), suggests that the socio-economic and political changes in the 1970s and 1980s provided the backdrop for CSRs in both developed and developing countries. These reforms, which were partly prompted by the world-wide economic recession of the 1970s and 1980s, largely deemphasized the role of the State, and rather ‘emphasized the role of the private sector in the socio-economic life of the countries concerned, a phenomenon that is referred to in the literature as the “rolling back of the state”’ or the “withdrawal” of the state’ (ECA, 2010: 16).

An underpinning objective for these reforms appears to have been the search for efficiency and effectiveness in the face of dwindling State resources in many countries (World Bank, 1997). The central motive for CSRs, was therefore, to improve the ways ‘in which government is managed and services delivered, with emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency, economy and value for money’ (Ayee, 2008: 8). This was in most instances, elaborated into
a general crusade aimed at reorganizing and ‘modernizing’ the public sector including the civil service in line with the dominant neo-liberal discourse (Caiden, 1991; Olowu, 2010).

ECA (2010: 16), argues that ‘these changes had their political and ideological underpinnings in the rise of neoliberal economic thinking and conservatism in both the UK and the US in the late 1970s and 1980s, and were reflected in the concurrent shift in the strategies of the IMF and the World toward a more liberal and market-oriented ideology’. The emergence of the neoliberal agenda in the form of ‘withdrawing the state’ in Western countries in the 1970s began to have expression in IMF and World Bank supported economic reform programmes in SSA countries in the 1980s, with a similar demand for a smaller but efficient and effective civil service institutions (Caiden 1991; ECA, 2010; Olaopa, 2010; Caiden, 1991).

Therefore, it could be argued that the need to reform the civil service in SSA as in other DCs has been prompted largely by world-wide pressures in public finances and the neoliberal narrative of getting more for less (Ayee, 2008; Olaopa, 2012). While this argument is certainly valid, it is important to acknowledge however, that the focus of CSR in SSA has changed over time, and opinions differ about the goals and objectives of current practices (Rao, 2013). In this regard, McCourt (2013) identifies six major challenges faced by the civil service in developing contexts, and six approaches to reforms. Table 2.2 succinctly summarises these approaches and types of reforms.
Table 2.2: Approaches to civil service reforms in SSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Weberian’ public administration and capacity building (Post-independence periods)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ‘Weberian’ approach emphasises hierarchy and inputs, specifically efficient resource management. Minogue (2001, cited in McCourt 2013) identifies the main features of the approach as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A separation between politics and elected politicians, and administration and appointed administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administration that is continuous and rule-governed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrators who are trained professionals, appointed on the basis of qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A functional division of labour, and a hierarchy of tasks and people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resources belonging to the organisation, not the individuals within it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public servants serving public, not private, interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The approach is distinguished by an emphasis on centralised administration, a focus on structure rather than outputs, and the replacement of patronage by a rational, orderly system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Decentralisation (1970s to present)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decentralisation refers to the transfer of power from central to lower levels of government. Scott and Rao (2011) identify three main types of decentralisation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrative decentralisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political (or ‘democratic’) decentralisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fiscal decentralisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralisation can be pursued for a number of reasons: for example, to bring decision-making as close as possible to the people affected, or to respond to political and geographic tensions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pay and employment reform (1980s and 1990s)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay and employment reforms, seeks to reduce the fiscal burdens that have arisen from public sector development. Nunberg (1994) gives examples of some of the many civil service reform initiatives that affect pay and employment conditions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employment reduction mechanisms such as voluntary departure and early retirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retraining, redeployment, credit and public works programmes for redundant employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cost-of-living salary supplements or top-ups for specific roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attempts to make wages more equitable, and the pay system more efficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These initiatives have tended to prioritise short-term cost reduction, but they have also aimed to make the civil service more effective and efficient (Nunberg 1994).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be gleaned from Table 2.1, some approaches to CSRs appear to have dominated certain periods, but there are clearly some overlaps and none is mutually exclusive. In present times, CSRs in SSA has expanded to include part of the broader agenda for improving governance, which according to ECA (2010: 16) includes three broad areas:

- Rule-based operation of the government itself to improve the supply of public goods;
- Voice and accountability for citizens to demand better public services; and
- More efficient and effective regulation of the private sector to improve its competitiveness.

Against this backdrop and as pointed out by Dror (2001), CSRs and public sector reforms more generally, tries to head off crises in the capacity to govern and therefore commands attention everywhere especially when public officials are expected to provide satisfactory

\[\text{Source: Adapted from Rao (2013: 6 – 9); McCourt (2013: 2 – 8).}\]
service, make improvements, plan ahead to meet most contingencies and keep up with the state of the art. Perhaps, this is why the ECA (2010: 34) argues that ‘effective CSR is part of good or sound governance, which also includes accountability, transparency and the rule of law….CSR as part of the good governance agenda requires a commitment to establish a more professional civil service with a stronger emphasis on performance and less influenced by patrimonialism and ethnic loyalties.’ This is particularly significant, considering that the need to enhance the State’s capacity for promoting development in the wake of the relentless pressures towards democratization and globalisation, has become critical (Olaopa, 2012; Caiden, 1991; ECA, 2010). The civil service, widely recognized as the ‘core’ public service is therefore, an instrument of the state whose capacity must be substantially and continuously increased. Yet, despite this realisation and in spite of efforts at reforms, many civil service institutions have remained inefficient in SSA, and their continued poor performance has been blamed on a number of factors, which I refer to as ‘pathologies’ and are briefly discussed in the section that follows.

2.6.2 Pathologies of CSRs in SSA: Challenges, traps and the crises of inefficiency

As already indicated in 2.6.1, CSRs in SSA are largely intended to be a comprehensive programme aimed at improving the public sector and the entire economy of a State. However, the unjust international political economy and persistent public pressures for increased government intervention to reverse developmental challenges, have forced governments in SSA and many other DCs to adopt ad hoc measures (Das, 1998; ECA, 2010; Olaopa, 2012). As Ayee (2008: 8) argues, these temporary measures, ‘resulted in large-scale borrowing, unprecedented public debt, high rates of inflation, frequent currency devaluations, and harsh policies imposed under the pressure of the World Bank and IMF’.

This development arguably has serious implications for the direction and outcomes of CSRs in SSA. In practical terms, this largely explains why CSRs in SSA appear to have been driven mainly by donors rather than being ‘home-grown’ (Olaopa, 2008; Olaopa, 2012; McCourt, 2013; Scott, 2011). As a result of this development, emphasis was/is usually placed on accountability, improved service delivery and a demonstration of value for money (Ayee, 2008). The outcome of this approach show mixed results, mainly ‘because public expectations of the state in Africa are fundamentally different while the notions of public service ethos or civil service culture have not changed as envisaged’ (ECA, 2010: 30). And while the elements of CSR vary from one African country to another, there seem to be key features that have remained prominent and consistent. With the benefit of hindsight, these features can be categorised into phases. ECA (2010: 25) identifies three important phases:
reforms from the 1980s to early 1990s, which focused mainly on macro-economic stability and were mainly “quantitative”; reforms of the mid-1990s to 2000, which focused on performance and civil service management; and reforms from 2000, which focused on service delivery as a result of the publication of the World Development Report 1997.’ Table 2.3 provides an overview of the aims, features, achievements and challenges of each phase.

**Table 2.3:** Phases of civil service reforms in SSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Features/Strategies</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges/problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>1980s-early 1990s</td>
<td>Achievement of macro-economic stability and quantitative</td>
<td>Problems of service provision were the result of price distortion emanating from widespread government subsidies</td>
<td>Features of the NPM, renumeration and promotion policies to reward performance, incentives, skills, motivation, contracting out public-private partnerships, specialisation such as the executive authority model.</td>
<td>Marginal reduction in size of public sector, even though it is debatable, cut back on equipment, services and development expenditure.</td>
<td>(i) Ignored the historical evidence about the origin of the public sector problem in Africa. Low productivity and inefficiency originated from the economic crisis of the 1970s; (ii) Reforms ignored a basic fact about people and organizations: people make organizations work, therefore, motivated workers is a sine qua non for organizational efficiency. If therefore failed to address livelihood concerns of public sector employees. (iii) Lack of ownership of reform; (iv) Real downsizing not achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Mid-1990s-2000</td>
<td>Performance and civil service Management</td>
<td>Shifted emphasis from the quantity of employees to their quality. To make public sector employment more attractive and decrease the size of the government.</td>
<td>Provision of basic services through processes driving pluralization, decentralization and participation; beneficiary surveys, self-appraisal exercise, performance improvement plans by public servants; customer-friendliness and responsiveness; Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan</td>
<td>Marginal improvement in conditions of service</td>
<td>(i) One-size-fits-all approach that ignores country-specific organisational aspects of public organizations; (ii) Created a quagmire for employees, for instance, reduction in government requires that salaries and no-wage benefits remain low; thus hiring freezes, the underpaid and poorly motivated workers were being admonished to assume additional responsibility and to lend efforts at improving efficiency. (iii) Issue of retrenchment not addressed; (iv) Brain drain continued; (v) lack of ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>2000-Date</td>
<td>Effective and efficient service Delivery</td>
<td>Improve service delivery to citizens, making it more responsive and effective; it. Effective, responsive and legitimate state is crucial for sustaining market economy</td>
<td>- Provision of basic services through processes driving pluralization, decentralization and participation; beneficiary surveys, self-appraisal exercise, performance improvement plans by public servants; customer-friendliness and responsiveness; Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan</td>
<td>Improved participation of civil society and other stakeholders in some public policies in the formulation of some public policies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan; improved consultative process; marginal improvement in quality of service.</td>
<td>Performance improvement plans and beneficiary surveys have not been properly organised; provision of services for the poor still a far cry; in spite of participation, Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan have not achieved their objectives; quality of service not improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be gleaned from Table 2.3, a challenge that appears common throughout all the phases of CSRs in SSA is the lack of sufficient attention to situational contexts, which resulted in a somewhat technocratic approach to CSRs in SSA (Rao, 2013; Ayee, 2008). Rao (2013: 1) concurs with this view and highlights a number of common challenges and traps militating against CSRs in a developing context to include:

- Insufficient attention to politics and patronage. Understanding the particular context’s political economy dynamics is likely to be crucial to effective reform. Patronage is often a particularly important challenge.
- Attempting to transplant one country’s organisational structures and practices to another without due consideration of contextual differences.
- Over-emphasising downsizing and cost-cutting. An excessive focus on cost-cutting can undermine government effectiveness and fail to produce lasting savings.
- Failing to integrate reform activities into a wider policy and organisational framework.

These issues coupled with other structural and institutional dynamics of the SSA context and the lack of anticipation of what would motivate stakeholders, have combined to ensure that impacts of CSRs remain abysmally insignificant in many SSA countries (Rao, 2013; Scott, 2011; Grindle, 2010; McCourt, 2013). Findings from Scott’s (2011) literature review of public sector reforms in DCs corroborate this view and indicate that more attention needs to be paid to politics in both the design and implementation of reforms. As Rao (2013: 10) succinctly points out, ‘without sufficient attention to politics, barriers to reform can arise as a result of organisational silos within the civil service, functional territorialism, unfamiliarity with working together, and perceived threats to authority.’

As a result of these challenges and traps, outcomes of CSRs in SSA have been seen as largely unsuccessful (ECA, 2010). However, even though CSRs outcomes has not been remarkably successful in many SSA states, the process have at least retooled public institutions to perform basic regulatory and service delivery functions, required of the post-independence and post-SAP state in many SSA countries (ECA, 2010). More significantly and taken together, these reforms have arguably altered the public management discourse both for governments and other stakeholders, including development agencies to recognise alternative perspectives and the centrality of the human factor in the reform process (Olaopa, 2012; Olaopa, 2008). It is my intention to contribute to these emerging alternatives and
shifting debates from a Nigerian perspective. The next section situates the research within the Nigerian context.

2.7 The Nigerian situation: Positioning the NFCS in development contexts and background to reforms

As already highlighted in this current chapter, the civil service in all countries is a vital organ that helps governments in achieving socio-economic, political and development goals of the State (Olaopa, 2012). In the context of Nigeria, these goals are usually defined by the objectives of the existing government which has generally included:

- Achieving/maintaining national unity;
- Accelerating national development in order to achieve self-reliance and improvement in the living standard of the people;
- Nurturing the country for a speedy entrance into the scientific and technological age; and
- Playing increasing role in the comity of nations (Monye-Emina, 2012).

Arising from these objectives, the NFCS is expected to promote national unity, rapid socio-economic and technological development and formulate and implement policies in a dynamic globalising world. As stated in the OHCSF’s Revised Federal Civil Service Handbook – RFCSH (2010), the fundamental roles of the federal service is to promote the common good and to effectively serve the public, the nation and the community through the principles of: accountability, responsiveness, courtesy, objectivity, impartiality and upholding the public trust at all levels. These principles are encapsulated in Service’s core values, which include: stewardship, trust, engagement and professionalism (OHCSF, 2010).

These core values are intended to guide the operations of the Service and are reflected in the Vision and Mission of the Service, which are to be ‘a world class service, implementing government policies and programmes for rapid and sustainable development’ and ‘to attain an integrity and merit-based civil service that is performance driven, accountable and committed to continuous improvement in the conduct of Government business’ (OHCSF, 2010: 33). In fulfilling this vision and mission, the NFCS is expected to perform the following fundamental roles as highlighted in the Revised Civil Service Handbook (2010: 40):
i. Contribute to translating the dreams and visions of the political/ruling class into concrete reality through the formulation of far-sighted policies and programmes and executing same loyally, conscientiously and effectively;

ii. Provide continuity between administrations;

iii. Serve as a unifying factor by bringing together people from all parts of the Federation and providing effective and adequate social services;

iv. Advise government on the full implications of various policy options open to it;

v. Execute government policy loyally;

vi. Protect public interest, as custodian of public conscience;

vii. Manage government data and information system effectively and efficiently so as to facilitate availability of data for government decision making;

viii. Operate an open, humane and sensitive system which respects the rule of law;

ix. Operate a personnel management system that ensures high professionalism, significant specialization, excellent motivation and high morale; and

tax. Ensure prompt, effective and satisfying service delivery.

Considering these outlined fundamental roles it makes some sense to suggest therefore that the NFCS is central to the effective functioning of the Nigerian state, and holds the key to rapid human and economic development of the country is to merely state the obvious. Despite this development however, there is a broad consensus in many quarters that the federal civil service in Nigeria has become inefficient and dysfunctional in many respects and unable to meet its basic constitutional role, even as the quality of public servants and the services they provide to Nigerians appear to be both below expectations (OHCSF, 2010; ECA, 2010; Adeyemo & Salami, 2008; Maikudi, 2012).

This inefficiency is particularly disturbing and needs to be tackled head on, in a globalising world, where the public service has become a crucial agent in national development. Perhaps, it is against this backdrop and recognising the critical role that the civil service plays in improving a country’s position in the emerging world economy, that successive Nigerian governments have been forced to take steps to reposition the NFCS to fulfil its role of initiating and implementing government policies/programmes as well as for effective service delivery. The next section provides an overview of the main CSR efforts in Nigeria, since colonial to present times with a view of understanding why these initiatives have not resulted to the transformation of the NFCS into a capable and efficient Service.
2.8 Reforms in Nigeria’s federal civil service: Storylines and reoccurring discourses

The Nigerian federal civil service has passed through the dynamics of so many CSR initiatives, induced largely by changing administrative environment, including the necessities of colonial administration, realities of independence and emerging global socio-economic, technological and administrative requirements (Olaopa, 2013). Table 2.4 summarises the main reform efforts in the NFCS and the key recommendations or outcomes arising from each exercise.

Table 2.4: History of civil service reforms in Nigeria (1934-2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Name of Reform Commission/Committee</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Purpose/key recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hunter Commission</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Reviewed wages and salaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bridges Committee of Enquiry</td>
<td>1941/42</td>
<td>Reviewed wages and salaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tudor-Davis Commission</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Reviewed wages and general conditions of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Harragin Commission</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Reviewed wages and general conditions of service; divided the civil service into ‘Senior Service’ and ‘Junior Service’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Smaller Commission</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Review of wages and general conditions of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Foot Commission</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Recommended the non-inclusion of non-Nigerians to government post, and the decentralisation framework for the operation of the civil service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Phillipson-Adebo Commission</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Recommended ceding administrative and political powers to Nigerians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lidbury Commission</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Review of wages and general conditions of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gerschuch Commission</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Reviewed remuneration and structure of the service and noted absence of viable middle category and created 5 main grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mbanefo Commission</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Reviewed salaries and wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Newns Commission</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Proposed the integration of ministries and departments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Morgan Commission</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Reviewed salaries/wages of junior staff of Federal Government and private establishment; introduced for the first time the minimum wage on geographical basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Eldwood Commission</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Tackled anomalies arising from the grading of posts, and proposed uniform salaries for civil service officers performing identical tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Adebo Commission</td>
<td>1970/71</td>
<td>Proposed the establishment of a Public Service Review Commission to examine the role of the Public Service Commission, structure of the civil service, conditions of service and training arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Udoji Commission</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Introduced unified grading and salary structure. Recommended a result-oriented management system operated by professionals and specialists in particular fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dotun Phillips Reforms</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Enhanced professionalism, alignment with presidential system of government, decentralization and delegation, combination of authority with responsibility, enhanced accountability, enhanced checks and balances, general modernization and enhanced effectiveness, efficiency and speed of operation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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For the sake of space, I will not be able to elaborate much on the various phases of reform in the NFSC. Please see Olaopa (2012) and Ademolekun (1993) for an elaborated discussion on the history of CSRs in the Nigerian federal civil service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Event/Programme</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Decree No. 43</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Recognized the politicization of the upper echelon of the civil service; Office of Head of the Civil Service abolished; the Minister in addition to being the Chief Executive also became the Accounting Officer in place of the Permanent Secretary; the post of Permanent Secretary abolished and a new political post of Director-General, who holds office at the pleasure of the President was then created in its place and would vacate office with the Government which appointed him unless reappointed by the incoming administration; civil service to be professionalized to stimulate specialization and expertise and an office to make a career in a particular ministry or department; each Ministry to be divided into department, division, branch and section; abolition of the pool system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fatai Williams Committee</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Reviewed salaries and wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ayida Review Panel</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Recommended the abrogation of decree No. 43. Structuring of ministries according to their workload and not according to a uniform pattern. Covered the responsibility of personnel management on the Civil Service Commission, with delegated powers to ministries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Obasanjo Civil Service Renewal Programme (CSRP)</td>
<td>1999 (2003 - 2007)</td>
<td>(i) Re-professionalized the Civil Service to create a new generation of officers and technocrats with sufficient skills; (ii) Monetized fringe benefits and reduce wastage and inefficiency within an incentive structure that supports competitive private sector development; (iii) Operate a fiscal rule and budgetary reforms in the context of a move towards a medium term expenditure framework; (iv) Set a clear organizational and personnel objectives with a concern with results rather than process and expenditure; (v) Conducted rigorous and systematic evaluation and reporting of programme performance to make policy makers accountable for resources used and for results; (vi) Re-engineered existing processes to make them faster, modernize and more efficient using ICT; (vii) Tried to balance the direction, control and the autonomy energy of department and public managers through reforms of central agencies; (viii) Created a process in policy work to encourage decision makers to periodically look at the longer and wider issues; (ix) Changed the mind sets of officers so that they are conditioned by strong professional ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Ongoing reforms:</td>
<td>2008–present</td>
<td>Largely founded on the basic premises and institutional framework existing since the Obasanjo reforms. Commitment to a professionalised civil service and a result-oriented management that would enable the government of Nigeria achieve its macroeconomic and social policies. Aims to transform the civil service to become the engine for the implementation of the reform programmes. Developed a strategic document for that purpose, named the National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: OHCSF (2010); Olaopa (2012); Olaopa (2013); Adewumi (2012); ECA (2010).
As can be gleaned from Table 2.4, the centrality of an efficient civil service is evidently never been lost on the Nigerian state as there have been numerous efforts at reforming the Service since colonial periods. With the benefit of hindsight, almost all of these efforts have blamed the ‘dead hand’ of bureaucracy: the poor performance of public bureaucracies and cumbersome red tape occasioned by unpleasant officials, lack of accountability, corrupted and inefficient practices, as the main issue confronting the Nigerian public service (Ayee, 2008; Olaopa, 2010; ECA, 2010). In this regard, these reforms sought to broaden the institutional scope, capacities and competencies of the civil service to meet present and future challenges (see FGN, 2009). This partly explains why almost all the reforms in Nigeria’s civil service have largely been administrative reforms as opposed to a mere administrative change10.

Despite these efforts at reforms, the general verdict by scholars and commentators alike is that the plethora of reforms in the NFCS has not significantly improved the capabilities of the Service. This rather chequered phenomenon is even acknowledged in official quarters, with the OHCSF’s Revised Civil Service Handbook (2010: 35) recently declaring that ‘presently, the civil service has a lot of deficiencies which have hindered it from responding effectively to the developmental challenges of the nation.’

The pertinent question to ask at this juncture is a simple but profound one: After so many reforms aimed at improving the institutional and human capacities of the Nigerian Civil Service, why has all the efforts not resulted in an effective and adequate turn around? Addressing this question is admittedly not an easy task and requires an appreciation that any reform is a complex process, usually influenced by several dynamics, including history, politics, institutions, culture, dominant discourses and several others.

Scholars and commentators have of course adduced several reasons for this development and a lot of disparate stories abound on how and why these reform efforts have failed to yield the intended objectives, ranging from political, socio-economic, to cultural, structural, and institutional amongst others. The ECA (2010) and Olaopa (2012), in their different works for instance, suggest that colonial legacy and continuing neo-colonialism is to blame. El-Rufai (2011) and Lawanson (2009) on their part, argue that the fundamental issue is that

10 Administrative reform has been defined variously, with some definitions emphasising the political interactions of stakeholders, and others containing elements of rational instrumentality (Ayee, 2008). Whatever the emphasis however, administrative reform could be taken to mean ‘a specially designed efforts to induce fundamental changes in public administration systems through system-wide reforms or at least through measures for improvement of one or more of its key elements, distinct from normal and containing administration and management improvement in terms of their scope, modus operandi and implications’ (UN, 1973: 2, cited in Ayee, 2008). This process is different from administrative change, which is suggests a normal self-adjustment by an organisation responding to certain administrative fluctuations (Olaopa, 2010).
of bad governance, engendered mainly by weak and corrupted political leadership which has become an almost symptomatic feature of many SSA countries. Other reasons that have been put forward include: management ineffectiveness and inefficiency (Tokunboh, 1990), faulty diagnosis and prognosis arising from human resources constraints (Olowu, 1999), politicisation of recruitment and selection (Nwanolue & Iwuoha 2012), policy inconsistency (Maikudi, 2012) and poor execution and implementation (Money-Emina, 2012; Olaopa, 2012).

These issues are not new neither are they by any means peculiar to Nigeria, but are reflective of the general challenges that often militate against effective CSRs in most DCs, especially in Africa. I have already extensively discussed some of these challenges in the preceding section. It suffices to add here however that the failures of reforms in the NFCS also has a behavioural and incapability dimension, engendered by the apparent lack of sufficient attention to human and institutional capacity building and inappropriate staff development practices (Inyang, 2008; Adewumi, 2012). As the OHCSF (2010) argues, it appears that there has been too much emphasis on the review of salaries/wages and on other conditions of service, rather than on structural, institutional and attitudinal reforms that are fundamental to change and transformation (OHCSF, 2010). Some of these reforms (e.g. the Hewn Committee, Udoji Commission and the Ayinda Review Panel) did attempt structural and institutional reforms of the sector, but their impacts were very limited, largely because of the lack of capacity for reform implementation.

It could be argued then that what is required to make progress and lay a solid institutional foundation for rapid transformation of the NFCS, is not just a deluge of ideas, frameworks and strategies, but a critical emphasis on strategies for effective implementation of existing policies and on sustainable development of human resources (ECA, 2010; Olaopa, 2010). If this is the case, then it makes some sense to suggest that the success of any CD reforms and effectiveness of the civil service and by extension, the development of any nation, depends to a very large extent on the quality, organisation and motivation of its human capital (Balogun, 2003; Lavigna & Hays, 2005).

The issue of how to effectively develop and manage the human capital of the NFCS with a view of harnessing its potential towards achieving policy objectives of the Service is therefore, one that should be taken very seriously (Olaopa, 2012). Despite this recognition however, it appears that this need has become a taken for granted development discourse agenda, such that policies and practices governing the development and utilization of the
human capital in the NFCS have largely failed to grapple with the realities of contemporary HCD and management challenges facing the Service.

This is why it has become imperative to rethink approaches to human capital development within the NFCS. It is my intention in this thesis to contribute towards this rethinking from a CD perspective. Towards this end and using the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD), one of the purpose of this thesis as already highlighted in Chapter 1, is to explore how contextual subtleties intersect with power relations to produce dominant discourses which in turn influence policies and ultimately produce what becomes ‘standard’ practices for human capital development in the NFCS. The next section situates the research agenda in the context of capability and TM challenges faced by the federal civil service in Nigeria.

2.9 Developing a research agenda: The capability and TM imperatives

From the analyses so far in this chapter as well as in Chapter 1, it is self-evident that the consequences for a society where human capability is weak, i.e. where the civil service is unable to effectively implement government policies, can be very costly. For instance, the inability to make reasonably accurate budget forecasts in many SSA countries means that the leadership in these countries cannot make the best decisions on how to spend public money (Saasa, 2007; McCourt, 2013). Following Saasa (2007: 3), it could be argued therefore that human capacity challenges, ‘compromises the ability of many African governments to deliver services and to undertake their public sector management and regulatory functions – a state of affairs that has checked the capability and efficacy of the State in Africa.’

This development becomes particularly disturbing, when juxtaposed against the realisation that issues related to recruiting and developing civil service human resources in the twenty-first century has become complex and dynamic, such that traditional human resource (HR) management approaches no longer work, especially considering the emerging human capital trends highlighted in section 2.4 of this current chapter. It makes some sense therefore, to suggest that developing human capital in the public services of SSA must be done from an innovative perspective, which not only addresses current needs, but also responds to emerging challenges. And while there are many important approaches to achieving this, there is a growing consensus among scholars and practitioners (see for example: McCourt, 2013; Rao, 2013; Nussbaum, 2011; Robinson, 2014), that human capability development offers a viable option.
In spite of this recognition however, and despite the recognition by many (e.g. Morgan, 1998; Tarique & Schuller, 2010; CIPD, 2014; Iles, Preece & Chuai 2011; Hope, 2011, Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011, etc.) of the potential contributions of capability development (particularly human capability development) and TM practices to improved human capital development efforts in DCs, it appears however that both the academic and practitioner literature on human capital development in SSA and Nigeria in particular, has been unexplainably silent on the linkages between effective capability development, TM and civil service human capital.

Indeed, using Nigeria as an example, it would seem that scholars, practitioners and policy makers alike have not devoted sufficient efforts to identifying and highlighting innovative approaches to civil service human capital development, let alone addressing strategies to improving them. Instead, a common theme that permeates most of the studies on human capital development in Nigeria has been a focus mainly on the linkages between the concept and economic growth and development, and the challenges thereof. For instance, among other important concerns, several studies in Nigeria (driven largely by neo-classical ideologies) have generally examined the relationship between human capital development efforts of the Government and economic growth in Nigeria (e.g. Oluwatobi & Ogunrinola, 2011); the role and contributions of human capital in the economic development of Nigeria (e.g. Dauda, 2010; Diawara, 2009; Lawanson, 2009); the challenges for developing human capital in Nigeria (e.g. Ugal & Betiang, 2003).

These studies provide both theoretical and empirical basis for the analysis of human capital development in Nigeria, but unfortunately, do not say much about underlying processes and practical approaches. It seems evident therefore, that whilst there has been an increasing general interest in human capital development in Nigeria from academics (e.g. Dauda, 2010), donor agencies (e.g. FGN & UNDP, 2009) and policy makers (e.g. FGN, 2009), resulting in numerous scholarly publications and policy blueprints, very little attention have been paid to the critical analysis of prevailing methods and approaches to human capital development in the country, especially within the context of the limits imposed by socio-economic and political undercurrents.

In the same vein, a perusal of the substantial literature on talent management (e.g. Iles et al., 2010; Ford et al., 2010; McDonnell et al., 2010; Mellahi & Collins, 2010; CIPD, 2009b, etc) indicates that SSA, particularly Nigerian context with all its socio-economic, cultural and institutional peculiarities and current development challenges have been inadequately highlighted. This is chiefly because most scholarly studies on the subject have been
predominantly Western oriented, or are looking at emerging markets of Asia and/or Brazil (e.g. CIPD, 2009a; Bhatnager, 2007; Iles, Preece & Chuai, 2011). This largely explains why much of the extant TM literature appears to lack both the theoretical frameworks and practical strategies for effective implementation of TM interventions in Nigeria and much of SSA; even as there have been very little critical analysis of the potential impact of effective TM (or lack of it) on civil service human capital development in Nigeria. It could also be argued that the findings and recommendations derived from studying TM in other contexts might become problematic or even dysfunctional when applied in the Nigerian context, considering the many unique peculiarities of the Nigerian situation.

What is more, despite widespread agreement on the critical need for effective capability development in Nigeria and SSA more broadly, little consideration for contextual and environmental subtleties influencing the development of capacities in practice means that programmes have failed to address local needs (Otoo et al., 2009). This is especially so in the civil service, where insufficient evidence of what actually takes place in real life contexts and little accountability about outcomes of CD programmes in the service, means that unproven dominant assumptions and potentially inappropriate interventions persist (Ortiz & Taylor, 2009; Miller, 2010). It also appears that strategically important questions have not been factored in many instances, resulting in a failure to explicitly link CD efforts to civil service priorities (see Otoo et al, 2009: 1-2). As a result of these issues, the results of efforts aimed at improving civil service capabilities and national capacities more generally, have persistently fallen short of expectations in many SSA countries (OECD 2005; OECD 2006a; World Bank 2005).

The issues highlighted above constitute major gaps in the development and management theory: a field, like its parent the social sciences, attempts to establish methods and concepts that can be reasonably employed worldwide. This thesis starts to fill these lacunae by interrogating the Nigerian experience to illustrate the dynamics of a typical civil service CD policy implementation and human capability development efforts, as a complex process shaped by power relations, dominant discourses, interests, incentives, institutional arrangements and other structural/quasi-structural features.

2.10 Chapter summary and conclusions

In the context of the issues raised in this chapter and in Chapter 1, it is evident that the civil service is central to national development of all countries, irrespective of the level of development. However, as a result of the challenges highlighted in this chapter, the civil
service in SSA has remained largely ineffective. Some of the current challenges which are particularly worrying and deserve urgent attention include: lack of clear objectives, over-staffing, lack of clear job descriptions, poor evaluation methods, lack of incentives, political interference, poor infrastructure and the impacts of HIV/AIDS. These issues have further been exacerbated by the consequences of globalisation and other international factors such as the activities of transnational corporations, shifting demographics, labour market trends and increasing internationalisation of the HR function. These issues have been well documented in the literature (see for example: Evans, 2008; Bunse & Fritz, 2012; Jooste, 2008; ECA, 2010, McCourt, 2013), and have arguably engendered a whole new set of hybridised challenges for the civil service in SSA, including:

1. Balancing the global and the local (the brain drain).
2. Attracting, developing and retaining the best talents.
3. Anticipating change and adaptation of technology.
4. Leadership issues and the pipeline problems; and
5. Downsizing vs rightsizing.

These challenges are the same for much of the developing world. However, what is particularly peculiar in the context of SSA with particular reference to Nigeria, is that the federal civil service appears to lack the requisite capabilities to effectively respond to these challenges. And whilst there have been no dearth of efforts at improving the functional and intuitional capabilities of the NFCS, it seems that these reform efforts have largely failed to yield the intended objectives (Olaopa, 2010). As highlighted in this chapter, one major explanation for these failures is the problem of insufficient attention to contextual peculiarities in the design and implementation of reform policies. Understanding the context of reforms is especially important considering that environmental complexities arguably shape the direction of reform policies and implementation trajectories in Nigeria, as in other SSA countries.

It is against this backdrop that this study explores the contextual issues that impact on civil service human capital development reforms in the NFCS with a view of understanding how the process can be furthered from a capability development perspective. In the current chapter, I have tried to show how a predominantly Western focus of CD research and insufficient attention to contexts in CD programmes, diminish the utility and impacts in SSA contexts. In the next chapter I discuss how theory (which is sadly lacking in most texts on CD may be built, and how this may inform research and intervention in this area. It is pertinent to stress, that this is not just intended for academic purposes or just for utilisation
in this study. The adage ‘there is nothing as practical as a good theory’ attributed to Kurt Lewin, I believe may become self-evident for the various stakeholders identified as potential beneficiaries of this research highlighted in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 therefore, provides the conceptual and theoretical foundations for the thesis and continues with the quest to rethink civil service human capital development in SSA using the example of Nigerian federal civil service.
Chapter 3

Conceptual foundations for rethinking civil service human capital in a developing context

‘Acquire new things while reflecting over the old.’

— Confucius

3.1 Introduction

The development agenda has in the last five decades witnessed and continues to witness dramatic changes (Kothari & Minogue, 2002). Competing and sometimes contradictory development theories have influenced and continue to influence the development discourse and priorities in international development policy agenda (Mikkelson, 2005; Cornwal & Eade, 2010; Fukuda-Parr, 2011). The rationale and competing philosophies articulated in these diverse positions and debates implicitly underpin the only too evident variations in approaches to development practice and research (Gill & Johnson, 2010). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive analysis of these variations, an understanding of the underlying principles and interconnectedness of the key concepts and theories that underpin this study is however crucial.

This is especially so, considering that an exclusive focus on either the human capital perspective, or on the capability approach; or any single perspective for that matter is unlikely to draw out the essential synergy they bring (or could bring) to rethinking civil service HCD and in accelerating development generally in the global South. Indeed, if human capital is to serve as a useful catalysts for civil service capability development and the advancement of national/international development targets, a better understanding of its interconnectedness with other perspectives aimed at providing these alternatives is at least as necessary as analysing the forms in which human capital and CD are delivered.

It is against this backdrop therefore that I explore the concepts of human capital, capability development and talent management in this chapter, with a view of identifying their interconnections and salient linkages to this study. The main purpose of this effort is to integrate the knowledge territories that provide the conceptual and theoretical foundations for this study; and by so doing, outline the theoretical framework that will guide the empirical chapters that follow. The chapter does this using a thematic approach and in four parts.
The first part critically assesses the concept of human capital and human capital development. To help situate the idea of capability in the context of this study, I then proceed to clarify the conceptual basis of capacity/capability development in the second part. This is followed by a lucid justification and the rationale for utilising Sen’s capability approach in this study. The third section explores the concept of TM within the context of this study. The fourth part explores the links between the concepts of human capital, TM and capability development for the purpose of this study. The chapter concludes by outlining the theoretical framework that will guide the rest of the study and provides insights into the trajectories of the empirical chapters that follow.

3.2 Human capital and human capital development: Conceptual clarifications

The starting point for any effort at rethinking human capital and indeed, for any research into human capital development must inevitably be an exploration of what precisely constitutes human capital. In doing this, it is important to recognise that ideas about any concept are usually closely connected to their historical context and the narratives that inform them. In the 1960s, ideas about the economic value of schooling – which has been around since Pigou’s (1920) seminal contribution, were expanded upon and they have had considerable impact ever since. In order to appraise the idea of human capital as a useful concept in the context of this research therefore, it is important to firmly place the concept in its historical context and into the bigger research paradigm of neo-classical economics\textsuperscript{11} to which it rightly belongs (Brown et al, 2001).

Proponents of human capital (e.g. Becker, 1962; Sakamota & Powers, 1995), argue that formal and informal education and other attempts to improve the competencies of individuals is an investment, which is highly instrumental and even critical to improving the productivity of a population. HC maintains that education, training and general investments in people, improves their socio-economic productivity and efficiency levels of both the individual and society at large, because it increases an individual’s cognitive abilities and general capabilities (Johnson, 2011; MacMahon, 1999; Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Human Capital theorists’ affirm that labour should not be treated as a homogenous category inherent in classical political economy; neither should it be treated as just a mere commodity, because individuals and societies derive economic benefits from investments in

\textsuperscript{11} As Schultz (1981) infers, ideas about human capital is rooted in the field of macroeconomic development theory. Sweetland (1996) traces the bona fide articulation of the concept to classic economic-philosophers such as Adam Smith (1723 - 1791), John Stuart Mill (1806 - 1873), Alfred Marshall (1842 - 1924) and others. However, in its present form, human capital has benefited immensely from the works of T. W Schultz (1971), Jacob Mincer (1974), and Gary Becker (1962). In recent times, Sakamota and Powers (1995), and Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1997) have also made very useful contributions to its refinement.
people (Brown et al, 2001; Sweetland, 1996). Becker (1993) emphasises this point further, when he argued that the most valuable of all capital, is the investment in human beings.

Human capital theory’s radical assertion in the 1960s that education was an investment for governments and individuals alike has become a truism (Brown et al, 2001). It is now universally recognised that the availability of skilled labour and quality national human resources are central to future global economic competitiveness and that a country’s most valued capital is undoubtedly its human capital (OECD, 2001; McMahon, 1999).

The creation of knowledge and a focus on human capital as a strategic resource central to the achievement of sustainable national development has therefore, become a dominant discourse within the literature (Gillespie, 2005). Despite this popularity, there is no consensus among scholars, practitioners and policy makers on the precise definition or meaning of the term – human capital. Ugal and Betiang (2010: 4) present a very succinct definition of the term as ‘the total stock of knowledge, skills, competencies, and innovative abilities possessed by the population’. This view is consistent with that of the OECD (2001: 18) who see human capital as ‘the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being’.

Weatherly (2003: 2) suggests an important distinction between human capital and human resources, arguing that human capital is not human resources per se, ‘because people exercise control over their human capital and are free to invest it as they see fit in different aspects of their lives: family, community interest groups, observance of religious beliefs, physical fitness pursuits, other outside interests, and work’. Therefore, ‘while human resources represent people or the labour force, human capital is an intangible asset and represents “the collective sum of the attributes, life experience, knowledge, inventiveness, energy, and enthusiasm that people choose to invest in their work”’ (Weatherly, 2003: 2). Perhaps, it is this intangible nature of human capital that explains why some writers have tended to confuse or equate human capital with intellectual capital. Indeed, there seems to be some conceptual confusion concerning the difference between intellectual and human capital. Garavan et al. (2001: 49) has however, succinctly clarified this confusion, thus:

[Intellectual capital is a broad concept], encompassing internal dimensions such as patents, concepts, human capabilities, R&D models etc., and external dimensions such as brands, reputation and trademarks. The term ‘human capital’ corresponds to one of the internal dimensions of intellectual capital and consists of education, competencies, values, attitudes and experience components.
Schuller (2000), Wealthery (2003), Putnam (2000) Bourdieu (1986) and several others have identified other forms of intellectual and intangible capital to include: cultural, social, structural and even customer capital (see especially Bourdieu, 1986). An important point to note here, is that these ‘capitals’ including physical, natural and financial capitals amongst others, are all interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The only difference as Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1997: 102) have pointed out, is that ‘capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organization, and carry forward national development’.

This clarification and broader conceptualisation of human capital finds a parallel in Adamu’s (2000) argument, cited in Awe and Ajayi (2010) that human capital represents the abilities and skills of human resources of a country. Jones and George (2006), present a similar perspective as above, when they note that human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, physical and managerial effort required to manipulate capital, technology, and land among other things, to produce goods and services for human consumption.

While by no means exhaustive, the foregoing definitions generally emphasise the importance of skills, abilities, competencies and the centrality of knowledge as expressions of human capital. As Machlup (1984: 8) cited in OECD (1996: 19) points out, ‘the connection between knowledge and human capital is easily understood if one realises that capital is formed by investment, that investment in human resources is designed to increase their capacity…and that improvement in capacity, as a rule, result from the acquisition of “knowing what” or of knowing how’. However, while this position is arguably valid, the meaning of knowledge or ‘knowing’ has however, remained unclear. And although, there are many important arguments on what precisely constitutes knowledge, I accept Mullins’ (1999) position that knowledge adds understanding and retention to information and is the next natural progression after information. To have ‘knowledge’ therefore, requires information in conjunction with data and other knowledge, coupled with understanding, cognition and proper application (Mullins, 1999).

In line with the above conceptualisations, it is logical to argue that while it is true that there is no consensus on definition, there seem to be a broad agreement that human capital is concerned with the abilities, skills, competences, knowledge and other individual attributes that is relevant to productive activity. It is important to highlight, that because these attributes are intangibles, it is notoriously very difficult to measure (Brown et al., 2001). Schuller (2000) observes that duration of schooling and levels of qualification are the
conventional standard measures used. Yet, it could be argued that schooling and qualifications ignores many aspects of an individual’s development, knowledge and other attributes. Therefore, conventional calculations of a nation’s human capital must be treated with serious caution. As the OECD (2001: 19) succinctly points out, while ‘human capital has often been defined and measured with reference to acquired cognitive skills and explicit knowledge, a broader notion of human capital, …more adequately reflects how various non-cognitive skills and other attributes contribute to well-being and can be influenced and changed by the external environment including learning.’

Given the foregoing arguments, it will not be a conceit to contend that human capital is not just the skills and knowledge of individuals, but also encompasses their innate abilities (e.g. mental stability and emotional intelligence) which are largely abstract factors that cannot be easily measured or quantified (Schuller 2000; Wealtherly, 2003). While this might indeed be the case, for the purpose of this thesis however, the term ‘human capital’ is taken to mean: a multi-faceted human characteristic that embodies the skills, knowledge and competencies of individuals acquired mostly through formal and informal learning and also through experience.

Human capital development – although without a univocal definition could therefore, be taken to mean the processes and techniques of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have the skills, education and experience that are critical for the sustainable growth and development of an entity, be it an organisation or a country (UNDP, 2012; Dauda, 2010). As Dauda (2010: 5) aptly argues, HCD is an ‘investment in man and his development as a creative and productive person. It is a continuing process from childhood to old age, and a must for any society or enterprise that desires to survive under the complex challenges of a dynamic world.’

A major point of departure of this definition is its recognition that human capital does not only evolve through formal education or training programmes, ‘but also in informal interaction with others as well as through self-reflection and self-directed learning’ (OECD, 2001: 20). The focus on interactions across levels is important considering that human capital is developed in specific cultural settings. The role of social networks, trust and norms in fostering a culture of learning is important throughout the entire lifecycle and is therefore crucial to the process of developing human capital (OECD, 2001: 20).
3.2.1 Human capital development and social capital

The role of social networks in understanding human capital and HCD is particularly important considering Schuller’s (2000) argument that people and their human capital do not exist in isolation; rather the utility of individuals’ skills and abilities depends on the social context and networks within which they are embedded. This focus on networks underpins the relevance of relationships to the issue of human capital development and this is where the notion of social capital comes in. Bourdieu (1983: 249) defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’. For Schuller (2001: 5), ‘social capital focuses on networks: the relationships within and between them, and the norms which govern these relationships.’

The importance of social capital for ensuring the development and utility of human capital has been highlighted by a number of scholars. Iles and Day (2006), for example highlighted the centrality of social capital to the process of human capital formation, with particular emphasis on leadership development. Day (2001), imports the concept of social capital into management learning, and argues that management and leadership development is potentially a vehicle for increasing the human capital of an organisation considering that people can have extra collective value through their relationships.

As already pointed out, human capital includes the skills and knowledge developed through formal and informal learning. Social capital, built through meaningful interactions between people, facilitates the learning and use of these skills and knowledge (Falk, 2000; Iles & Day, 2006). It could be argued therefore that social capital promotes the development of human capital (Brown et al, 2001; Iles & Day, 2006). As Putnam (2000), points out, the level of community, enterprise or nation and the quality of life will be higher if members of a community brings with it active participation. This implies that an ‘environment poor in social capital will concentrate on skill and knowledge acquisition in a top-down fashion, will underplay the importance of trust and interpersonal issues such as self-confidence’(Falk, 2000: 2).

The implication of this type of thinking, especially in the context of this thesis is very significant. In specific terms, it highlights the need to move away from neo-classical ‘narrow’ conceptualisation of human capital and human capital development and to understand that skills, ‘consists much more than acquired technical competences through
education and training, but more importantly, it consists of ‘the ability to “learn how to learn” as a lifelong activity’ (Brown et al, 2001: 15).

Against this backdrop therefore, my understanding and utilisation of the terms ‘human capital’ and ‘human capital development’ in this thesis, is informed by a more theoretically open definition of human capital – as a process of developing people’s capabilities (OECD, 1996). This line of reasoning is akin to Mehrotra’s (2005), who argues that that human capital is a narrower notion than human development. Accordingly, the meanings and definitions which I ascribe to these terms in this study emerge in a methodologically consistent way from my post structural epistemological position and from the contextual consideration of how the terms are used in the NFCS. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, the concepts of human capital and human capital development are all taken to mean a strategy for effective human capability development in the context of the Nigerian federal civil service. The section that follows explores the concept of capability development.

3.3 Understanding the capability discourse (CD): Ethos and conceptualisations

3.3.1 A brief note on terminology

Let me begin by clarifying my choice of terminology as a starting point in my attempt at conceptualising Capability Development (henceforth CD) in the context of this thesis. As Gillespie (2005) observes, the terms capacity building, capacity development and capability development are used somewhat interchangeably in the literature – in most cases to mean the same thing, with capacity/capability building appearing more frequently in earlier works and still carries connotations of earlier approaches, such as training courses in advanced countries and the so called ‘technology’ transfer (Blagescu & Young, 2006).

In this study however, I have adopted capability development in line with current conceptualisations and wider usage. More importantly, I have adopted the term capability development because of my philosophical positioning and my understanding that the word ‘development’ seems to better reflect what I intend to convey in this thesis, ‘suggesting a more organic emergence of capability than does ‘building’, which connotes an externally planned or engineered approach’ (Gillespie, 2005: 9). This perspective is also sometimes called the Human Development Approach (Alkire, 2012; Nussbaum, 2011). To some extent and as Nussbaum (2011) notes, these labels are just mere verbal variant with little or no difference in meaning. Some authors (e.g. Fukuda-Parr, 2011; Mehrotra, 2005) do attempt to
distinguish between human development and the capability approach. However, as Alkire (2010: 22) was quick to point out:

There is no consensus as to a conceptually clear distinction between human development and the capability approach, nor is it obvious that such a distinction is useful or required. What is clear is that, while the capability approach spans philosophy to practice, human development – particularly as represented in the Human Development Reports – emphasises real world applications, identifying and advocating policies that advance capabilities and human development in different contexts and institutional settings and at different levels.

For the purpose of this thesis and following UNEP (2002:11), I use the terms capability or capacity development interchangeably to mean the same thing: ‘a process of building abilities, relationships and values that will enable organisations, groups and individuals to improve their performance and achieve their development objectives’. By capability or capacity in this thesis I am therefore, referring to the set of skills and knowledge that are critical for individuals and organisations to coordinate resources effectively to achieve specific purposes (Analoui, 2007; McGuire, 2014).

3.3.2 Ethos

As a term, CD emerged in the 1980s, and gained prominence as a conceptual approach in international development during the course of the 1990s (Lavergne & Saxby, 2001; Black, 2003). This was in part due to continuing ineffectiveness of international aid and the growing realisation that providing technical solutions and/or funding are not all what is needed to address most developmental challenges (Lusthaus et al., 1999; Gillespie, 2005). As Bolger (2000) argues, the renewed interest in capacity development in recent years is perhaps, a response to widely acknowledged shortcomings in development assistance since the 1950s, including the dominant role of donor-led projects (top-down aid models) and issues of inadequate attention to long-term capacity of developing countries. Consequently, there has been an increased focus on developing ‘indigenous’ capabilities by working more closely with the individuals, organisations and societies and paying more attention on strengthening the underlying human and institutional capabilities, as well as on the support structures that are critical for sustainable development of developing countries (Eade, 1997; Gillespie, 2005; ECDPM, 2008).

It is relevant to note as Blagenscu and Young (2006), observe that since no overall theory of CD exists, its practices have been based largely on theories of change borrowed from the social sciences. Arguably, this triggers the interchangeable and sometimes, confusing use of
terms like capacity building, capacity enhancement or capacity development; even as some continue to ascribe some of the features of the predecessors of CD like institutional development and development management to the concept (Whyte, 2004; Blagescu & Young 2006). Table 3.1, summarises the historical evolution of CD theorization and the major focus associated with each epoch.

Table 3.1: Historical evolution of capacity development theorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Capacity development approaches</th>
</tr>
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| Institution building                           | 1950s and 1960s | - Provide public sector institutions.  
- Focus on and design individual functioning organisations.  
- Models transplanted from the North.  
- Training in Northern universities.                                                                                                            |
| Institutional strengthening and development    | 1960s and 1970s | - Shift to strengthening rather than establishing.  
- Provide tools to improve performance.  
- Focus still on individual organisations and training in the North.                                                                                     |
| Development management and administration      | 1970s        | - Reach target groups previously neglected.  
- Focus on improving delivery systems and public programmes to reach target groups.                                                                                 |
| Human resource development                     | 1970s and 1980s | - Development is about people; emergence of people-centred development.  
- Key sectors to target are: education, health and population.                                                                                       |
| New institutionalism                           | 1980s and 1990s | - Capacity building broadened to sector level (government, NGO and private).  
- Focus on networks and external environment.  
- Attention to shaping national economic behaviour.  
- Emergence of issues of sustainability and move away from focus on projects.                                                                   |
| Capacity development                           | Late 1980s and 1990s | - Reassessment of the notion of technical cooperation (TC).  
- Stressed importance of local ownership and process.  
- Participatory approaches as the key.  
- Seen as ‘the way to do development’.                                                                                                                  |
| Capability Development & knowledge for development (K4D) | 2000s       | - Increased participation in capacity development.  
- Emphasis on continuous learning and adaptation.  
- Balancing results-based management and long-term sustainability.  
- Systems approach and emerging talk of complex systems.  
- Emphasis on needs assessment/analysis.  
- Emphasis on the need to understand endogenous contextual factors.  
- Spread of ICT-based knowledge networks.  
- A focus on policy and institutional development.                                                                                                      |

Sources: Adapted from Lusthaus et al. (1995), Whyte (2004) and Blagescu & Young (2006).
### 3.3.3 Conceptualising CD: A critical perspective

In spite of the increasing attention from policy makers and the popularity of the concept amongst development practitioners and scholars, CD remains a hugely elusive concept with no univocal meaning or definition (Morgan, 1998). This seeming ambiguousness notwithstanding, a critical evaluation of some of the definitions offered by various scholars, point to the notion that CD has to do with how societies improve their collective ability towards attaining real progress in a very sustainable and inclusive manner (see: UNEP, 2006; Otoo, Agapitova, Gold & Fisher, 2009; Lavergne & Saxby, 2001; Eade, 1997, 2010; Hope, 2011). For instance, Lavergne & Saxby (2001: 4), define CD as ‘a process through which individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner’. In a similar vein, the UNEP (2002: 11) sees CD as ‘a holistic enterprise, encompassing a multitude of activities’ and is ‘a means of ‘…enhancing people’s technical ability and willingness to play new developmental roles and adapt to new demands and situations’.

In recent times, the understanding of CD has been expanding to highlight that the concept is not just a means or an end itself, but importantly, a continuous process of adaptation to change (Eade, 1997). As Gillespie (2005: 13) points out, ‘understanding capacity development as an ongoing process tends to emphasise the “development” part of capacity development’. However, while there is an increasing recognition in the literature of the need to understand CD as an ongoing process, it appears that this understanding has not translated into practice, with CD still largely reflecting a supply driven orientation (Kaplan, 2000).

Perhaps, it is this that has led some scholars and commentators to become very sceptical of the propositions of the concept, arguing that CD is nothing, but another development buzzword (Eade, 2010); another neo-liberal rhetoric, which does not offer much in terms of practical relevance. What is more worrying is that in contemporary times, it appears that CD has evolved and broadened to include virtually all development interventions, and have taken a somewhat ambiguous characteristics (Eade, 1997; 2010; Lavergne and Saxby, 2001).

Similarly, and as Kenny and Clarke (2010) point out, the concept has also been accused of exhibiting instrumentalist and technocratic tendencies, and is increasingly framed in managerialist terms of references, which focuses mainly on organisational development and training. Consequently and as Eade (2010: 205) observes, some dismiss CD ‘as a sloppy
piece of aid jargon. For others, it is a synonym for institutional or organisational development. Often it is no more than a serious-sounding alternative to ‘training’.

Perhaps, this explains why the terms of reference of the capacity development discourse relapsed into the general narrow patterns of technocratic, instrumentalist and bifurcating tendencies, common with neo-liberal approaches to development, which treats development largely as a North-South dichotomy (Kenny & Clarke, 2010; Collier, 2007). As a consequence, the CD discourse increasingly began to manifest a social ontology in which agency takes precedence over structure, ignoring that underdevelopment is largely a product of salient structural, socio-political and resource impediments, and not necessarily the lack of ‘capacity’ of local communities (Kenny & Clarke, 2010). This kind of social ontology is what Collier (2007) and Sachs (2010) allude to as the ‘development trap’ and is compounded when external ‘capability builders’ fail to understand that all communities have historically developed indigenous capacities to independently increase their ability to live a more rewarding life (Rodney, 1983).

As Kenny and Clarke (2010: 9) point out, ‘this kind of “deficit” orientation is a significant weakness of CD programmes’ and affects the impacts of CD activities, especially in developing countries – where external ‘development’ intervention is still a major feature of national development efforts. Indeed, as Eade (1997) argues, the character of capacity development activities and the criteria for judging the effectiveness of these activities is often determined by the way in which the concept is understood.

In this regard, Eade (1997), then Gillespie (2005) identify three different overarching ways of how understanding the purpose of CD can be viewed: as a means to an end, an end in itself and as an ongoing process of adaptation to change. Those that have a rather narrow understanding of the concept, tend to see it either as an end in itself or as a means to an end. The debate on the difference between understanding capacity as a means to an end or an end in itself underscores much of the literature on CD (see, for example, Eade, 1997; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002, Black, 2003; Lopes & Theisohn, 2003; Boesen, 2004; Whyte, 2004; Gillespie, 2005; Blagescu & Young, 2006; Land, et al., 2009; Kenny & Clark, eds., 2010).

An underlining argument in most of these works suggests that some (especially donors) see CD as the means by which they ensure that the necessary skills and structures are in place to support their intervention (Gillespie, 2005; Boesen, 2004). Some of these authors (e.g. Eade, 1997; Black, 2003) are also very critical of NGOs and civil societies that hide under the pretext of CD as a conduit for securing more funding and programming money. It is also
argued that this is what differentiates new frameworks for donor support (e.g. the System Wide Approach – SWAP, pooled funding and general budget support), from more traditional ‘technical assistance’, emphasising greater local ownership and seeing CD more of an end in itself (Gillespie, 2005).

Despite its popularity in the development discourse however, a rather curious discernible trend in the academic literature on CD, is that very few scholarly works have attempted to provide direct conceptual treatment of the concept (e.g. Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Fukuda-Parr & Kumar; 2003; Anand & Sen, 1996; Nussbaum, 2000; Qizilbash, 1996; Robeyns, 2005; Streeten, 1994; ul Haq, 1995; Alkire, 2010). Instead, it appears that a disproportionate number of publications on the subject focus mainly on the Capability Approach (CA), which was popularised through the writings of Amartya Sen.

Given the above, it would appear therefore, that Sen’s Capability Approach (CA) offers the most philosophical foundations for the CD approach. Against this backdrop, and for the purpose of this thesis, it is very important to properly understand the basic arguments of the Sen’s CA, in order to appreciate its linkages, policy implications and analytical links to this research. Towards this end, I will in the next few paragraphs, provide a critical assessment of the CA, examining some of its salient links to the idea of human capital and the analytical implications of these interconnections for this study.

3.4 Sen’s capability approach: A critical overview

As already indicated, the perspective I am utilising in this study is the Sen’s Capability Approach (CA). I have adopted Sen’s CA because its core characteristic is ‘to move away from the income-led evaluation methods and focus on people’s ability to achieve the things that they value. Wellbeing can thus be measured by assessing people’s freedom and choices, rather than their income or consumption.’ (Frediani, 2010: 175).

Indeed, the conceptual foundations of the CA can be located in Sen’s critique of traditional welfare economics (Clark, 2006). According to Sen (1985), the focus on utility or resources can be misleading, as what is essential is not the sum total of commodities, but the value and utility of these commodities to people. Alkire (2010; 24 - 25), summarises the main features of Sen’s CA to include:

1. A focus on people as the ‘ends’ of development; clarity about ends and means. People centred.
2. A substantive notion of freedom related to well-being (capabilities) and agency (empowerment)
3. A focus on that freedom being ‘real’ – not just paper freedom but an actual possibility
4. A well-being objective that included multiple capabilities – that need not be unidimensional.
5. Stable curiously regarding the causal interconnections between different dimensions of human development and between economic growth and human development
6. A focus on supporting people as active agents, not passive victims, of development
7. An ability to prioritise capabilities for poor people across time while keeping in view the development of rich persons and of non-material capabilities.

Therefore, consistent with Fukuda-Parr (2011: 123), ‘the central idea of this approach is the primacy of people; their well-being as the purpose of development and their agency as an essential element of the development process’. This line of reasoning contrasts with mainstream strand of development thought that conceptualises development largely as a linear process of economic transformation, social modernization and technological progress. And although welfare improvement is the ultimate goal, it is assumed that economic growth is not only a necessary but a sufficient condition to achieve this objective (Frediani, 2010; Fukuda-Parr, 2011).

While Sen\textsuperscript{12} is generally acknowledged as the ‘founding father’ of the capability approach, some scholars (e.g. Clark, 2006; Alkire, 2010) have however, traced the origins of the approach to Classical Political Economy and to a long lineage of illustrious thinkers including Aristotle, Smith, Kant, Mill and Marx among others. In the more immediate past, the origin of the approach has been linked to Rawls’ (1971) Theory of Justice and in particular, to the Basic Needs Approach, which predates the capability approach and shares several similarities with it (Clark, 2006; Alkire, 2010).

Sen himself (1985: 43), acknowledges these links when he points out that ‘the roots of the approach go back at least to Adam Smith and Karl Marx, and indeed to Aristotle.’ Whatever the case, what is hardly contestable, is that the Capability Approach has become the leading alternative framework to standard neo-classical economics thoughts on poverty reduction.

\textsuperscript{12} Apart from Sen, others have equally made important profound contributions to the development and refinement of the CA. For instance, the works of Nussbaum (2000); Alkire (2002); Anand (2005) and others have all been very important to the development of the approach. However, for the purpose of this review and for the rest of this thesis, my emphasis will mainly be on Sen’s conceptualisations and understanding of the CA, but occasional references will also be made to other conceptualisations as well.
socio-economic inequalities and on issues of sustainability and general human development (Clark, 2005, 2006; Robeyns, 2006). Pressman and Summerfield (2000: 98) emphasise a similar point, arguing that ‘the capabilities approach leads to fundamental changes within the field of economic development. It has helped change the development paradigm from promoting economic growth to promoting human wellbeing.’

It is instructive to point out however that this change of focus, does not in any way suggest that the CA is against the promotion of economic growth and/or raising of incomes levels. What the CA demonstrates, is that ‘raising incomes was one way to augment individual liberty, but there were others as well, and repressing those liberties in a blind quest to raise output was exposed as a Pyrrhic victory’ (Rapley, 2007: 7). Indeed, while it is acknowledged that increasing aggregate national income is essential and might enhance people’s welfare, it is however, insufficient in fulfilling some important human choices, including guaranteeing freedom and equality (Sen, 1985; Aluko & Aluko, 2011; Clark, 2006). As Aluko and Aluko (2011) argue, economic growth is off course an important means to development, however the achievement of human outcomes such as participation and gender equality do not depend on economic growth and levels of income alone. They also depend on how these resources are used – whether for buying weapons instead of producing food, or building houses instead of providing health care and educational facilities.

Individuals and societies might make choices that require no income or wealth at all. For instance, a society does not have to be rich to be able to afford democracy, nor does a family have to be wealthy to respect the rights of each other. A person could be rich, healthy and well educated, but lack the opportunity to effectively participate in the development process, thus constraining individual choices. Valuable social and cultural traditions can and are maintained at all levels of income (HDR, 1994).

Despite its innovativeness, some analysts (e.g. Sugden, 1993) have questioned the usefulness of Sen’s framework in real life contexts. These criticisms concern the ability to operationalise the CA, especially the identification of what critics call ‘valuable capabilities’. By the same token, the usefulness of the concept for making inter-personal comparisons of well-being in the presence of potential disagreements about the valuation of capabilities including the relative weights to be assigned to these capabilities has also been questioned (Clark, 2005; 2006). As Clark (2006) points out, some commentators have also criticised Sen for failing to supplement his framework with a coherent list of important
capabilities. Some of these scholars (e.g. Nussbaum, 1988: 176; Qizilbash, 1996), argue that Sen goes too far in insisting that certain capabilities are simply valuable (see Sen, 1992: 40).

However, as Clark (2006: 6) argues, this line of attack, perhaps ‘misrepresents Sen’s actual position and conflicts with the available evidence on what is value formation’. Indeed, the CA’s central argument is that the overriding objective of development should be a concern with the expansion of human capabilities, rather than a myopic focus on economic growth, and this should be separated from the debate about the most valuable capabilities (Clark, 2006). It is evident therefore, that while the CA may not necessarily be a ‘complete model’, the approach nonetheless, ‘offers a coherent philosophical framework for thinking about the full range of development challenges, starting with the question of how development should be defined’. (Fukuda-Parr, 2011: 123). In this regard, CD conceptualises development as ‘the process by which a type of (social) change is introduced into a system in order to produce a better production method and improved social arrangement (Aluku & Aluko, 2011: 115). It involves a structural transformation of the economy, society, polity and culture of a country to guarantee human freedoms and the full realisation of people’s potentials (Fukuda-Parr, 2011, Sen, 1985).

3.5 Rationale for adopting Sen’s capability approach in this thesis

Very few concepts/theories have achieved such prominence in the development and management discourse as the Capability Approach (CA). In particular, Sen’s (1980, 1985, 1992, 1995 and 1999) CA has been profoundly influential at both academic and policy levels. This influence has also been reflected in mainstream development discourses, with some of the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP’s and World Bank’s most important recent publications, such as the Human Development Reports and the World Development Reports, largely influenced by the Sen’s approach (Comin & Carey, 2001).

Arguably, the theoretical insights offered by the Sen’s model have led to a flurry of recent theoretical and empirical research which constitutes a reawakening in the field of development and management studies. These writings have identified the significance of human capital created mainly, but not only through education and the utilisation of new knowledge through the expansion of individual capabilities and freedoms, as a strategy for an inclusive and sustainable national development (McMahon, 1999). The importance of Sen’s work in recent years to the development of the capability approach and human development literature; and to development practice in general cannot be over emphasised. Coy (1998: 1) has even suggested that Sen, ‘is economics' answer to Mother Teresa’.
From what was said in the preceding section, it is evident that Sen’s CA is very significant to social and development issues related to poverty, inequality and productivity especially at national levels, particularly in developing countries (Sen, 1989; Mehrotra, 2005). This perhaps, explains why Sen’s CA irrespective of several criticisms, have remained very popular and is extensively utilised by scholars and policy makers in the analyses and formulation of national development strategies.

Sen’s approach evolved as a result of the practical considerations regarding policy implications for development practices and its practical manifestations, especially the failures of neo-liberal prescriptions to lift the living standards of individuals (Comim & Carey, 2001; Sen, 1995). This argument becomes clearer when one considers Sen’s (1985) criticisms of the commoditisation of human resources inherent in neo-classical economics, as well as his argument that people should be free to utilise their skills, knowledge and energy for whatever purposes and endeavours that interest them. This kind of arguments clearly highlights a concern of the Sen’s approach ‘with the role of human beings, and in particular with the actual abilities that they achieve and acquire’ (Sen, 1989: 35).

Sen’s CA therefore, offers an ‘alternative’ conceptual and theoretical frameworks that aim to overcome the limitations of standard development thinking, which was based largely on economic considerations and productivity maximisation (Mehrotra, 2005). This distinguishes it from traditional approaches to development thinking, that sees poverty and underdevelopment in terms of resources and economic wellbeing. For Sen’s CA, ‘poverty’ and underdevelopment is understood as deprivation in the capability to live a good life, and ‘development’ is understood as capability expansion (Alkire, 2010). A person’s capability to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of valuable ‘beings and doings’ like being in good health or having loving relationships with others to which they have real access (Comin & Carey, 2001).

I adopted Sen’s capability approach for the purpose of this thesis because it provides a fine theoretical basis for addressing the kind of issues that are relevant to this study, including a focus on ‘the promotion of knowledge and skills that are required by a society to acquire greater prosperity through the building of productive capabilities’ (Saasa, 2007: 2). The approach is also relevant to the political economy of human capital and skills formation in developing contexts, considering its focus on functioning and agency and on the need to pay greater attention to the moral implications of individuals’ capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value (Alkire, 2010). Sen (1985) describes functioning as a valuable activity that makes up people’s wellbeing, while agency is a person’s ability to
pursue and realize goals s/he has reasons to value. Capabilities in the context therefore refer to the evaluation spaces according to which prevailing state of affairs are assessed.

In this regard, DCs should aim to initiate policies that promote valuable context-sensitive capabilities if they are serious about rapid development. This focus on developing capabilities that are relevant to ‘local’ needs in turn give rise to a focus on a wide range of less tangible, but no less important dimensions of CD such as skills and creativity; social cohesion and social capital; values and motivations; habits and traditions; institutional culture, and so on (Lavergne and Saxby, 2001). This intangible dimensions of CD is what some writers (e.g. Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; UNDP, 1998) characterise as ‘core capabilities’.

As Lavergne and Saxby (2001: 3) note, ‘core capabilities refer to the creativity, resourcefulness and capacity to learn and adapt of individuals and social entities. They are what allow them to realise their human and social potential to the highest possible level’. The European Centre for Development Policy Management – ECDM (2008: 2) and Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010: 3) identify a similar set of what they describe as ‘five core capabilities’ to include: the capability to commit and engage, the capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks, the capability to relate and attract support, the capability to adapt and self-renew and the capability to balance diversity and coherence. Figure 3.1 highlights the critical issues that require particular attention as well as the interrelationships between each of these core capabilities.
Figure 3.1: Core competencies - Key issues and interrelationships

Although the capability categories highlighted in Figure 3.1 are by no means exhaustive or prescriptive, they highlight several important implications in understanding capacity and CD. As Lavergne and Saxby (2001: 3) point out, this kind of capabilities, ‘… are crucial because they determine how well society uses the other resources at its disposal.’ It is important to stress here however, that a focus on capabilities, does not in any way suggest that the development of capabilities is or should be the only concern of CD. To be sure, ‘CD encompasses technical skills and knowledge as well as core capacities because both are important, but there is value in pointing to core capacities as fundamental in the pursuit of sustainable development’ (Lavergne and Saxby, 2001: 3).

It is instructive to point out however that while the categories highlighted in Figure 3.2 are valuable in promoting capabilities, what should be considered ‘valuable’ or ‘core’ should be decided upon through participatory decision-making and contextual peculiarities (Sen, 1995). The implications of this in the context of this research are very wide-ranging. In specific terms, it brings to fore the need for developing countries like Nigeria to pay greater attention to the processes of developing the required knowledge and skills base necessary to propel and sustain its national development efforts or what many analysts (e.g. Utz, 2006)
have characterised as ‘knowledge for development’ (K4D). This will ultimately enhance the development of the country’s capacity and will contribute in no small way to enhancing national development. As Utz (2006: 1) points out, ‘by building on their strengths and by carefully planning appropriate investments in human capital, effective institutions, relevant technologies, and innovative and competitive enterprises, developing countries can benefit from the knowledge revolution and make the transition to a knowledge economy.’

3.6 The application of capability development in this thesis

My understanding and utilisation of CD in this thesis critiques conventional ideas about the concept and challenges the existing neo-liberal social ontology that underpins most CD practices. The application of CD in this study is consistent with my ontological position and incorporates the idea of interaction across levels as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2: Levels of CD**

![Levels of CD Diagram](UNDP_2008.png)


As can be gleaned from Figure 3.2, CD is an interdependent process. This means that the success or otherwise of any CD efforts, depends crucially on the quality of the organisations and institutions in which individuals work (OECD, 2006). In turn, the operations of particular workplace are influenced by the enabling environment – the structures of power and influence and the institutions in which they are embedded (Jackson, 2004; Grindle, 2010). It could be argued therefore that CD is not only about skills and procedures; but importantly the process is also about incentives and governance (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003; Gillespie, 2005). Perhaps, this explains the shift of emphasis and why recent literature on CD (e.g. Lopes & Theisohn, 2003; Gillespie, 2005; Otoo, et al., 2009; Blagescu and Young,
2006; Hope, 2011) discuss the concept in relation to systems levels, namely: individuals, organisations, groups, institutions and societies as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

This multi-level emphasis highlights the need to understand the historical and endogenous contexts within which the Nigerian federal civil service as an institution evolved and continues to evolve. This is why the knowledge of historical development of the NFCS is very useful in this thesis. Considering the dynamics of the CD levels illustrated in Figure 3.2 and following Groot and Molen (2001), CD for the purpose of this thesis is defined as:

The development of relevant knowledge, skills and competencies in individuals and groups of people necessary to the design, development and maintenance of institutional and procedural infrastructures that is locally meaningful.

This definition resonates with Fakuda-Parr (2002) and Lopes and Theisohn’s (2003) argument that capacity does not only exist in individuals but also between them; in institutions, and the social networks they produce. Consistent with Sen’s (1985) CA as well as the argument of Lasthaus et al. (2002), I posit therefore that it is more productive to examine the capacity of the Nigerian civil service as a component of a system (i.e. the broader Nigerian context) – as illustrated in figure 3.3. 

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13 The origin and structure of the federal civil service and its role in national development cannot be adequately discussed without reference to the impact of a country’s historical experiences and environmental characteristics (Ayee, 2008; Monye-Emina, 2012). In the case of Nigeria, being a former British colony, the civil service, including its structures and features, evolved from the colonial public service administrative structure (Maikudi, 2012; Monye-Emina, 2012; Olaopa, 2012). Olaopa (2012) provides a comprehensive analysis of the history of the NFCS.
Figure 3.3: Understanding CD in the context of Nigeria’s civil service

The value of the issues highlighted in figure 3.3, is that it makes it possible to explore some of the underlying factors that condition the policy making and implementation outcomes. For instance, the historical legacies of a group can have a strong and lasting effect on institutions, power structures and relations, ideologies and perceptions. Similarly, understanding the dynamics of change and the direction of trends in a given polity is also critical for placing any CD intervention in its proper context (Moncrieffe & Luttrell, 2005). This is so, considering that these issues condition the ideologies and values that people hold, as well as influence the structural features and power relations of a group, all of which help define how institutions and actors operate in a given context and play an important role in policymaking and implementation (UNDP, 2012; Moncrieffe & Luttrell, 2005).

As already pointed out, CD is a broad area which addresses development at different levels of society, dealing with entities of different size and scope, at different stages of the development process (Eade, 1997). This implies that there are various dimensions of capability development, including: Individual (human), Institutional (organizational) and societal (community) capacities (Aluko & Aluko, 2011; Lusthaus et al., 1995; Whyte, 2004; Blagescu & Young, 2006, Kaplan, 1998). While this might be the case, for the purpose of
this thesis however, my emphasis will be on institutional and human capacities as key elements for improved human capital development and effective civil service.

Since the focus of this study is on human and institutional CD, it is important to understand these two aspects. In this regard, issues of institutional capacities are concerned with institutional and organizational capabilities (both physical and non-physical), to attract and effectively utilise different types of capitals including financial, intellectual, social and quality human capital. Central to institutional capacities therefore, are the structures and institutional frameworks for developing and managing people. Individual capacities on the other hand, relates to the availability of the right quantity and quality of human capital to achieve and sustain organisational or national development objectives. For the purpose of this thesis, the main issues of concern are:

*Recruitment and selection*

Recruitment and selection, as part of broader human capital and capability development and management strategy, comprise all the linked stages involved in the process of employee resourcing (French & Rumbles, 2009). Bratton and Gold (2007: 239) succinctly capture these linkages and define recruitment as ‘the process of generating a pool of capable people to apply for employment of an organisation’. Selection on the other hand, ‘is the process by which managers and others use specific instruments to choose from a pool of applicants a person or persons more likely to succeed in the job(s), given management goals and legal requirements.’

*Training and development (T&D)*

T&D is increasingly recognised as a key function that contributes to effective capacity development and the overall attainment of strategic organisational objectives. The provision of T&D has a number of important benefits for both employees and their organisation, as it provides mechanism for knowledge creation and exchange, which helps drive organisational change and renewal (McGuire, 2014; Crawshaw et al., 2014). As Armstrong (2012: 296) points out, training can be seen as ‘planned instruction’, aimed at achieving learning in order to improve capabilities. Development on the other hand, refers to the acquisition or improvement of a range of knowledge, skills or attitudes on a specific area of interest, through a combination of different types of training and learning over a period of time (Mankin, 2009; Crawshaw et al., 2014).
Management and leadership development

Developing effective managers and organisational leaders is both a complex and crucial process, yet it remains strategically significant for an effective organisation (McGuire, 2014; Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010). Their complexities arise largely because of the difficulties associated with defining both concepts. In turn, the problem of definition is in part, a result of the difficulties experienced in trying to ‘pin down’ what is involved in the work of being either a manager or a leader (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010).

Indeed, there is a continuing controversy about the difference between leadership and management, and while nobody has proposed that managing and leading are exactly the same, the degree of overlap remains a point of profound disagreement (Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2013). While it is beyond the scope of this study to join this debate, it suffices to point out as Yukl (2010: 8), argues that ‘managing seeks to produce predictability and order’, whereas leading seeks to produce organizational change by ‘facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.’

In the context of the NFCS, and in line with House et al. (2004), this means the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the federal service. This understanding reflects the assumption that managing and leading ‘involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization’ (Yukl, 2010: 3). Therefore, while there is little agreement about what exactly constitutes management and leadership development or the most appropriate way for doing it, it could be argued with some certainty that management and leadership development embraces some or all of the following features:

- A range of activities to maximise individual capability to lead (CIPD, 2015).
- The process by which individuals gain the skills and abilities to manage themselves and others (Margerison, 1991).
- The structured process by which managers and/or leaders enhance their skills, competencies and/or knowledge, via formal or informal learning methods, to the benefit of both individual and organisational performance (CIPD, 2014b).
- The system of corporate activities with the espoused goal of improving the managerial and leadership stock in the context of organisational and environmental change (Lees, 1992).
• An attempt to improve managerial effectiveness through a learning process (Mumford & Gold, 2004).

It is important to point out however that capability development involves much more than enhancing the knowledge and skills of individuals, or improving the effectiveness of institutional frameworks. Indeed, while my emphasis in this thesis is largely on these two dimensions of CD, I nonetheless recognise that CD is an endogenous process through which a society changes its rules, institutions and standards of behaviour, increases its level of social capital and enhances its ability to respond, adapt and exert discipline in itself (Eade, 2002; OECD, 2006). I similarly acknowledge as Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010: 2) note, that ‘the complexity and inter-connectedness of the elements associated with capacity, means that reductionist efforts to focus on separate components of capacity are unlikely to provide a sound basis for CD strategies and interventions’.

The implications of this in the context of this research, is that while it is important for me to identify measures that will help improve the processes of human capital accumulation in the Nigerian civil service, paying attention to what people do with these acquired skills and to the institutional and policy frameworks that support or hinder their ‘freedoms’ to exercise these acquired capabilities is equally important. In practical terms therefore, what this means is that DCS such as Nigeria, now have a set of policy options, including encouraging higher rates of national human capital development and promoting conditions that enhance the acquisition and effective utilisation of human capabilities. And while there are many important approaches that can help in achieving this objective, TM has emerged as a viable strategy for this purpose. The next section expands this argument and critically assesses the concept of TM in relation to capability development.

3.7 Conceptualising talent and talent management

Over the past few decades a literature has grown on TM research drawing mainly on strategic human resource management (SHRM), but also in part on industrial organisation management and economics (Capelli & Keller, 2014; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Since the late 1990s when a group of Mckinsey consultants coined the term – talent war, academics and practitioners have produced a considerable amount of publications on TM and it is now arguably one of the most debated themes in contemporary HRM/D theory and practice (Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010; Vaiman et al., 2012; Thunnissena, Boselieb & Fruytierc, 2013). Indeed, TM as an integral part of contemporary human capital and capability intervention strategy and general development practice has become a major strategy for improving and
effectively managing human capital in organisations including the civil service (Cappelli & Keller, 2014; Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries & González-Cruz, 2013).

Despite its increasing popularity in management and development discourses however, the precise meaning of TM remains elusive (Iles, et al., 2010). Indeed, there is no agreement among scholars and practitioners on what precisely constitutes ‘talent’ let alone on what talent management should be about (Elegbe, 2010; Preece, Iles, & Chuai, 2011; Iles, 2013). The concept remains a narrowly defined term, with unclear conceptual and theoretical boundaries and several anecdotal assumptions (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Preece et al. (2011) and Iles et al. (2010) in their different works, argue that the lack of theoretical foundations and conceptual development in the TM literature can be attributed largely to the pervasiveness of practitioner/consultancy-based writings that dominate the TM literature. This is a critical limitation of TM research and has led some (e.g. Iles et al., 2010), to caution that the concept is perhaps another HR fad or buzzword to remain relevant.

In recent years however, the theoretical and empirical foundations and the practice of TM have developed significantly and now occupy a major part in organisational planning and HCD (McGritty, 2007; Collings, Scullion, & Vaiman, 2011). Indeed, a number of scholars have attempted to refine our understanding of talent and talent management and have put forward a number of definitions of both terms. Cheese, Thomas and Craig (2008: 46) for instance, define talent as ‘…the total of all the experience, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that a person has and brings to work.’ For Tansley, Harris, Stewart and Turner (2006: 2), ‘talent can be considered as a complex amalgam of employees' skills, knowledge, cognitive ability and potential. Employees' values and work preferences are also of major importance.’ Tansley et al. (2007: 8) on their part, define talent more broadly as consisting of ‘...those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer-term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential.’ Chuai, Iles and Preece (2008: 4), takes a narrower view of talent and define the concept as those ‘individuals who have the capability to make a significant difference to the current and future performance of the company’.

While by no means exhaustive, what can be inferred from the above definitions is that there are many different ideas on what constitutes talent and everyone appears to have their ‘own idea of what the construct does and does not encompass’ (Gallardo-Gallardo, et al., 2013: 291). Perhaps, this is why Silzer and Dowell (2010) and Lewis and Heckman (2006) in their
different works argue that talent simply refers to the entire employee population and is nothing but a euphemism for people.

What this simply means is that the term ‘talent’ is a socially constructed phenomenon that has been rendered powerful by dominant discourses and metaphors, such as the knowledge-based economy discourse and ‘war for talent’ (Downs & Swailes, 2013). This implies that the meaning of talent varies in different professional and managerial contexts and is usually influenced by an organisation’s strategic position and challenges (Downs & Swailes, 2013).

For the purpose of this thesis, I follow Chuai et al. (2008) and adopt a more focused definition of talent. In this regard and consistent with Tansley et al. (2007) and CIPD (2009a), I take talent to mean those individuals who can contribute meaningfully to the efficiency and productivity of an organization, either through what they can contribute in the immediate or in the future by demonstrating the highest levels of potential. In the context of this thesis, talent therefore refers to the current capability or future potential of a civil servant to deliver exceptional performance in relation to the needs and strategic objectives of the civil service.

Talent management therefore relates to a set of organisational plans associated with ‘the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organization’ (Iles et al., 2011: 127). Consistent with Capelli (2008) and Frank et al. (2007) TM simply refers to efforts by an employer to keep desirable workers in order to meet ‘business’ objectives. At its heart, TM is simply a matter of organisations anticipating their need for human capital and then setting out a strategic plan to meet it (Capelli & Keller, 2014). Perhaps, this is why McCauley and Wakefield (2004: 4) opine that the ‘talent management processes include workforce planning, talent gap analysis, recruiting, staffing, education and development, retention, talent reviews, succession planning, and evaluation.’ This perspective is not too dissimilar with that offered by the CIPD (2010), which defines talent management as ‘the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organisation, either in view of their “high potential” for the future or because they are fulfilling business/operation-critical roles.’

The above conceptualisations of TM underline the importance of recognising that it is not enough to just attract individuals with high potential. Developing, managing and retaining those individuals as part of a planned HCD strategy for talent is equally important, as is adopting systems to ensure continuous personal and professional development (CIPD, 2010; Chuai, Preece, & Iles, 2008). Perhaps, this is why more organisations are now broadening
their definitions, looking at the ‘talents’ of all their staff and working on ways to develop their strengths. This has led to the evolution of the inclusive versus exclusive approaches to TM, as well as an increased emphasis on continuous professional development – CPD (CIPD, 2010; Capelli, 2008; Philips, 2006).

Consequently, in practice, some organisations or institutions adopt an inclusive approach to talent management creating a ‘whole workforce’ approach to engagement and talent development, while others develop a more exclusive focus, segmenting talent according to business needs and prioritisation (Swart et al., 2005; Chuai, Preece, & Iles, 2008). However, as the CIPD (2010) points out, regardless of which approach is adopted, fairness and consistency must be applied in all TM processes; even as diversity considerations must also be built-into TM processes to ensure that organisations are able to draw from the widest pools of talent possible. Involving the right stakeholders in the TM strategy should also be a major concern (Iles et al., 2011).

In this regard, Fournier (2008) outlines several strategies for effective TM to include: making retention a core strategy, engaging the workers, matching techniques to employee types and extracting maximum value from employees. Organisational branding, employee empowerment, the role of line managers and overall alignment of organisational human capital development strategy to the talent retention processes, are all identified as effective techniques for improving talent management, performance and retention abilities. Brittain (2007) and Yapp (2000) in their separate articles similarly highlighted several strategies for effective TM. They argue that organisations must place TM as an integral part of their overall business strategy. Brittain (2007) further makes a distinction between what he calls high potential talents – ‘hipos’ and ‘key talents’ and asserts that greater attention must be paid to the latter group, because they are critical to organisational success and competitiveness. The problem with this form of classification is the criteria to be used in making this distinction, considering that ‘talent’ is a difficult concept to define. Moreover, it could be argued that this kind of classification has the potentiality of producing dysfunctional impacts and lowering of individual’s morale and commitment (Lawler, 2008).

It is instructive to point out however that TM is not an end in itself, rather, it is a process intended to be a means to an end. As Capelli (2008) and several others argue, TM is not about developing employees or creating succession plans, nor is it about achieving specific turnover rates or any other tactical outcome. It exists to support organizations’ or institutions’ overall objectives, which essentially amount to being effective and competitive.
Being effective and competitive or making money to borrow Capelli’s (2008) words, require an understanding of the costs as well as the benefits associated with talent management choices.

As the CIPD (2014) argues, successful TM is driven by a ‘talent mind-set’ in which every manager in a firm regards talent management as their business and not the sole responsibility of the HR department. Whatever the conception or approach to TM, in general it is a process by which an organisation hires, engages and develops its most valuable resource (Iles et al., 2010; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). It consists of various interrelated components that are shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.4 as an integrated system.

**Figure 3.4:** Talent management system

Source: Elegbe (2010: 7) [Adapted].

Given the centrality of the TM components illustrated in figure 3.4 to organisational survival, it could be argued therefore that ‘TM is not merely a process of managing physical human bodies or disparate human resource management processes and systems, but rather an integrated and comprehensive approach to managing the abilities, competencies, skills,
needs, concerns, careers, fears and expectations of the people that an organization values and needs to make it great and highly effective’ (Elegbe, 2010: 7-8). In this regard and as outlined in figure 3.4 TM processes include, but are not limited to workforce planning, talent gap analysis, recruitment and selection, education, training and development, retention, talent reviews, succession planning and evaluation. As McCauley and Wakefield (2006) argue, it is important for organisations to align these processes with its business strategies in order to drive performance and create sustainable success in an increasingly volatile global environment – a strategic approach to TM.

3.7.1 The concept of strategic TM

As already pointed out, the centrality of effective TM for organisations (whether private or public), has been profoundly highlighted by management scholars and development experts (e.g. Deery, 2008; Iles et al., 2010; Devine & Powell, 2008). There is no lack of evidence in the literature about the importance of ‘talents’ to an employer’s competitive position – although many claims have been contested. The above notwithstanding, a strategic perspective to talent management is relatively a recent development, engendered largely by the increasingly volatile nature and unpredictability of the global economic environment (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

Demographic changes, continuing globalisation and the internationalisation of the HRM/D function have made it imperative for organisations and governments alike to adopt ways of attracting and retaining the best talents as a source of competitive edge (CIPD, 2010; Philips, 2006). The consequences of these trends are already apparent in the workplace today, through the increasingly competitive battle to recruit individuals in possession of scarce skills; growing international dimension to recruitment and internal mobility strategies; and employers’ renewed focus on developing and retaining key employees through appropriate and innovative TM strategies (Philips, 2006; Powell et al., 2012).

In the past these issues would have just been the concern of the major players but today talent management is an issue on almost every boardroom agenda across the globe, regardless of the size or status of the employer. TM has moved into centre stage as it becomes evident that there is truth in the old adage that the most important organisational assets are its people (Philips, 2006). To be sure, this is not mere rhetoric. There is going to be less and less to choose from amongst the talent pool, so employers (whether organisations, institutions or governments) are going to have to get smarter at finding the right people. Yet the fundamental issue remains as to how organisations should go about
finding the right talents and most importantly retain them. This is where the concept of strategic talent management comes in.

As the CIPD (2010) succinctly argues, ensuring that the talent strategy is closely aligned with the corporate strategy must be a priority, even as strategic analysis from the business perspective should feed into an HR forecast which can help shape an organisation’s tailored approach to TM. Perhaps, this is why McCauley and Wakefield (2006:4) argue that TM processes must be ‘more strategic, connected, and broad-based than ever before.’ As the CIPD (2010: 3) notes, ‘the business case for taking a strategic approach to TM is strong and persuasive’. For employers to gain competitive advantage they need to develop a strategic approach to TM that suits their strategy and gets the best from their people (Powell et al., 2012; CIPD, 2010).

Similarly, Cappelli (2008) passionately argues for the adoption of a strategic approach to TM, asserting that traditional forms of TM have had dysfunctional impacts on organisations, because it has failed to meet the exigencies of the 21st century business environment, hence the need for a strategic approach. He proposed a talent on demand framework, based on supply chain perspective. It must be stated however, that while it has to be accepted that the call for the adoption of a strategic approach is timely and imperative, it must also be acknowledged that traditional methods are not entirely useless, as it has provided the foundation for the evolution of a more ‘modern’ strategic approach.

The CIPD (2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010) presents a comprehensive empirical and theoretical overview of effective strategic talent management and argues that a greater number of organisations are adopting this approach with recorded success. However, with an exclusive focus on organisations in the UK, these works does not provide a global perspective and are therefore, not an appropriate measure of the development and application of STM in organisational or institutional contexts. Therefore, the claim of ‘recorded successes’ should be treated with serious caution, bearing in mind that the UK business environment is quite different from those of other countries, especially developing economies like those of Africa, particularly Nigeria.

Prior research into the application of HRD interventions, particularly talent management practices have highlighted the need to properly align people development policies, including talent management with strategic objectives – best fit (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). In this regard, many authors (e.g. Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Perkins & Shortland, 2006; Lee, 2003, etcetera) have sought to integrate the huge range of HRM/D and talent management choices
that might be adopted in different situations (the contingency model) by considering the
differences between ‘bureaucratic’, ‘market’ and ‘clan’ models of HRM, a set of categories
that draws on the work of Ouchi (1980). The bureaucratic model is seen as concerned with
‘control’ and ‘efficiency’, using traditional authority and such staples of HR management as
job description and job evaluation to provide order and equality (Beer et al., 1984). This
approach is regarded as relevant to markets with stable technology and employment levels
like much of the developed world.

The market approach on the other hand aims to treat employees more like sub-contractors,
fostering short-term exchanges and performance-related pay systems (Boxall & Purcell,
2008). This is seen as relevant to fast changing environments such as high-fashion
merchandising, advertising and professional sports (Beer et al., 1984). Lastly, the ‘clan’
models are seen as building more diffuse kinship links, fostering shared values, team work
and strong commitment in organisations seeking ‘long-term adaptability’ (Boxall & Purcell,
2008; Perkins & Shortland, 2006). It has been argued that this approach is the most relevant
to firms pursuing quality and innovation. However, combining aspects of two or even the
three models is seen as useful when facing complex environments like that of Nigeria (Beer
et al. 1984). What this simply means, is that in developing a talent strategy, both internal and
external factors should be taken into account.

3.7.2 Limitations of current TM research and the relevance of context

As already highlighted, the theoretical and empirical foundations and the practice of TM
have developed significantly in recent years, especially in the West and now occupy a major
part in contemporary HRD discourse (McGritty, 2007; Collings, Scullion, and Vaiman,
2011). While this is certainly encouraging, there are questions regarding the utility of
current concepts in the TM literature, which are strongly embedded in the context of private,
Western-based organizations and multinationals in understanding and studying TM in
organizations in other contexts – including civil service organisations in Africa (Guthridge,
Komn & Lawson, 2006; Powell et al., 2012; Thunnissena, Boselieb & Fruytierc, 2013).

As pointed out in chapter 2, apart from very few studies (e.g. Bhatnager, 2007; Iles, Preece
& Chuai 2011; Melahi & Collins, 2010) that have attempted to study the application of TM
principles in non-Western settings (namely: Middle East and Asia Pacific), a critical
limitation of the extant literature on TM is its inability to provide situational contexts. This
is especially the case for SSA, where very little studies exist on TM. Indeed, despite the
popularity of TM in current discourses on strategies for improving human capital
development and management, it would appear that TM issues have not received much attention in much of SSA. Against this backdrop, the central question that then follows is: what happens to other environmental contexts, including talent management in Nigeria?

Further, it also appears to be the case that most studies on TM have paid very little attention to national and public sector dimensions (Iles, 2013), instead the focus have mainly been on private organisational contexts, with an overriding emphasis on the need to retain ‘talented’ employees for improved performance and competitive advantage (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Consequently, a common theme that reflects in most writings on TM is the need for organisations to maximally harness and utilise the potentials of its brightest talents as a source of competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive and critical labour market characterised by the so called ‘talent war’ (Wooldridge, 2006; CIPD, 2006; Powell et al., 2012).

This approach is undoubtedly the outcome of demographic trends, particularly the ageing of the population and shrinking of the workforce of most industrialised countries, attitudinal changes, the changing world of work and the ripple effects of globalisation (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2004; CIPD, 2010). And while there might be some value in this type of approach considering its impact on an organisation’s competitive position (Bhatnagar, 2008), it however appears to largely ignore the wider societal and ethical dimensions of TM (Downs & Swailes, 2013). The approach seems not to also sufficiently demonstrate the potential contributions of TM to the processes of capability development (Bhatnager, 2007; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Downs & Swailes, 2013).

Downs and Swailes (2013) have critiqued this approach and argue that most mainstream approaches to TM, often driven by the productivity discourse largely ignore individual well-being and freedom. Utilising theoretical lens from Sen’s capability approach, they call for a rethinking of the TM discourse to pay more attention on the freedom of individuals concerned. Indeed, by focusing on freedom, Downs and Swailes (2013) following Sen (1985) draws our attention to often forgotten ‘dark-side’ of TM practice. This type of thinking contrasts with the discourse on human capital accumulation and the skill-based/competency based models on one hand and between organisational development and profit/performance-driven TM on the other (Kenny & Clark, 2010; Gillespie, 2005).

While Downs and Swailes’ (2013) interest on ‘freedoms’ brings to focus the increasing commoditisation of the TM discourse and the need to pay more attention to individual welfare, their analysis did not however say much about the political economy of TM and the
relevance of contextual factors in the practice of TM. This is a serious gap not only in Dwons and Swailes’ (2013) work, but in the TM literature more broadly. Indeed, it appears that TM scholars and practitioners alike have not paid much attention to the critical analysis of the politico-economic and other contextual conditions that promote or hinder TM processes, particularly in developing contexts. There is therefore a limited understanding of how civil service TM takes place, especially within the constraints imposed by socio-political and economic contexts of DCs including Nigeria.

This thesis helps advance this kind of knowledge and one of my main aims in this study as discussed in chapter 1 is to critically explore how power, dominant discourses, interests, incentives, institutional arrangements and other structural/quasi-structural features of the Nigerian State intersect to influence human capital development policies, including TM processes in the NFCS. Understanding the political economy of TM and the other aspects of civil service human and capability development have become crucial, considering that ‘political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time.’ (Collinson, 2003: 3).

The focus on the political economy level underscores the relevance of relationships, power relations and incentive systems to the issue of TM and to human capital and capability development more broadly, especially in a civil service context. Focusing on these kinds of issues is especially significant in the context of this thesis, considering my earlier argument in this current chapter that the utility of individuals’ skills and abilities depends on the social context and networks within which they are embedded (Schuller, 2008; Iles et al., 2010). It is also the case, as Sen (1985) argues that people differ in their capacity to convert goods into valuable achievements due to personal and locational factors as well as socio-political and economic arrangements.

It is my contention here therefore that civil service TM, just like other aspects of the capability development process should be analysed and understood in terms of people and their contexts (Mhone, 2003). When applied in the context of this study, this implies understanding the political, socio-economic, structural and institutional nuances of the Nigerian state, and how these dynamics combine to affect TM policy and processes in the country’s civil service over a period of time (Collinson, 2003; Heymans & Pycroft, 2003).
While I acknowledge that there are many important approaches to gaining this understanding, I argue however that political economy analysis and a conceptualization of an antithesis between the contextual realities in Nigeria and the prevailing approaches to civil service TM, offers a viable approach. In adopting this approach, I follow a part already taken by a number of scholars (example: Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2009; Utomi et al., 2007; Amundsen, 2010; Moncrieffe & Luttrell; UNDP, 2013 and etc.), who have utilised political economy and contextual analysis to help situate some of the salient contextual features that should be considered in developing and implementing civil service reform initiatives, especially in DCs.

Not only is it hoped that this analysis will provide the basis for a better understanding of issues of civil service human capital, including TM in Nigeria and the SSA sub-continent itself, but also contribute to development theorising, by focusing on the issues and levels of analysis required to study complex management systems engendered by hybridization within post-colonial societies where power and ideological relations are major factors. This effort is also intended to illuminate the study and implementation of TM practices in a wider range of organizations, including the public sector than has previously been the case. At this juncture, it is important to consider how the concept of TM relates to other related concepts used in this thesis, namely: human capital and capability development before proceeding any further. This is what I attempt to do in the section that follows.

3.8 Linking human capital, talent management and capability development

It should be evident from the discussions so far in this chapter and in preceding chapters that there are clear linkages between human capital, capability development and talent management. Figure 3.5 provides a structural representation of how these concepts are theoretically linked for the purpose of this study.
As illustrated in figure 3.5, the ultimate mission of capability/capacity development as already pointed out, is for people to increase their ‘value’ and improve their quality of life, while human capital development relates to the processes that help individuals acquire a range of skills for improved productivity. TM on the other hand, has a key role to play in delivering on human and institutional capacity development and in the accumulation of human capital, especially as skilled labour becomes harder to find and as employees’ loyalty to single companies decreases (Holbeche, 2009). In this regard, critical TM processes such as workforce planning, recruitment, retention, talent identification, skills development, management and succession planning, as well as enhancing skills required to respond to an ever-changing environment, will all continue to be crucial to discourses on human capital and capability development (Tarique & Schuller, 2010; Holbeche, 2009).

The evidence from the literature supports this view and indicates that there are clear linkages between human capital, capability development and TM (Brewster, Sparrow & Harris, 2005; Evans, Novicevic & Davis, 2007; Ghanam & Cox, 2007; Hailey, Holland, Sheehan & DeCieri, 2007; Michie & Sheehan, 2005; Downs & Sawiles, 2013). It is argued that the appropriate utilisation of TM initiatives can help in leadership development (Iles et al.,...
2010; Romans, Frost & Ford, 2006; Green, 2002); support training and learning initiatives (Bersin, 2007; Guttridge et al., 2006) and develop organisational capabilities (Kates, 2006; Perkins & Shortland, 2006). All of these are anticipated to enable capability to be endogenously developed through skills and knowledge acquisition and effective capacity utilisation. These linkages do not in any way suggest that there are no differences between human capital, TM and CD. The points of departure between these concepts in the context of this thesis are summarized in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Points of departure between human capital, TM and CD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Human capital</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paradigm</strong></td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus &amp; Beneficiary</strong></td>
<td>Skills development of individuals</td>
<td>Capability development of the organisation</td>
<td>Development of individuals, organisations and societies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy &amp; Basic assumption</strong></td>
<td>Increased levels of education and skills acquisition have benefits for individuals and society.</td>
<td>The development of the ‘talented’ will benefit the organization and this will benefit other employees.</td>
<td>It is not just enough to acquire skills, paying attention to individuals’ freedoms and wellbeing are equally important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Based on ability to demonstrate value for money.</td>
<td>Workforce differentiation on the basis of actual or potential contribution.</td>
<td>Inclusive, recognizes individual diversity and encourages all employees to achieve what they value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed from ideas contained in (Downs & Swailes, 2013; Wealthery, 2003; Lawler, 2008).

And whereas it has to be acknowledged that the idea of human capital, TM and Sen’s CA belong to different paradigms and share many different characteristics as illustrated in Table 3.2, I maintain however that they nonetheless share some salient intellectual and practical similarities which are very significant in the context of this research. Sen (1989: 35) succinctly highlights this interconnectedness when he notes that ‘the significant transformation that has occurred in recent years in giving greater recognition to the role of “human capital” is helpful for understanding the relevance of the capability perspective’.
It is important to re-emphasise here that capability and capacity development is more than just the training and development of individuals to acquire more skills, or even raising the levels of education/learning and effective utilisation of human capital in an organisation. Of course these approaches are helpful, but alone they are not sufficient to make real improvements in capability and capacity development. In line with Sen’s (1985) argument, the accumulation of human capital and effective management of the already developed human capital through TM initiatives must be supported by an enabling environment engendered through appropriate policy, legal and organising frameworks which will enable the long term recognition, development and utilisation of appropriate capabilities.

As earlier pointed out in this current chapter (refer. 3.3.1), capabilities within the context of this thesis are the skills and competencies necessary for an organisation to coordinate resources effectively to achieve specific purposes (Analoui, 2007). It is argued that for an organisation to be able to recognise and exploit such capabilities there will need to undertake systematic development in a range of areas, including human resource and institutional development. These dimensions will affect, and be affected by the TM initiatives undertaken within the organisation and the organisational asymmetries14 more broadly.

As Miller, Eisenstat and Foote (2005: 337) argue, to create capabilities an entity needs to be able to discover their asymmetries and create new capability configurations, which may ‘…not currently produce any economic advantages but have potential to be transformed into valuable resources or capabilities. According to them (i.e. Miller et al., 2005: 337), these capability configurations are ‘systems of reinforcing elements incorporating core capabilities and the organisational design infrastructures in which they are embedded and that renew, adapt, and support these capabilities’.

In this regard, an organisation is likely to translate its asymmetries and potentials into capabilities if it specifically develops structures and policies which energise and maximise the processes of capacity enhancement. From what has been discussed so far in this chapter, human capital development and talent management are arguably supporting structure for such enhancements. It can be argued that effective recruitment, development, retention and support of individuals which leads to greater levels of shared and new knowledge, will enable innovation which will lead to greater capability development (Lawler, 2008).

14 Asymmetries are skills, knowledge, processes, relationships, properties, or outputs that help an organisation develop a competitive advantage (Miller, et al., 2005).
Against this backdrop, my understanding and utilisation of human capital, TM and Sen’s CA in this thesis will be complimentary and mutually reinforcing. In precise terms, my understanding of these concepts in this study is consistent with Sen’s (1989) position that human capital (as well as TM) concentrates on the agency of human beings, through their skills, knowledge and competencies in promoting productivity; while the CA ‘focuses on the ability of human beings to lead lives that they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have’ (Sen, 1989: 35). The focus on freedoms has in turn led to the recognition that ‘capacity/capability’ is a feature of systems and an endogenous process (Gillespie, 2005; Fakuda-Parr, 2002).

This view is consistent with Sen (1989, 1995) and then Gillespie’s (2005) arguments that ‘capacity’ is much more than the aggregation of skilled individuals, but importantly encompasses the opportunities that individuals have to use and extend those skills. Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010: 2), expand this argument when they note that ‘capacity and its associated capabilities emerge as a function of the agency of country actors. In other words, although outsiders may be able to assist in developing and reinforcing capacity, sustained capacity results when endogenous actor-led processes stimulate the creation and strengthening of core capabilities’.

This is especially so, because in most instances and as Bourdieu (1998) argues, social and political legitimisations emerge at the level of acquired habitual assumptions that are taken for granted, or without the need for interrogation, and are not part of the public discourse, but are rather unspoken and pre-reflective. In line with the preceding arguments, it becomes crucially important to recognise the interconnected nature of socio-economic and political contexts within which CD initiatives take place, especially because these dynamics produce the dominant discourses that shape what become reality and invariably what becomes CD itself.

Any theoretical lens for rethinking any social practice, including the processes of human capital development must therefore take cognizance of contextual factors and dominant discourses. In the context of this thesis and in line with the research objectives earlier identified in chapter 1 (refer to 1.4), this means critically exploring the broader Nigerian political economy contexts, in order to understand some of the embedded contextual issues that impact on the civil service human capital development. Herein lies the foundation of the theoretical model that underpins this research. The next section discusses the theoretical framework for rethinking human capital development within the NFCS.
3.9 Developing a theoretical model for rethinking civil service human capital

As discussed previously in chapter 1 (see 1.4), one of the key objectives of this study is to help fill a gap in understanding how a human capital approach is designed, implemented and experienced in DCs’ civil service, using the Nigerian experience. Based on the discussion so far and consistent with the need documented previously in chapter 2 (2.10) for greater attention to contextual factors in HC policy formulation, I propose here an innovative analytical framework influenced by post structural discourse theory and social constructivism. Figure 3.6 presents an analytical framework for studying approaches to civil service human capital development in DCs, particularly in a hybridised context like that of Nigeria. Following Jackson (2004: 38), hybridization here refers to practices derived from cultural interactions, ‘historically and currently, that provide the organizational strategies, structures, principles and characteristics.’

Figure 3.6: A theoretical model for studying civil service human capital development in a hybridised context

Source: Author, 2014.
The emphasis of the model illustrated in Figure 3.6 is on understanding how decisions for civil service HC policies emerge as well as some of the contextual issues that influence implementation strategies in a developing context. Towards this end, the framework is premised around the following epistemological and theoretical positioning:

1 Public policies, particularly HC policies are constituted as Bevir and Rhodes (2003; 2011) argue, on an ensemble of specific, locally articulated discourses on the nature of the policy process. These discourses are assembled and rendered powerful by discourse coalitions, composed both of policy actors and of the policy process-related materialities that these actors employ to construct and maintain a particular discourse (Hajer 1993; Yanow 1995, 2000).

2 In order to understand how HC policy are formulated and implemented in the civil service of a developing country, it is important to therefore:
   a) Analyse the policy- and process-related dominant discourses that circulate in such a setting, and the uses and interpretations different policy actors make of these discourses (Danieli, 2011), and on this basis;
   b) Discern and interpret the various discourses that construct civil service HCD and policy direction in a developing context, as well as analyse how these discourses relate to each other, with the aim of explaining phenomena such as training and development and talent management (Hajer, 1993; Danieli, 2011).

3 Power and power relations are translated into control mechanism within organizations/institutions, and reveal themselves in policy decision making processes and leadership/management systems. To be more specific:
   - Power can be described as the ability (militarily, economically, politically, charismatically, knowledgably, etc.) to impose one’s will on others (Jones & George, 2006; Jackson, 2004).
   - Power is circumscribed by the available resources and what other actors permit, meaning that there is a ‘possibility boundary’, which serves as a constraint to actors (Boulding, 1989; cited in Hyden, 2008: 13). In this regard, ‘formal’ power can be constructed to mean the visible, recognised structures of power that are part of the way in which societies work (Acosta & Pettit, 2013).
   - When framed in this way, formal power then manifests as the institutions that mediate the relationship between those with legitimate authority and those who are subject to that authority, the laws and rules that define what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, and how those who break laws and flout norms are treated (Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth, 1992).
This understanding of power, often referred to as power to, underpins Sen’s (1995) capability approach influencing this study, which argues that people are not free when they do not have the power to make choices about their lives (refer to chapter 3).

4 Power relations is therefore, an overriding principle in understanding how HCD policies are formulated and how management systems are conceived and operated in a given context (Jones & George, 2006; Jackson, 2004). The nature of control and the dynamics of power relations arguably shape the standards through which norms, rules and behaviour are regulated, sometimes through informal, illegal or clandestine forms of coercion. Again, the perceived legitimacy of such control may well reflect the values, beliefs and knowledge systems of a cultural group, and the integrity of that group in terms of acceptance or rejection of dominant discourse or ideology (Grindle, 2011; Danieli, 2011).

I contend that these issues are critical to the understanding of the key features that influence the standards for civil service HCD policies in Nigeria, as in many other DCs. This is particularly so, considering that despite the pervasiveness of globalisation, there are strong arguments to suggest that crossvergence, rather than convergence appears to be the dominant process influencing policies for national development (Jackson, 2004; Edwards & Rees, 2006). The implication of this development therefore, is that while indigenous value, belief and knowledge systems are arguably influential in policy development at national levels, there are usually modified through the hegemony of globalising power relations, which in turn may be modified through practice in a given context (Jackson, 2004).

Overall, in developing this framework, I follow Heclo’s (1994: 366) argument that ‘change has to be identified with reference to what has not changed, or changed less’. This line of reasoning becomes crucial, against the realisation that many institutions and processes stay the same far more than they change; and any framework that wants to be taken seriously must hold the potential of explaining why changes take place and why they do not (Hope, 2011). This is especially significant in the context of this study, considering that developing a meaningful understanding of how HC processes and capability can be improved also requires a critical consideration of change and continuity as well as the critical role of institutions in a given context – in this case the Nigerian context (Heclo, 1994).
Operationalizing the theoretical framework: Linking structures, institutions and rules of the game

In operationalising the theoretical framework described in the preceding section, I proceeded from the view that human capability development should be an emergent process, influenced by contextual issues. This Heraclitean ontology presents HCD as an evolutionary process driven by structural and institutional developments within a given context. This type of social ontology is consistent with my constructivist and poststructuralist position that members of a group together invent the meanings and realities of their social world through continuous interactions and off course, through the power of dominant discourses (William and May, 1996; see chapter 4).

In attempting to rethink approaches to civil service human capital development, it is important therefore to consider the interconnections between structures, institutions and rules of the game. The interest in the relationship between structures, institutions and rules of the game, is off course an old theme in political economy and development research. It was, for example, an important subject for Adam Smith, who argues in the Wealth of Nations that:

Commerce and manufactures can seldom flourish in any state which does not enjoy a regular administration of justice, in which the people do not feel themselves secure in the possession of their property, in which the faith of contracts is not supported by law, and in which the authority of the state is not supposed to be regularly employed in enforcing the payment of debts from all those who are able to pay.

The literature on this subject has however, thrived in recent times among development theorists and other social scientists, due to the renewed questioning of the utility of neoliberal economics of growth to the big question of development, especially in DCs. The current popularity has also benefited from the contributions of new institutional scholars, such as Douglass North and his collaborators, as well as from ‘ideational’ scholars, including Collin Hay, Vivien Schmidt and many others. Figure 3.7 diagrams the interconnections between structures, institutions and rules of the game.
As Figure 3.7 illustrates, structural features of a country include natural and human resource endowments; geographical and climatic factors; demography; ethnic composition; technology; level of economic development; patterns of production, distribution and exchange; and the distribution of income and wealth (Heymans & Pycroft, 2003: 25). Institutions on the other hand, has been described as an ‘enduring collection of rules and organised practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances’ (March & Olsen, 2006: 3).

In the context of Nigeria, these factors are somewhat flexible and change over time, driven largely by several other underlying contextual subtleties, including: historical hybridity, the influence of diverse dominant conceptual discourses operating at endogenous and exogenous spheres, inequalities, increasing poverty levels and the dynamics of power relations (see UNDP, 2010). The dynamics and interconnections between these factors arguably shape the meaning system within the Nigerian polity. It is the impacts of these meaning systems on behaviours and on social relations that some scholars (e.g. Eyben, 2004), allude to as ‘the rules of the game’.

The notion of ‘the rules of the game’ therefore, constitute the set of clearly defined norms and rules that are accepted, communicated and enforced through formal and informal
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channels (Eyben, 2004; Moser, 2004). As Acosta and Pettit (2013: 15), note, ‘rules of the game’, therefore, ‘closely defines the arenas or spaces in which power and political dynamics take place.’ This implies that policy implementation in different arenas of the Nigerian polity, as elsewhere, are shaped by different rules of the game (see Gaventa, 2006; Acosta & Petit, 2013).

When applied in the context of this thesis, this means that by looking at different arenas and the rules that shape them, it is possible to identify ‘political opportunity structures’ or entry points for rethinking human capital development in the NFSC. This is exactly what I intend to achieve in this thesis. Towards this end, my focus in the empirical chapters is on understanding the:

- Structural issues that define and shape the institutional character of the NFCS.
- Formal/informal institutions that define the existing rules of the game in the NFCS.
- The existing practices that shape how the game in actually played in the context of the NFCS.

In addressing these dimensions, it is important to recognise however that identifying reform policy entry points, requires a critical understanding of the structural and institutional contexts within which policies are constructed and experienced. This is particularly important in the context of this thesis, when one considers Garavan’s (2007) argument that any strategy for developing people should focus on the interplay between HRD practices and the broader context within which people development policies are enacted and implemented.

3.11 Chapter summary and conclusions

In this chapter, I have set out the basis of the theoretical framework that I believe can help in rethinking approaches to civil service HCD in SSA. In doing this, I critically explored and integrated the knowledge territories that will serve as the main intellectual foundations for subsequent analyses in this study, including human capital, TM and capability development. Considering the need to better understand the dynamics of development in history and culture (Schmidt, 2010), I argued in this chapter that it is important to recognise the interconnected nature of socio-economic and political contexts within which capability development initiatives take place in the NFCS, as elsewhere. As I pointed out, this need becomes crucial, especially because social and political legitimisations emerge at the level of acquired habitual assumptions that are mostly taken for granted (Bourdieu, 1998).
Moreover, these dynamics have been shown to produce the dominant discourses that shape what become reality and invariably, what become policies.

It is in line with this recognition that my understanding and utilisation of the concepts of CD, TM and HCD in this thesis critiques conventional ideas about these concept and challenges the existing mainstream neo-liberal social ontology that underpins most current understanding of these issues. Indeed, while I acknowledge that most of the literature on CD, TM and HC are situated within the context of mainstream development discourse, I maintain however, that the core issues and ideas underlying these discourses go beyond narrow neo-liberal technocratic and instrumentalist conceptualisations, because they are critical to the quest for sustainable human and economic development of most developing countries like Nigeria.

Against this backdrop and as already highlighted in chapter 1, my emphasis in this thesis therefore, centres on the dynamics of power relations, the taken for granted dimensions of skills formation and the socio-economic factors underlying the processes of HCD, CD and TM in the context of the Nigerian civil service. This is why the understanding and the meanings which I have ascribed to these concepts in this study are informed by more theoretically open definitions – as processes of developing and utilising people’s capabilities (Sen, 1989; OECD, 1996). These meanings also emerge in a methodologically consistent way from my philosophical positioning and from the endogenous consideration of how these terms are used in the Nigerian civil service.

However, having examined the theories and concepts that will be significant in the quest to rethinking HCD in the Nigerian civil service, the crucial question that then follows is: what research methods will be used to generate accounts of continuity and change to illuminate my research questions and accomplish the aims and objectives which I have set out for this study? Addressing this question becomes imperative considering Scandura and Williams’ (2000) contention that for social science research to progress, it is important for researchers to assess the methods they employ, because the appropriateness and rigor of the research methods chosen; design choices about instrumentation and data analysis, may affect the types of conclusions that are drawn; and by extension the impact of the research. It is precisely in this spirit that I will, in the next chapter, discuss the key methodological principles that guided my research in practice.
Chapter 4

Methodology: Insights into research philosophy, design and methods

The methodology of qualitative social research, with its particular data collection and data analysis procedures, therefore aims at systematizing and controlling the scientific reconstruction of constructions of reality. Here qualitative methods are to be understood less as prescriptions than as sensitizations to typical problems of the research process – such as adequacy, coherence, reliability, validity and checkability.


4.1 Introduction

Methodological reflections concerning the ‘fit’ of research questions, data material and methods, are essential in situating the concrete empirical-methodological implementation of a research project (Keller, 2013). This is especially so considering that the accomplishment of any research objectives is largely dependent on the efficacy of the research design and choice(s) of methodology adopted. It is pertinent to point out however, that methodological issues cannot be entirely separated from theoretical assumptions within qualitative, discursive and critical approaches to development and management research – which is very much the approach I am utilising in this study (Silverman, 2014). This chapter therefore, constitutes both a discussion of the particular issues surrounding methods in a discursive study of this nature as well as a presentation of ‘what happened’ and ‘how it happened’ in this research.

In this regard, the chapter contains both a discussion of the associated key theoretical issues in discourse analysis, with particular emphasis on the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD) and a descriptive account of how the study was developed and conducted in practice. While this effort is by no means a complete account of the various methodological issues relating to this research, nor of all the things that happened during the research process, the main aim here is to highlight the critical issues involved in adopting and utilising a discursive approach to the study of civil service human capital in a developing context. In addition, it is also intended to demonstrate how the presentation and practice of ‘method’ is inherently bound up with theoretical assumptions in the research process (Silverman, 2014).
The chapter is developed in two broad parts. The first part critically explores the role of ideas and discourse in development theorising and in explaining institutional and policy change. This exploration helps set the context for a discussion on the philosophical assumptions and methodological considerations that underpin the research. The second part provides a critical assessment of design choices and justifications of the methods that I have chosen for data collection and interpretation. It also offers insights into some practical limitations of the research process and considers questions about reliability and validity, which has been re-contextualised here as research trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Finally, the chapter concludes by offering critical insights into the politics of research, with particular emphasis on ethics and issues of researcher reflexivity.

4.2 Re-evaluating development theory: The role of ‘ideas’ and ‘discourse’ in understanding policy and institutional change/continuity

In recent times, there has been a growing degree of agreement amongst development scholars and practitioners on the need for new and innovative ways of thinking about development (Rapley, 2007). This increasing congruency is arguably the result of the evident profound failings of neo-liberal theory in practice, particularly rising poverty levels and widening inequalities (Sachs, 2010; Rapley, 2007; Mathews, 2004). The recognition of the dire need to achieve development’s intended outcomes and avoid replicating the rhetoric of the modernisation approach that became derogatorily known as 'developmentalism', seems to have engendered a growing shift of emphasis in development policy discourse (Pieterse, 2000). It has become clear that the use of growth indicators to measure development missed the real essence of development, such that people are now increasingly stressed as both the measures and determinants of development (Rapley, 2007; Gasper & Apthorpe, 1996).

Perhaps, it against this backdrop and in line with the need to be seen as proactive, that large international development agencies, such as the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and several others, appear to have begun to rethink their policies and approaches to development. As Stiglitz (2002: 15) points out, ‘the IMF and the World Bank have changed their rhetoric – there is much more talk about poverty, and at least at the World Bank, there is a sincere attempt to live up to its commitment to “put the country in the driver’s seat” in its programs in many countries’. In their efforts to overhaul their development frameworks therefore, these agencies are now seeking to broaden their conceptualisation of development, by expanding their analysis of local peculiarities on the one hand, and incorporating a wider range of perspectives in their approaches on the other
(Rapley, 2007; Stiglitz, 2002). For instance, new projects for grassroots application (e.g. UNAIDS)\textsuperscript{15} are increasingly being designed to incorporate strategies that take cognisance of socio-cultural and institutional nuances, group dynamics, knowledge for development (K4D) capabilities, politico-economic peculiarities and other context-sensitive characteristics of local communities.

Consistent with Rapley (2007: 5), ‘this kind of localised, particularistic, and flexible approach to development is, in the end, not that far from what post-development thought has advocated’. To be sure, poststructuralists like Sachs (1995, 2010), Escobar (1995) and others, have since advocated for an ‘alternative to development’ or an ‘end to development’. It is important to stress however, that the calls for an ‘end to development’, should not be (mis)interpreted as a belief that the progress of human societies is impossible through the idea of ‘development’ or other processes of societal transformation for that matter (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Mathews, 2004). Rather, the call for ‘alternatives to development’ by poststructuralist theorists should instead, be seen as a call for new ways of thinking about development, of improving development practice to tackle poverty and inequality; and a belief in the possibility of societies to make collective and sustainable progress (Mathews, 2004).

With the benefit of hindsight, I contend here, that at the heart of this new ways of thinking, should be a critical recognition of the role of ideas and discourses in development policy theory and practice. This is especially so, considering Schmidt’s (2002: 10) point that discourse is ‘whatever policy actors say to one another and to the public in their efforts to generate and legitimize a policy programme. As such, discourse encompasses both a set of policy ideas and values and an interactive process of policy construction and communication’. This is particularly so, considering that what we think and say are critical factors influencing what we do (Hope, 2011).

It is my contention here then, that ideas and discourse should be treated by development theorists as a prominent and unique part of the policy process when explaining policy and institutional change/continuity. This view is bolstered by my belief that institutional and policy change or continuity is nothing, but discursive practices and a constructed reality.

In making this assertion, I follow a path already taken by a number of other contemporary analysts (e.g.: Schmidt, 2010; 2008; Hay, 2006; Blyth, 2002; Campbell, 1998; and etc.), who

\textsuperscript{15} UNAIDS, is the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which involves numerous UN agencies, including the UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, World Bank, and others.
have sought to understand the impact of ideas and discourse on policy, politics and institutions, through discourse analysis and interpretative tradition. To be more specific, important contributors to this literature such as Blyth (2002) and Schmidt (2002; 2008), have sought to understand the role of ideas in guiding political actors’ decisions during periods of crisis; as well as understand the role of communicative and coordinative types of discourse in promoting change in different types of institutional context.

My concern in this thesis is to use these forms of analysis to cast light upon particular aspects of the development process – precisely to understand how the standards for HCD are negotiated and how the process can be improved within the context of the Nigerian civil service. Admittedly, this approach is not new and has arguably gained increasing legitimacy over the past recent decades (Hajer, 1993). In the context of development policy theorising, this approach has indeed, produced a body of work that challenges more long-standing perspectives, particularly in understanding how development policies emerge in societies (see for example: Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2009; Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004).

However, it would appear that in most previous studies, ideas were used merely to patch-up existing theories or to explain why actors attach or distance themselves from a common development project (Hope, 2011; Blyth, 2002). Ideas in this context, are seen largely as ‘informative but not particularly causal in the first instance; they are part of the process of change, but not necessarily its driver’ (Hope, 2011: 6). The consequence of this kind of approach is that the role of ideas is underplayed as part of the explanation for the drivers of policy change and/or continuity (Schmidt, 2006).

This is not a helpful approach in development policy theorising, considering the views of Blyth (2002) and Schmidt (2008) that ideas have causal functions that drive policy change or continuity. Indeed, ideas are central to the explanation of policy change/continuity, because ideas set ‘the parameters of action and allow actors to develop common understanding of particular policy problems’ (Hope, 2011: 7). As Blyth (2002) points out, ideas inform choices, especially in situations where the consequences of decisions cannot be determined – the so called ‘Knightian uncertainty’. In such uncertain circumstances, it appears that policy makers’ interests are formulated through their ‘ideas’ about the situation, as they are unable to decide their ‘interests’ and choose accordingly, because these interests are impossible to know (Hope, 2011; Campbell, 1998).

This is especially so, considering that ‘the ideas that actors hold lead them to interpret their environment in a specific way’ (Gliszczynski, 2011: 9). In addition to informing interests,
Ideas, also appear to shape and dictate how actions or policies, are perceived, comprehended and utilised within a constructed context (Hay, 2006). In this regard, Blyth (2002: 37-44), cited in Hope (2011: 6-7), outlines five hypotheses of the role ideas:

- Ideas reduce uncertainty and define ‘courses of action’ and are path-dependent.
- Ideas overcome the collective action by defining ‘causal stories’ and collective ends.
- Ideas can be used a ‘weapons’ to alter other actors’ actions.
- Ideas define new institutions and their role and purpose.
- Ideas make institutional ‘stability’ possible by telling policy makers what futures to expect and how to interpret them.

Gliszczynski (2011: 9) similarly identifies three major and distinct functions of ideas to include: shaping of actors perceptions by social constructions which determine the range of viable ideas; enabling of political action by social constructions which act as focal points for political organization, and (de)legitimization of policy solutions by publicly relating them to other important social constructions. It appears therefore, that a set of general ideas as well as assumptions and norms such as ‘discourses’ (Schmidt, 2002; 2008), a ‘paradigm’ (Hall, 1993), is what defines the very goals of policy, because they constitute the basic worldview of political actors – including basic causal relationships and problem definitions (Gliszczynski, 2011).

Given these roles and functions, it is plausible to argue then, that while ‘interests’, norms and history admittedly influence institutional or policy change/continuity, they do not necessarily drive them (Hope, 2011; Hajrer, 1993). Instead, what largely drives change/continuity seems to be something ‘less tangible’ or ‘given’ to borrow Hope’s (2011: 7) words; and these are ideas and discourses. And while this position is far from being theoretically unproblematic, its value in the context of this present study is that it helps in understanding why specific policies may succeed or not, and why they change in the Nigerian civil service (Schmidt, 2008). This kind of understanding is key in my attempt at rethinking approaches to HCD in the civil service, because institutional and policy change/continuity, have been shown to be a socially constructed reality shaped by ideas and discourses. Having said this however, to conflate ‘ideas’ and ‘discourse’ without elaboration is to imply that ‘thinking’ is the same thing as ‘speaking’ when indeed, there are fundamentally different (Hope, 2011).
4.3 Beyond objectivism: Institutional and policy change/continuity as a constructed reality

Burrell and Morgan (1979) have since explored the dualistic assumptions about the nature of social science, drawing a distinction between objectivist and subjectivist philosophies along the dimensions of ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology (Ramdhony, 2011). Although this framework is arguably dichotomous and somewhat rigid, it nonetheless, provides a useful basis for a discussion of the philosophical and methodological concerns underpinning social science research and theory development (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996; Ramdhony, 2011). This is especially so, considering that the positioning and philosophy of a social scientist are largely influenced by their ontological and epistemological stances (Saunders et al., 2009). This has led to the objectivist vs. subjectivist debates, which is summarised in figure 4.1.

**Table 4.1**: Objectivism vs. Subjectivism – Characteristics of social science research paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Objectivist Philosophies of Science</strong></th>
<th><strong>Subjectivist Philosophies of Science</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Realist Ontology</td>
<td>A Nominalist Ontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Positivist Epistemology</td>
<td>An Anti-Positivist Epistemology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Determinist View of Human Nature</td>
<td>A Voluntarist View of Human Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Nomothetic Methodology</td>
<td>An Ideographic Methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Saunders et al. (2009); Ramdhony (2011).*

As can be gleaned from Table 4.1, objectivism tends to promote a realist ontology, which views the reality of the social world as similar to the natural world. Objectivists believe that the social world, just like the physical world, is made up of concrete structures that pre-exist any single human being and are independent of the human mind (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). What is knowledge is therefore, influenced by a positivist epistemology, which entails a view of ‘science’ as value-free and unhindered by human interests, which, seeks to explain the social world by ‘searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements’ that can ideally lead to generalisations’ (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 5).

The implication of this kind of philosophy, is that explanations of the relations between human beings and their environment usually follow a determinist view of human nature, which regards human beings as constrained or conditioned by social structures, thus denying them a role in shaping those structures (Ramdhony, 2011). As a result, when addressing
questions of how a specific social issue should be researched, a nomothetic approach is often preferred by positivists, using highly structured and quantitative measures to provide what they claim to be a ‘complete account’ of the researched phenomenon (Gill & Johnson, 2002; Ramdhony, 2011).

In social science research, this implies that how people create meaning in their lives is largely overlooked, because respondents are treated as mere sources of data without any critical consideration of their interpretive capacity, or of how they make sense of their own world (Silverman, 2013). As Gubrium and Holstein (1997: 106) argue, objectivists ‘view the border [between the topic of study and the way in which it is socially constructed] as a mere technical hurdle that can be overcome through methodological skill and rigor, they lose sight of the border as a region where reality is constituted within representation’. This approach is arguably problematic and insufficient in explaining the social world, particularly institutional/policy change or continuity, including the processes of developing human capital in DCs. Indeed, objectivism’s belief that the world is ‘out there’ and is a ‘concrete’, reality, appears very limiting in explaining social phenomena, because human actions are socially constructed and dependent upon human cognition, discourse and interactions (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Keller, 2013).

Against this backdrop, I contend therefore that contrary to objectivists’ ‘illusion of pure science’, it appears more useful for the social scientist to account for subjective values and interests that influence knowledge development and social practices, when investigating any social phenomena in a given context (Ramdhony, 2011). This is particularly so, considering that the totality of the characteristics of the human environment and its psychological formations, including policy change or continuity, is shaped by what Luckman and Berger (1966: 70) describe as habitualisation. In their words:

> Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which, ipso facto, is apprehended by its performer as that pattern. Habitualization further implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort. This is true of non-social as well as of social activity.

These processes of habitualization precede any form of institutionalization, because institutionalization only occurs when there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors in a context (Lukman & Berger, 1966). It is such typifications that over time, become known as an institution (Schmidt, 2008). This implies that institutions are an assemblage of individual actors as well as individual actions, reflecting historicity and
control (Lukman & Berger, 1966). It is plausible to argue then, that institutions cannot be instantaneously created, but are always located in a historical context, within which they are produced.

The implication of this, is that it is impossible to adequately understand institutional change or continuity, without an understanding of the historical contexts within which it was ‘constructed’ (Hope, 2011; Keller, 2013). These mechanisms - the totality of which constitute what is generally referred to as ‘meaning system’, do of course exist in many institutions and in all the forms of social institutions that we call societies (Luckman & Berger, 1966). It is these meaning systems that largely shape what becomes acceptable ‘social knowledge’, as well as conditions the way humans interact with their world (Keller, 2005). These are the issues that informed my philosophical positioning and methodological choices for this research as discussed throughout the rest of the chapter.

4.4 Developing a research methodology

Research methodology has been defined as a systematic way of solving the research problem (Silverman, 2013). It consists of the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying their research problem along with the underpinning logic (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For the purpose of this research, I adopted Saunders et al.’s (2009: 138) research onion as a template to provide an overview of the methodology developed for the empirical research in this thesis. Its key dimensions are illustrated in Figure 4.1 and discussed in the sections that follow.
4.5 Research philosophy

As highlighted by Creswell (2007), no social science research takes place in a vacuum. Not only is it shaped by the research environment and the researcher’s background and values, it is also shaped by the many intellectual traditions and philosophical assumptions that has over the years shaped and continues to shape the social sciences at large (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Saunders et al. (2009) point out, that the research philosophy contains important assumptions about the way the researcher view the world and underpins the research strategy and choices of methodologies thereof.

Therefore, when undertaking social science research, particularly a research of this nature, it is important to critically examine different research paradigms and questions concerning the nature of social entities – ontology, as well as issues relating to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge – epistemology, that have characterised the social sciences for many decades (Saunders et al, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). The next few paragraphs provide an explanation of these issues in the context of this research. I limited my focus to these two dimensions, considering my earlier argument that the
philosophy of the social scientists is largely influenced by their ontological and epistemological positioning (Saunders et al, 2009). And although basic, the discussion that follows is deemed sufficient to support my research philosophy as well as my positioning for subsequent analysis.

4.5.1 Ontological considerations: Social constructivism

Questions of ontology centre on the nature of social entities and of reality and its characteristics (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al, 2009; Creswell, 2007). It raises questions of the assumptions researchers have about how the world operates and introduces debates over objectivism and subjectivism/constructionism (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the context of social science research, ontological issue therefore, concerns the issue of ‘whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from perceptions and actions of social actors’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 20). These considerations are important in addressing the question of what is, the answer to which is influenced by the researcher’s worldview, which in my case is informed by social constructivist ontology (Saunders et al., 2009).

Social constructivism is not a simple concept to describe (Creswell, 2007). It could even be argued, that attempting to give it a single description or definition is somewhat ‘anti-constructionist’. Rather, it appears more useful to consider the different ways in which constructionism is itself constructed (Potter, 1996). While it is beyond the scope of this study to engage in this ambitious enterprise, it suffices to point out however that constructionism is ‘an ontological position which asserts that social phenomenon and their meanings are continually been accomplished by social actors.’ (Bryan & Bell, 2011: 22). Table 4.2 succinctly summarises the basic assumptions of a constructionist agenda.
**Table 4.2: Basic assumptions of a constructionist agenda**

1. The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of such accounts.
2. The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves are social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people.
3. The degree to which a given account of the world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of social process.
4. Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationship.
5. To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves.
6. Social facts or social worlds are neither objective parameters nor subjective perceptions, but achievements in their own right. Both inner lives and social worlds are epiphenomenal to the constructive practices of everyday life.
7. An abiding concern for the ordinary, everyday procedures that society’s members use to make their experiences sensible, understandable, accountable and orderly.

*Sources:* Adapted from Potter (1996: 3).

I proceeded from the perspective of constructionism, because I strongly refute realists’ (objectivism) position that social phenomenon confront us as external facts beyond human influence and that social entities exist in reality external to social actors (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Instead, I concur with a number of scholars (e.g. Campbell, 1998), and argue that the social world and its categories are not external to us as realists would suggest, but are built up and constructed through continuous social processes and interactions. Consistent with this position and in line with my research questions and objectives, it is evident that social constructivism is very appropriate as my ontological perspective for this thesis. This is so, because human capital development in Nigeria, as elsewhere, is a continuous social process produced from interactions among members of society.

Despite its suitability as my ontological position for this research, social constructivism has been criticised by some scholars (e.g. Heron & Reason, 1997; Fox, 2001; Hua Liu & Mathews, 2005) on my counts. For instance, it has been suggested by Heron & Reason (1997) that constructive ontology is limited because it is not very clear about the relationship between realities and what they call original ‘givennes’ of the cosmos and perhaps, deficient
in acknowledging experiential knowing. While some of these arguments might not be totally incorrect, it suffices to point out that in the context of this study, to properly understand the dynamics of the processes of human capital development and capacity development in Nigeria and analyse its basic features, an understanding of the social and environmental contexts within which these processes evolved is critical. Only then can one attempt an informed (re)construction and interpretation of the nuances and limitations of human capital development in the Nigerian civil service and subsequently suggest alternative approaches to improving the process given the prevailing contextual conditions.

4.5.2 Epistemological considerations: Post structuralism

Epistemology relates to the philosophical process through which knowledge about the world is developed and validated (Ramdhony, 2011). As Bryman and Bell (2011: 15) note, ‘epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge’. The central argument in epistemology then, is the validity of knowledge and the process of knowledge creation (Perrin & McFarland, 2011). In other words, what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study; how does the researcher knows what they claim to know; and how do research practices reveal truths or fail to do so? (Creswell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009; Perrin & McFarland, 2011). In essence, epistemology addresses the question of what is known, the answer to which is influenced by how the researcher thinks about the world (Saunders et al., 2009; Ramdhony, 2011).

For the purpose of this study, I adopted post-structuralism as my underpinning epistemological stance. I proceeded with this perspective from the premise that ‘the nature of social life precludes both explanation, such as that found in the physical sciences, or any form of prediction that can hold true for all people at all times and in all places’ (Williams & May, 1996: 48). This line of reasoning is in recognition of Butler’s (1990: 40) argument that ‘post-structuralism rejects ‘the claims of totality and universality and the presumption of binary structural oppositions that implicitly operate to quell the insistent ambiguity and openness of linguistic and cultural classification’.

Peters and Humes (2003: 111) aptly describe post-structuralism as an epistemological worldview that ‘eschews the traditional account of truth as correspondence to reality, emphasizing the idea that language functions like a differential system.” Mackenzie (2001: 344) attempts a broader definition of post-structuralism as:

A form of critical enquiry that conceives of the symbolic as constituted by non-symbolic processes of construction which are themselves unshackled
from the logic of negation by way of an empiricist account of differentiation such that the practice of criticism is conceptualized as a form of ontological constructivism.

Post-structuralism in contrast to mainstream empiricist, positivist and post-positivist research, adopts an anti-realist position, rejecting the picture of knowledge as accurate representation of reality and rejects all forms of ‘objective reality’ as evident in positivism and structuralism (Peters & Humes, 2003). Poststructuralist thought, through its emphasis on anti-essentialism, tends to historize questions of ontology, investigating the cultural construction of subjectivity genealogically and tries to understand how knowledge becomes possible at any particular time under specific historical conditions (Peters & Humes, 2003; Harcourt, 2007). As Peters and Humes (2003: 111) argue, ‘against transcendental arguments and viewpoints’, post-structuralism ‘pits a many-sided perpectivism’ and ‘provides a strong critique to the metaphysics of presence, re-evaluating the taken-for-granted humanism underlying traditional accounts of the unified, autonomous and transparent self’. It tries to inquire and analyse the positionality, discursive formations and historical becomings of the subject. What is more, poststructuralist epistemology highlights the centrality of language to human activity and culture, emphasising what Peters and Humes (2003) describe as the self-undermining and self-deconstructing character of discourse.

Therefore, in the context of this research, I utilised poststructuralist discourse analysis to unearth the structures and manipulation of official and institutional discourse of human capital development and capacity development in the Nigerian context. This was very useful in understanding the features of current approaches to human capital development in the Nigerian civil service and in subsequently highlighting ways in which some of the ‘taken for granted’ dimensions have profoundly undermined the process at both individual and institutional levels (see chapter 6). Overall, understanding the contextual sensitivities of the Nigerian context was a key factor in my quest to rethink human capital and suggest alternative approaches and strategies for improved human capital development in the country’s civil service.

Despite the logic behind poststructuralist epistemology and its utility in the social sciences, the concept has nonetheless received many criticisms from some scholars. Hoy (2005) for instance, advocates for what he calls a post critique, arguing that post-structuralism is problematic and inadequate in present day context. While I acknowledge that poststructuralist epistemology can sometimes be complex, because of the multiplicity of thoughts and the proliferation of writings on the subject, I however, do not share in Hoy’s sentiments that the concept has become inadequate in present day contexts.
Indeed, as a contemporary epistemological movement, and in the context of this research, post-structuralism, offers a range of theories and critiques related to texts and institutions; and new concepts and forms of analysis, including deconstruction and discourse analysis which are profoundly relevant and significant for the study of human capital and capacity development in the civil services of DCs – in this case Nigeria. It is therefore, a very sound epistemological foundation for this study.

4.6 Research approach and positioning

4.6.1 Research approach

Approaches to research are often dominated by the *deductive* (theory-driven) versus *inductive* (data-driven) debates, with each approach pursuing rather different objectives and reflecting different interests (Saunders et al., 2009; Ramdhony, 2011). However, this dichotomy appears rather artificial and potentially misleading, because both approaches are arguably interlocked and mutually reinforcing (Ramdhony, 2011; Blaikie, 1993; Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This is especially so, considering that ‘empirical inquiries are, to a certain extent, always informed by some theoretical understanding or pre-interpretive structure; and theories are not quite fully formed prior to their empirical testing’ (Ramdhony, 2011: 198).

Given this interrelationships and considering the nature of my research objectives, it appears more useful then to adopt an approach to research that combines features of both deductive and inductive approaches to research. Following Ramdhony (2011), I describe the approach adopted in this thesis as *abductive*, because it recognises the inter-relationship between theory building and empirical research (Lipscomb, 2012). Figure 4.2 diagrams the abductive research approach adopted in this thesis.
In operationalizing the abductive approach illustrated in Figure 4.2, I started deductively with a critical review of relevant literature, leading to the development of a context driven theoretical model for investigating human capital in a hybridized context like that of Nigeria (see Chapter 3, 3.11). This framework is then used as a conceptual and analytical lens to investigate approaches to human capital development in the Nigerian civil service, with a view of building theory in explaining how human capability and skills development can be furthered amidst institutional voids and structural constraints in the country – this is a major objective of this study.

In building this theory, I inductively utilised insights and explanations drawn from the research findings, to inform a theoretically-grounded, yet practically-oriented innovative framework designed to help define future public policy agendas for innovative and workable capability development processes within the Nigerian civil service. My intention is that this practical framework can in turn, inform follow-up studies and inspire further rounds of theory building aimed at rethinking human capital development, especially in the civil services of DCs.
4.6.2 Researcher Positioning

Consistent with the issues highlighted so far in this chapter, my overall positioning in this research is underpinned by the belief that the social world is fundamentally different from the natural world, relativistic and dependent upon human cognition and action (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Figure 4.3 diagrams my approach and positioning for the purpose of this study.

Figure 4.3: Research Position

![Diagram of research position with labels for constructionism, research position, post structuralism, ontology, epistemology, methodology, and empirical research.]

Source: Author, 2014

In adopting constructivist and poststructuralist philosophies, I concur with Kukla’s (2000) argument that members of a society together invent the properties and meaning of their world. This implies that meanings and reality are constructed by human actions in a given context and time, and are arguably ephemeral (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, instead of treating social phenomena as either objective parameters or subjective perceptions and dichotomies, I contend here that it is more useful to emphasise the rhetorical and constructive aspects of knowledge, realising that the so-called ‘objective facts’ or subjective values, are socially constructed in particular contexts and is part of a meaning system (Silverman, 2013).
I further argue that these meanings are thus, multiple and varying according to context and period. There is therefore, ‘the need to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meaning into a few categories or ideas’ (Creswell, 2007: 20). What is more, even the categories that people employ to comprehend the natural and social world are also social products, considering that these categories are nothing but arbitrary meanings, that do not have ‘built-in-essences’, but are constructed in and through societal interactions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is what Bourdieu (1998) describes as symbolic meaning systems.

Indeed, it is now widely acknowledged in the social sciences, that the relationship between human beings and the world are mediated by means of collectively created symbolic meaning systems or orders of knowledge (Keller, 2013). The value of this kind of mental framing, is that it allows for the development of new knowledge from the (re)construction of social practices and the ideas and narratives that underpin them (Keller, 2005). And while different paradigms may differ in respect to the theoretical, methodological and empirical value attached to the assessment of the social significance of these knowledge orders, the term Discourse and Discourse Analysis have become an increasingly important perspective in recent years. This is the overarching methodological approach that I have taken in this study, as discussed in the rest of the chapter.

4.7 Methodological approach: Discourse analysis

Consistent with my philosophical positioning and in line with the realisation that human capital development in the Nigerian civil service – as elsewhere, is a product of continuous social interaction which is greatly influenced by ‘politics’ and ‘interests’, it is my contention here that discourse analysis, appears the most appropriate approach to addressing my research question(s) and accomplishing the aims and objectives of this study. Therefore, I adopted Discourse Analysis as my overarching methodological framework. It is important to highlight however, that the term Discourse Analysis, does not refer to any specific research method, but rather, it is a perspective to research on any research objects that are understood to be discourse(s) (Keller, 2013).

The term discourse is often used to imply ‘an extended stretch of connected speech or writing – a text’ (Leeuw, 2013: 144). In this sense, discourse analysis is taken to mean just the analysis of text or type of texts (Leeuw, 2013). This focus on ‘texts’ explains why discourse research – irrespective of the Discourse Analysis approach adopted, has investigated almost exclusively texts. Here, I use discourse in a different context to mean a set of ideas or social constructions, which constitute social realities of phenomena (Keller,
2005; Schmidt, 2008). Building on the works of Foucault (e.g. 1977) and following Leeuwen (2013: 144), I understand discourses as a ‘context-specific frameworks for making sense of things’. Given this and in line with Keller (2013: 3), my understanding of discourse in this research is premised on three basic assumptions as follows:

1. The meanings of phenomena are socially constructed and these phenomena are constituted in their social reality.
2. Individual instances of interpretation may be understood as parts of a more comprehensive discourse structure that is temporarily produced and stabilised by specific institutional-organisational contexts; and
3. The use of symbolic orders is subject to rules of interpretation and action that maybe reconstructed.

In the context of this research therefore, discourses constitute socially constructed ways of knowing some aspect of reality (Leeuwen, 2013), while discourse analyses are attempts to make sense of these processes. As Keller (2013: 2) points out, ‘reference to the term ‘discourse’ occurs when theoretical perspectives and research questions relate to the constitution and construction of the world in the concrete use of signs and the underlying structural patterns or rules for the production of meaning. Discourse theories or discourse analyses, on the other hand, are scientific endeavours designed to investigate the process implied here.’

Perhaps, it is in recognition of the above conceptualisation, that contemporary social science discourse research now appears to be increasingly concerned with the relationship between speaking/writing as social practices and the (re)production of meaning systems/orders of knowledge, the social actors involved in this, the rules and resources underlying these processes, and their consequences in social collectivities (Keller, 2013). This shift of emphasis has arguably pushed the boundaries of discourse research beyond linguistics. As a result, the turn of the 21st century has witnessed a marked expansion of discourse analysis to almost all other spheres of social sciences, including policy analysis and development research. In more recent times however, there has been a tendency towards what Keller (2013: 1), calls ‘the sociologizing of discourse research’. This is a clear pointer to the approach that this present study adopted.

This approach is inspired by Foucault’s (1972; 1980) ideas on discourse and power, which considers institutional contingencies of discourse and knowledge, and sees them as a socially constructed regime of knowledge and truth, which forms the social reality about
which it speaks (Haider & Bawden, 2006). Indeed, Foucault’s concept of power acknowledges the diverse influences of social and political relations on policy, beyond the immediate political arena. Keller (2011; 2012; 2013) expands these arguments and sees discourse as a facet of practices and structures as well as of processes/events, leading to the evolution of his Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (henceforth SKAD). It is this variant of discourse (i.e. SKAD) that forms my methodological framework for this research.

4.8 SKAD: A framework for investigating institutional change and rethinking human capital development

In this section, I explain the type of discourse analysis that I utilised to analyse the key discourses through which institutional change and associated power relations between architects and recipients of human capital policies were formulated and articulated as they worked towards improving the capabilities of the civil service in Nigeria. The past recent years have seen a growing interest in discourse research in the social sciences, yet, current research still faces two major problem: Methodological devices offered by conventional discourse analysis – the analysis of ‘talk and text in action’, are limited in addressing the interests of discourse research at more comprehensive or meso/macro levels (Keller, 2005). Some constructivist discourse research has also been criticised for what Heron and Murray-Evans (2013: 6) describe as ‘latent materialism’ that results from an overdependence on material factors in explaining why certain ideas become dominant discourses and how they inform social practices.

The first problem arises largely because the methodological devices offered by traditional approaches stem mainly from linguistics and may be well suited for questions of linguistic research (including linguistic pragmatics and conversation analysis) (Keller, 2005, 2013). These approaches are hardly therefore, suitable to grasp the larger dimensions of knowledge and knowledge/power which Foucault was interested in (Keller, 2005). The second problem is closely tied to the first and emanates from a rather disproportionate interests in ideological functions of language which all too often results in a somewhat reductionist ‘proof’ of the presence of ideological notions and functions in a concrete set of spoken or written language – discourse (Heron & Murray-Evans, 2013). As Keller (2005: 3) notes, ‘there is no place for any surprising results or insights to be derived from such empirical research, because the discourse theorist always knows how ideology works in advance.’
These constellations have led to attempts to bring together ‘the best of both worlds of social science discourse research’ (Keller, 2005: 2), by integrating the theoretical foundations offered by discourse theory and empirical strategies from the toolbox of discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Philipps 2002, cited in Keller, 2005; Heron & Murray-Evans, 2013). An approach to discourse informed by the sociology of knowledge has the potentials to grasp these dimensions.

The SKAD perspective to discourse taken here, is based on the assumption that everything we perceive, experience and sense is mediated through socially constructed and typified knowledge, for example, schemata of meanings (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Keller, 2013). It links arguments from the social constructionist tradition, following Berger and Luckman (1966), with assumptions based in symbolic interactionism, hermeneutic sociology of knowledge, and the concepts of Michel Foucault. This approach to discourse also integrates important insights of Foucault's theory of discourse into the interpretative paradigm in the social sciences, especially the ‘German’ approach of hermeneutic sociology of knowledge (Keller, 2005; Keller, 2011).

Unlike some Foucauldian approaches however, this form of discourse analysis recognises the importance of socially constituted actors in the social production and circulation of knowledge. Going beyond questions of language in use, SKAD importantly, addresses sociological interests, the analyses of social relations and politics of knowledge as well as the discursive construction of reality as an empirical ‘material’ process (Keller, 2005; 2011, 2013). As Keller (2005) explains, SKAD combines research questions related to the concept of discourse with the methodical toolbox of qualitative social research. Accordingly, SKAD considers discourses as ‘structured and structuring structures’ which shape social practices of enunciation (Keller, 2005: 1).

Methodologically, SKAD therefore, proposes the use of analytical concepts from the sociology of knowledge tradition, such as interpretative schemes or frames, classifications, phenomenal structure, narrative structure, dispositive and etcetera for empirical research on discourses (Keller, 2005). As Keller (2013) points out, SKAD is concerned with the processes and practices of the production and circulation of knowledge at the level of the institutional fields (e.g. the public domain) in modern societies. And although drawing heavily from the ideas of Foucault and other ‘traditional’ approaches to discourse analysis,

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16 Following Keller (2013: 73), Dispositif is understood here to mean ‘the material and ideational infrastructure, i.e. the bundle of measures, regulations, artefacts, by means of which a discourse is (re)produced and achieves effects (e.g. laws, codes of behaviour, buildings, measuring devices).

This kind of multidisciplinary approach is especially important in the context of this research, considering that the main themes and issues embrace wide-ranging concerns including political, economic and social life, as well as the environment in which they are constructed. These issues are arguably institutionalised by the practical use of agents in the particular social field, in this case, the Nigerian environment (Jensen, 1997; Hajer, 1993). The SKAD framework adopted for this study provides the tool with which these problems are best situated, explored and (re)constructed.

4.9 Application in relevant contexts: Utilising SKAD for explaining institutional and policy change or continuity

One of the main objectives of this study as already stated in chapter one, is to assist in defining future public policy agendas for innovative and workable capability development processes, that will help accelerate enterprise development, innovation and enhanced knowledge for development (K4D) in the civil service of DCs. The highly uncertain nature of this endeavour, coupled with the propensity to change of public policies, reinforces several important questions about the role of discourses in the construction of policies for human capital development (Keller, 2005; Keller, 2013). How, for instance, do powerful actors in DCs – with particular reference to Nigeria, structure their arguments to render them dominant and persuasive to decision makers? How much influence did individual arguments actually exert over institutional and human resource development policy developments in Nigeria’s civil service, and why? (Hajer, 2006).

Such questions are at the heart of what many scholars (e.g. Schmidt, 2008) have labelled ‘discursive inquiry': an approach to analysing social phenomenon which takes the roles of ideas and discourse in accounting for changes or continuity seriously (Hope, 2011). The SKAD framework is arguably suitable for addressing these kinds of social questions. This is particularly so, considering my earlier point that this approach to analysing discourse is premised on the view that reality is socially constructed rather than ‘given’ and that discourse plays a central role in this process of social construction of realities and knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1966).
This kind of relativist ontology is very relevant in the context of this study, because I am interested in the action-oriented character of discourse which transcends the notion that language merely represents organizational life, to include all forms of text (verbal, written visual), as well as social practices and power relations inherent in discourses (Fairclough, 2001, 2003; Francis, 2007). This line of reasoning is consistent with Hajer’s (1995: 44) argument that discourse is ‘a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.’

Following from the above, it is my contention therefore, that it is impossible to trace our knowledge of the world to ‘an innate cognitive systems of categories, but to socially created symbolic systems that are produced in and through discourses’ (Keller, 2013: 61). These symbolic systems and processes also include interactions between language-in-use (texts), and the sets of material and social conditions (social practices) in which discourse are anchored (Fairclough, 2001). In understanding discourse in this way, I treat the concept as a form of social practice. In doing so, I crucially recognize that discourse brings an object into being (e.g. a capacity development initiative), so that it becomes a ‘material reality’ in the form of practices that it invokes (Grant et al., 2005: 8). As social practice, discourse, thus acts as a resource made up of a set of concepts, expressions, statements and related practices, and a set of rules (social structures) that frames the way people apply their ‘sense-making’ (Watson, 1995, 2002).

The SKAD framework adopted in this thesis, helps investigate these social practices and processes of communicative construction, stabilization and transformation of symbolic orders and their consequences, such as laws, statistics and so on (Keller, 2013). This approach distances SKAD from other variants of discourse analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis, Linguistics, Ethnomethodology and the Analysis of Hegemonies, following Laclau and Mouffe (Keller, 2005, 2011, 2013). Instead, the SKAD framework adopted here, has been developed around my research questions as well as issues located in the broader social sciences, including public policy discourses and to more specific fields of discursive struggles and controversies, or what Keller (2005) describes as ‘problematizations’. As an empirical social science, SKAD therefore, has the potential to make accessible the practices of discourse production in the Nigerian civil service not only through texts, but importantly through observing them in action, including their rules and resources, as well as the role of collective actors and the social context that go beyond all of these (Keller, 2013).
The approach taken here shares some basic similarities with Culturalist Approaches to discourse\(^\text{17}\), which ‘proceed from the assumption that, in collective processes of interpretation, social actors negotiate definitions of reality and symbolic orders interactively’ (Keller, 2013: 33). It also shares something in common with the works of Helen Francis (2007) and Sambrook (2007) that utilised discourse analysis to explore several dimensions of the HRD process in private and public sector contexts respectively. Treating discourse as social practice, both authors demonstrated how several HRD policies and practices were shaped by a variety of discursive practices at the corporate level and beyond in each of their case organisations. Francis (2007: 83) for instance, stated that her work ‘draws on a discourse perspective to explore the role of the human resource development (HRD) function in shaping organizational change within a large manufacturing firm moving toward a flatter team-based organizational structure’. This kind of approach shares some parallel with the agenda of this research and is arguably key to understanding how the features of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic structures, cultures, systems, processes or skill-sets impacted on civil service human capital reforms in the country (refer to Chapter 2.7).

Having said this, it is pertinent to acknowledge here, that SKAD as a research methodology and discourse analyses more broadly, does have some limitations. As Morgan (2010: 4) observes, ‘the concept can be very challenging as the door is never closed on any analysis and each new interpretation gives rise to a further intense critique…importantly, discourse analysis may disrupt longstanding notions of selfhood, gender, autonomy, identity, choice, and such disruption can be very disturbing’. And whilst there might be some value in Morgan’s observations, I contend however, that whatever disruption that might arise from a ‘good’ discourse research, is in itself a positive development.

In making this contention, I concur with Hewitt’s (2009: 13) argument that ‘discourse analysis challenges researchers to question policy making processes, how dialogue takes place, and how power relations reduce dominant discourses and marginalises others. Such questions require researchers to be reflective, querying the research material in ways that they may not otherwise consider’.

SKAD arguably enabled me fulfil these ‘responsibilities’, considering that the framework requires a consideration of interactions other than the discursive event being scrutinized and allows the analyst to address both micro and macro levels of analysis (Keller, 2013; Francis,

\(^{17}\) ‘Culturalist discourse research is a field of research derived from three different traditions: Symbolic Interactionism (i.e. the analysis of the construction of social problems in public discourses), the investigation of language use and symbolic power inspired by Bourdieu, or the analysis of “circuits of representation/culture” in Cultural Studies’ (Keller, 2005: na).
And while my investigation was largely conducted at a micro-discursive level that focused upon the social construction of managerial and capability development discourses, attention was also directed to the ‘textscape’ within which the discourses were embedded – the Nigerian State (Francis, 2007). This was with a view of understanding how discourses framed the emergence of dominant perspectives and related discourse conventions, for instance, in policy formulation, in offices, and in the institutionalisation of HCD practices. Overall, I adopted SKAD in this thesis, because unlike some ‘conventional’ approaches to discourse, this approach holds the promise of not only grasping the larger dimensions of knowledge, its production and utility, but also the issues of power relations and institutional change/continuity. Table 4.3 summarises the main promises of SKAD in relation to this research.

Table 4.3: SKAD: Promises, main differences and advantages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared to other discourse theoretical approaches, the theoretical and empirical interests of SKAD range from social processes of knowledge production and circulation to symbolic structure and back to actors' orientations and practices in historical worlds of knowledge and meaning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By bringing the actors back into focus the approach avoids the reification and ontologisation of knowledge regimes. Actors' positions and possibilities are pre-constituted by discourse. But social actors are not puppets on the strings of discourse, but (inter) active and creative agents engaged in social power plays and struggles for interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking up theoretical concepts of the interpretative paradigm in sociology, SKAD considers institutions as temporary ‘crystallised’ or ‘frozen processes of ordering’ which enable and constrain individual action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKAD takes into account the historical and collective dimensions of knowledge and knowledge-making practices. Thereby it opens up the field of sociology of knowledge to social regimes and politics of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It supposes that all discourse research has to be interpretative work. This insight needs to be reflected in its methodological and empirical application. Therefore SKAD builds upon the qualitative research tradition in the social sciences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is conceived as ‘grounded theory’ (Anselm Strauss), which means it follows a strategy of bottom-up theory building on discourse issues rather than a top-down approach dominant in some discourse theoretical perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Keller (2005: 5).*
Having critically explored the key methodological and theoretical issues involved in adopting and utilising a discursive approach to the study of civil service human capital in a developing context, I now turn to the second part of this chapter, where I provide a descriptive account of how the study was designed and conducted in practice. The purpose of this account is to provide an overview and justification for the choices of methods adopted for this study (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.10 Research design

Before examining the design of this study, it is important to be clear about the role and purpose of research design. It is also important to understand the fundamentals and critical success factors of a research design, as well as where design fits into the whole research process: from framing a question to finally analysing and reporting data. This clarification becomes imperative, if one considers Blumberg et al.’s (2011) point, that the success of any development and management research and the attainment of intended research objective(s), irrespective of the methodological approaches, are dependent on effective research design.

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data, and is the practical way in which a research will be conducted according to a systematic attempt to generate evidence to answer the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The design of a research is the deliberately planned ‘arrangement of conditions for analysis and collection of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy of procedure’ (Selitiz, Wrightsman & Cook, 1981; cited in Jankowicz, 2005: 190). It is an activity-and time-based plan outlining procedures for every research activity, including the selection of sources and types of information and is usually informed by the research question (Blumberg et al., 2011).

In practical terms, the choice of a research design is a reflection of decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the context of this research and adopting Bryman and Bell’s (2011: 40) typology, these included the importance I attached to:

- Expressing casual connections between issues and variables;
- Generalizing to larger groups of individuals than those actually forming part of the investigation;
- Understanding behaviour and the meaning of that behaviour in its specific social context; and
- Having a temporal (i.e. over time) appreciation of social phenomena and their interconnections. Figure 4.4 gives a graphical illustration of the design of this study.

**Figure 4.4:** The design of this research

![Design of the research](image)

Source: Author, 2014

In developing the design framework illustrated in figure 4.4, I followed the view that the social construction of reality, particularly human capital development processes is context specific, experienced by individuals and between individuals (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This implies that the interactions which connect members of a social group are the building blocks of reality, and there is much meaning in the space between individuals (Cornelius & Gagnon, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I argue therefore, that the only way to have an idea of these contextual and sometimes, 'personalised' experiences is by asking those who experience them; as well as by critically examining the documents they have produced overtime. These are the issues that informed
my research design for this study. Consistent with Saunders et al.’s (2009) *research onion* (refer to Fig.4.1; also see Fig. 4.3), the design for this research is represented by three layers: research strategy, research choice and time horizon, which are briefly described below.

### 4.10.1 Research strategy: The case study approach

The design utilised for actual data collection in this thesis is the qualitative case study method. Qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). It is important to point out, that the case study is viewed by some as a method, while others see it as a methodology (see for example, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008). For the purpose of this study however, case study is taken to mean a method (i.e. a strategy for data collection).

This method was deemed appropriate for the purpose of this research, because it provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts and emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Soy, 1997; Baxter & Jack, 2008). As (Yin, 2003) argues, the distinctive need for case study research method arise out of the need to comprehend complex social phenomena; when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed; when the researcher has little or no control over events and when the investigation is on contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Similarly, Marchington and Wilkinson (2008: 532) also note, that ‘the case study method tries to capture the whole, is intensive in nature, and is open-ended and flexible at all stages of the research process.’ This is particularly important in the context of this research, considering the focus on civil service human capital development and management, which is an integral part of an organisation’s HCD strategy, which may have entailed complex processes, for which the case approach enabled the capture and evaluation of the views and HRM/HRD practices at all levels of the Nigerian federal civil service.

Further, this approach sufficed as the design and data collection strategy for this research, because it permits the understanding of management decisions and actions in their own organisational contexts and settings (Saunders et al, 2009). The above is invaluable to this research, if one considers that the nature of the national culture arguably shape the management practice including HCD strategies and approaches in a particular country.
The Nigerian Federal Civil Service\textsuperscript{18} was selected as a suitable case based on opportunity and utility (Bryman & Bell, 2011); as I have access to senior management of the Service. But more importantly however, the Service was selected because it is a typical case in the sense that it is a public service agency in a developing context, exposed to both domestic and global challenges, such as a difficult operational context, policy inconsistencies and issues of elite capture. The NFCS also faces the debilitating consequences of the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon and the ‘poaching’ of its brightest talents by the private sector and multinationals. In terms of intended outcomes, the Nigerian civil service can be viewed as both an exploratory and explanatory case, because it offers new insights into the nature of human capability development ‘in context’; and also provides a setting to help explain the reasons and intentions underlying such practices (Saunders et al., 2009; Yin, 2003).

4.10.2 Research choice and time horizon

Following Saunders et al. (2007), research choice refers to the way in which the researcher chooses to combine data collection techniques and data analysis procedures. In this regard, this research departs from the dominant positivist forms of inquiry prevalent within development and management research, by combining a range of qualitative data collection techniques (including document analysis and semi-structured interviews) with data analysis procedures rooted in a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (including narrative, text-driven and thematically-based qualitative procedures). This study could therefore, be best described as a multi-method discourse-based qualitative study. This description is appropriate because the research involves a form of triangulation within method, the whole essence of which is to enhance the overall trustworthiness of the research findings and conclusions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

\textsuperscript{18} The provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) does not recognise the term ‘the Nigerian Civil Service’. The definitions of the concept as provided for in Sections 169, 170, 171 and 318 in Section 10 of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution, only recognise ‘the Civil Service of the Federation’. Specifically Chapter VIII, Part IV, section 318 (1) of the Constitution defines the Civil Service of the Federation as: ‘Service of the Federation in a civil capacity as staff of the Office of the President, the Vice-President, ministry or department of the Government of the Federation assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the Federation.’ This definition of the civil service clearly distinguishes it from the public service, because the latter is made up of all officials of government, in MDAs and paramilitary organisations at Federal, State and Local Government levels (see chapter 2.2.1). It is important to point however, that the focus of this thesis is on the Federal Civil Service, and the term ‘the Nigerian Civil Service’ is preferred here instead of the constitutionally recognised Civil Service of the Federation.
It is important to point out however, that the time horizon of a study is a crucial factor in the implementation of the research choice and operationalising the research design. Research time horizon centres on the duration of the empirical inquiry and is largely informed by time constraints and the nature of the research objectives/questions (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In general terms, empirical studies are characterised as either cross-sectional (‘a snapshot taken at a particular time’) or longitudinal (‘a series of snapshots’ and ‘a representation of events over a given period’) (Saunders et al., 2009: 155). This study took a longitudinal perspective.

The field research took place in Lagos State and Abuja (Federal Capital Territory), Nigeria and lasted for approximately six (6) months\(^\text{19}\). I left Manchester, UK for Nigeria on 6 April 2013, but interviews did not commence until late May 2013. I concluded the interview process in late August 2013 and subsequently returned to Manchester on 12 September of the same year.

Although the empirical research lasted for about six months, the entire research process was a three year project. Therefore, apart from the six month period of the fieldwork, the data collection process in reality, consisted of four distinct phases spread over three years to allow for a context-sensitive and situational understanding of the processes of human capital and capability development practices in the Nigerian federal civil service as it evolved over the duration of the study.

4.11 Operationalising the case study design: Data collection and analysis strategies

In operationalising the case study design in this thesis, I adopted Hajer’s (2006) approach to data collection for discourse research, which is rather systematic and iterative in nature. In practice, this approach involved four distinct, but interrelated stages. Figure 4.5 provides a diagrammatical representation of these stages which forms the data collection process in this thesis.

As illustrated in figure 4.5, I began by contextualising the data gathering process through a first-hand reading of events, and ended with conducting semi-structured interviews with relevant actors. In this way, the data collection process not only allowed for flexibility and coherency, but is also interconnected with the entire research process as whole. This iterative process is also reflective of the abductive research approach and the overarching discourse methodology adopted in this study (refer to section 4.10.2).

\(^{19}\) Appendix A1 provides an overview of Nigeria as the broader scene of the research.
4.11.1 Unit of analysis

A critical factor in the design of any research is the unit of analysis. In very simple terms, the unit of analysis describes the level at which the research is performed and which object/subject are researched (Blumberg, 2011: 166). Since the main objective of this research effort is to help rethink approaches to human capital development in the civil service, the unit of analyses was individuals and the workplace, with the latter taken to mean ‘the activities of a single employer at a single set of premises’, in this case the Nigerian civil service (Cully et al, 1999: 4; cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011: 55). This approach enabled me investigate and highlight the interconnections between HRM/D rhetorics in the workplace and the sense-making activities of programme recipients in the Nigerian civil service.

The decision to focus on individuals and the civil service as a workplace, was deliberate and was intended to match the kind of questions being investigated (Keller, 2013). It was against this backdrop that I adopted document analysis and semi-structured interviews and as my main data collection strategies. This was complemented to a lesser extent by observable social practices, such as the delivery of a training programme in the civil service. This implies that textual data (books, legal texts, civil service documents, reports of interviews and discussions) constituted the main data format for this thesis. The next section discusses
the rationale behind adopting document analysis and interviews as data collection strategies and how I implemented them in practical terms.

4.11.2 Documentary data collection and document analysis

The point should be reiterated here that the concept of discourse for the purpose of this research, relates to the narrower field of discourse research, and focuses on institutional-organisational contexts of the Nigeria civil service as a socially constructed reality (Keller, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2013). Therefore, in order to investigate the nature of the human capital challenges facing the Nigerian civil service as well as understand some of the reforms that have been developed or under way to addressing these challenges, it was sensible to rely initially on documents from the context of the Nigerian civil service and official government policies.

In specific terms, the documents that were selected for analysis included: official policy documents from the Federal Government of Nigeria regarding civil service human capital development, national skills development and public service reforms more broadly. This is in addition to some of the official organisational documents of the Federal civil service. Table 4.4 lists all the documents that were analysed in this thesis.\footnote{All the documents listed in Figure 4.4, were obtained from the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), Abuja. Permission for this purpose was secured from the OHCSF before the commencement of the fieldwork (The approval letter are attached as Appendix B1 & B2). In addition, a number of official documents from the Centre for Management Development and the National Planning Commission, such as Training and Development Guide for Public Servants, course schedules and capacity development booklets, were also included in the document analysed.}
Let me state unequivocally, that I did not wish to interrogate specific text in details, neither did I deem it necessary to do so. Instead, my focus was to understand and (re)construct the interconnections and interdependencies between different ideological discourses and practices in relation to human capital development in Nigerian civil service. Indeed, considering the nature of my research questions and my ‘narrower’ understanding of discourse highlighted above, it was necessary to ensure consistency on the data, especially
the documentary data. This approach is akin to the concept of *theoretical sampling* (Corbin & Strauss, 2007), because the documents selected were based on a reflected criteria, and were largely informed by the theoretical model constructed in Chapter 3 (3.8) of this text.

### 4.11.3 Semi-structured individual interviews

Considering that one of the main objectives of this thesis was to understand how the features of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic structures, cultures, systems, processes or skill-sets impacted on civil service human capital reforms in the country, it was helpful to use different versions of texts and to clarify them through interviews. This is especially so, because interviews allow for ‘a relatively standard range of themes to be addressed with different participants – something hard to achieve when collecting naturalistic materials’ (Potter, 1996: 15). Interviews also allow a high degree of control over sampling and this perhaps, explains why they have been used extensively in contemporary discourse research.

In the context of this study, the interviews conducted helped me identify and explore participants’ interpretative practices (Potter, 1996). It also allowed me to explore the range of interpretative repertoires that an interviewee has available as well as some of the uses to which these repertoires are put.

The interviews took a semi-structured face-to-face format and a list of specific questions was prepared in the interview guide. In practice however, I allowed interviewees a great deal of leeway in how they replied. Following the recommendation of Bryman and Bell (2011), questions did not necessarily follow on exactly in the same way outlined in the interview guide, even as some questions that were not included in the guide were asked if there was the need to pick up on things said by the interviewee and probe further. However, efforts were made to ensure that all the questions were asked using the same wording for all the interviewees. All the interview durations lasted between 45 minutes to one hour thirty minutes.

The interviews were conducted using generic interview guides given as Appendixes B6 and B7. The face-to-face approach enriched the interview feedback by allowing for elaborate discussion and interaction with respondents. A total of twenty eight (28) individuals from across the sample agencies and institutions listed in the next sub-section were interviewed. I have decided not to include the names of the respondents in order to protect their identity in line with my anonymization strategy. The sample size of 28 is consistent with Creswell’s (1998: 128) suggested sample size range of between 20 and 30 for a study of this nature.
Indeed, as Green & Thorogood (2009: 35) point out, ‘the experience of most qualitative researchers is that in interview studies little that is new comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people’.

Overall, in adopting document analysis and semi-structured interviews as data collection strategies, I followed the view that if HCD initiatives have failed to ‘deliver’ the expected outcomes in the Nigerian federal civil service, it is important to know ‘how’ and ‘why’; and it appears that the only way to know this, is by asking the practitioners themselves and by critically examining the policies that inform HCD practices in the first place. Also, considering that the theoretical position runs counter to much extant literature on public sector reforms and HCD, it was important to gain the views of those involved and a useful way to do that was via interviews and stories in order to better understand the range of perspectives that might be present (McCaslin & Scott, 2003).

4.11.4 Study population, sampling technique and selection criteria for interviews

For the selection of the research population, I adopted purposive sampling (Blumberg, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011: 442) note that purposive sampling is ‘a non-probability form of sampling where the researcher does not seek to sample research participants on a random basis; the goal of purposive sampling is to sample participants in a strategic way using a particular criterion so that those sampled are relevant to the research question being posed’. In practical term, I relied heavily on what some (e.g. Blumberg, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011 and etcetera) have characterised as snowball sampling (referral networks) to identify the appropriate respondents. As Bryman and Bell (2011) point out, a snowball sampling occurs when the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contact with others. This approach became necessary because of the initial difficulties I encountered in establishing contact with civil servants who meet the selection criteria and are in a position to provide the kind of information being sought.

21 The principal inclusion criteria for the semi-structured interview are: participants must be of 18 years or older; must be currently working either the OHCSF or the CMD; must be working in Lagos or Abuja; must be working in any of the two OHCSF offices or any of the six CMD departments identified for the purpose of this study; must possess a minimum of a first degree or its equivalent. These criteria are consistent with the nature of this study and the type of information being sought for, as participants need to have the necessary contextual experience and be literate enough to contribute meaningfully to the research process.
In my case, since the study involves understanding human capital development in the civil service and making sense of this process in its specific social context; as well as having a temporal (i.e. over time) appreciation of social phenomena and their interconnections, I had to select participants based on their position, experience, roles and responsibilities within the NFCS. The public service agencies in the sample include: Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) and the Centre for Management Development (CMD).

For the OHCSF, those selected comprised federal civil servants deployed in Abuja who were working in the following Offices: Common Services Office; and Career Management Office (formerly Manpower Development Office - MDO). For the CMD, certain officers were identified as potential participants based on their roles and responsibilities within the organisation vis-à-vis the nature of data required. Those selected were from the following departments of the Centre: Learning and Development, Research and Consultancy, Accreditation & Curriculum Development, Administration and Human Resources Department, ICT & Resource Learning and The Director-General’s Office. Those recruited were based at the Centre’s offices in Lagos and Abuja (where most of its strategic planning and practical operations take place).

In both the OHCSF and the CMD, the offices/departments selected were based on the specific type of information required for the research and the staff strength of both organisations, so as to have enough peers to help the anonymisation strategy of this study. It was for this purpose also that I selected at least two (2), but not more than six (6) civil servants from each office and department within the OHCSF and CMD respectively. In essence, in both agencies occupants of strategic positions within the identified departments/offices constituted the participants for this study.

The selection of those that were finally interviewed in both agencies was therefore based on their position in making strategic decisions, especially with regards to the contents and conduct of training and capacity development programmes in the federal civil service; as well as decisions relating to the Service’s engagement with other public sector organisations. These were individuals who were in strategic positions within their respective departments and in their organisation to provide the needed information, either as senior civil servants, human resource practitioners/administrators, middle or junior level managers. Some regular employees were also interviewed – mostly at informal level, in order to allow for

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22 Although the semi-structured interview respondents came from the OHCSF and the CMD, some officials of the Federal Civil Service Commission (FSC), the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ACSON) were also interviewed at informal levels. Because these interviews were at informal levels and largely unstructured and spontaneous, no interview guide was utilised.
multiplicity of voices so as to enhance the credibility and reliability of the received information.

4.12 Methods of data analysis and interpretation: Narrative discourse analysis

Investigating civil service HCD within a framework which is grounded in culture and social interaction reflects important elements of people development policies, its transmission, and how it is learned about within the employment relationship (Cornelius & Gagnon, 1999). Investigating these kinds of interactions arguably requires the use of methodological approaches which explore values, beliefs and basic assumptions, and especially how these are played out through the social process of organizational culture and institutional change (Shein, 1985; cited in Cornelius & Gagnon, 1999).

It is against this backdrop, that I adapted an analytical method that reflected these issues in order to critically examine contemporary HCD practice in the Nigerian civil service at the level of broader social transactions as well as interactions between organizational members (managers, employees and other internal stakeholders). Accordingly, the documentary data and data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using qualitative approaches. Specifically, I utilised Brennan’s (2005) model of qualitative analytical process (See figure 4.6). As can be inferred from Figure 4.6, the procedure for a qualitative analysis may differ, but the emphasis remains on making sense of the raw data and reducing it to a meaningful description and/or explanation in line with the research objectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In my case, I adopted narrative discourse analysis as my method of analysis and interpretation.
Adapting Hajer’s (2006) perspective and consistent with the nuances of ‘discourse research’ which is the overarching methodology that underpins this study, the key segments of narrative discourse analysis as applied in this study are:

- **Sites of argumentation**: search the data to account for the argumentative exchange.
- **Analysis for positioning effects**: to show how people, institutions or nation-states get caught up in interplay.
- **Identify key incidents**: to understand the discursive dynamics and the outcomes.
- **Analysis of practices in particular cases of argumentation**: by going back to the data to see if the meaning of what is said can be related to the practices in which it was said.
- **Interpretation**: come up with an account of the discursive structures, practices, and the sites of production. These segments are illustrated diagrammatically as figure 4.7.
The narrative discourse analysis approach clearly has parallels with other methods such as domain analysis and frame analysis. However, the essential difference is that social-constructivist narrative discourse analysis, critically examines and narrows issues down to the individual, while at the same time reflecting on groups (meso) and the wider society (macro) levels. The potential power of this avenue of analysis in the context of this research, lies in its ability to help unearth the manner in which individuals and groups ‘make sense’ of the HCD policies that they currently engage with in working life. It may therefore, result in a way around the limitations of other methods which often analyse HCD issues independently of the social interaction and constructions within which they emanate (Cornelius & Gagnon, 1999: 229).

### 4.12.1 Justifications for adopting narrative discourse analysis in this thesis

Narrative discourse analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that allows for in-depth investigations of personal held beliefs and experiences; and is deemed appropriate for this study because HCD policies and its implementation are grounded in cultural and social interactions informed by internally held beliefs, which are personal to those who experience...
or are affected by it. Labov (1972) cited in Blumberg (2011: 297), defines narrative discourse analysis as one method of recapitulating past experience by matching verbal sequences of clauses to the sequences of events which actually occurred.

As a data analytical method, narrative discourse analysis can be seen as ‘the elicitation and analysis of language that is sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as tellers of stories about their lives or events around them, detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 531). Thus, as Blumberg (2011) notes, narrative analysis examines stories focusing on how its elements are sequenced and how they are evaluated. This is reinforced when respondents were part of the stories they tell as was in my case, and not mere observers.

The choice of this interpretive method in this study is appropriate, when one considers that most approaches to the collection and particularly the analysis of data, appear to neglect the realisation that people perceive their lives in terms of continuity and process, thereby neglecting the perspective of those being studied (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This situation becomes worrisome when one considers Silverman’s (2013) argument that understanding how individuals perceive their social life is essential if social scientists are to provide meaningful insights into the numerous problems facing the modern world. Understanding how people see their social world, is especially significant for the purpose of this research, because I had to rely on people’s experiences to make sense of the interpretations about capability development initiatives and HCD policies in order to accomplish the research objectives.

4.12.2 Practicalising the narrative discourse analysis approach in this study

Dey (1993: 30), points out that ‘analysis involves the process of breaking data into smaller units to reveal their characteristics elements and structure.’ In practicalising the narrative discourse analysis, I envisaged that the data collection process will generate a large amount of data. Therefore, systematic organization of the data was important to prevent a situation where the amount of data generated will overwhelm me and lead to losing sight of the original research purpose and questions. To guard against this, the analysis of data involved the employing of systematic methods and networks in sorting, arranging and presenting of data. The processed data was then used in answering research question and meeting the objective of the study. These elements and structures are then used in explaining the phenomenon being studied. In this regard, three main steps of data analysis: data reduction,
data display and conclusion drawing/verification, as highlighted by Miles and Huberman (1994) were employed in this thesis.

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), the first step in the analysis involved the abstraction, and then transcribing of the raw data from the tapes and field notes. The transcribed data was then taken through selection, focusing, simplifying and meaning making. These processes were undertaken to ‘sharpen, sort, focus, discard and organise’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 11) the primary data in such a way that the concluding outcome can be easily arrived at, and also verified (Ekeke, 2011).

As part of data reduction and display, the contents of the transcripts were read and key issues were identified and subsequently developed into themes. It is instructive to point out however that I avoided intensive coding in a bid not to destroy the meaning of materials nor derail my anonymization strategy. This approach is consistent with the modus operandi of narrative discourse analytical method (see Keller, 2013). It also resonates with the arguments of Francis (2007: 113), about ‘HRMism’ that the integrity (in my case – trustworthiness) of respondents’ narratives and documentary materials ‘would be lost if they were “categorised” into too mechanistic a fashion’.

To ensure clarity and help in ‘meaning making’, I instead identified appropriate discourse themes from the data for interpretations and analysis. This was the final stage of data analysis it was concerned with drawing of conclusion. It was done by looking at the patterns and regularities discovered and explaining these in light of the flows and propositions already established (Ekeke, 2011). This means that data presentation and analysis were interwoven and progressed simultaneously. I utilised the narratives generated from data from semi-structured interviews and documents analysis to explore the key issues necessary for rethinking HCD and (re)constructing new agendas for capability development in the NFCS.

In this regard, the discursive outcomes of the narratives from these ‘texts’ (i.e. data from semi-structured interviews and documents analysis) were synthesised with relevant literatures on Nigeria’s political and economic history (e.g. Osuji, 2011; Osuntokun, Aworawo, Akpan & Masajuwa eds., 2003), and assessed in terms of themes, examples and dominant discourses, utilising the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD). Guided by the theoretical framework developed in chapter three, these explorations were specifically weaved around two dominant discourse themes in line with my research objectives and questions:
Discourses of human capital and capability development in the NFCS: The focus of this theme is on the nature of current policies and approaches to human capital and capability development in the NFCS, with a view of understanding inherent limitations and critical gaps (see Chapter 5).

Structural and institutional constraints discourse: The emphasis of this theme is to understand some of the contextual issues that militate against capability development reforms in the NFCS. The issues explored under this theme include: the ‘resource curse’ discourse, State - civil society relations discourse and institutional voids and low institutional capacity discourse. I also explore the role of key actors and issues of patronage, power relations and incentives in relation to HC and capability development in the NFCS (see Chapter 6).

Together, these two discourse themes help address my research questions and objectives. In exploring these identified themes, I utilised case narratives that were central to my research objectives and to the generation of insight into the complex ways in which text and discursive practices emerged within the NFCS. These discursive themes were then interpreted to give a greater understanding of the main issues, forming the basis for addressing and answering the research questions (Ekeke, 2011). The reduction process also incorporated the comparing of field notes which contained my interpretation of events with interview transcripts, interview schedule, documents and some relevant literature. As these discursive themes suggest, my emphasis in this thesis was not on quantitative outcomes or on returns on investments of human capital (although these are important), but on how to utilise the underlying ideas of human capital and Sen’s (1985) capability approach to evaluate macro and micro-level processes and institutional frameworks that might hinder or promote skills development efforts in Nigeria’s federal civil service.

It suffices here to reiterate that in exploring these discursive themes, I recognise that discourse is a social practice, that brings an object into being, such that such object becomes a ‘material reality’ (Francis, 2007). Importantly, and in line with the SKAD adopted for this study, this (re)construction process involves the interaction between the language-in-use (text), the process by which the texts are produced and given meaning (discursive practices) and the prevalent material and social positionings (social practice) (refer to section 4.8). This is why it was crucial to make reference to the literature throughout the empirical chapters.
4.12.3 Critique of the narrative discourse analysis approach

Critics of narrative discourse method argue that it is too subjective and may degenerate into ‘story telling’ (Cresswell, 2007). Yet a counter argument can be made that narrative discourse analysis ‘tap rich anecdotal information that allows the researcher to get an insight into the perspective of the respondents’ (Blumberg, 2011: 298). This is especially so, considering the point made by Bryman and Bell (2011), that narrative analysis relates not just to the life span but also to accounts relating to episodes as well as the interconnections between them. Indeed, in the context of this study, narrative discourse analysis was extremely useful in providing a springboard for understanding what Weick (1995) cited in Bryman and Bell (2011: 531) called ‘organisational sense making’.

4.13 Limitations of the research design and practical problems encountered during fieldwork

4.13.1 Limitations of the research design

It might well be true, as McGrath (1982) cited in Scandura and Williams (2000), note that it is not possible to do an unflawed study and this research is no exception. Any research design and methods chosen will have inherent flaws, and that choice will limit the conclusions that can be drawn. For this thesis, the case selection is admittedly biased/subjective, and findings are likely to be fully applicable only in the Nigerian context. It has also been argued that the study of a single case or a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings (Soy, 1997). While there might be some value in this line of reasoning, it must be critically emphasised however, that the richness and depth attained in a case study research, especially of a single case, compensates for the lack of generalisations, but reliability and transferability is undoubtedly reinforced. This is especially so, if the case validates the results of prior research, or identifies areas of future development of theory and/or practice (Yin, 2003). Indeed, in the context of this study, there may be limited need for generalisation, since the environmental context of the civil service, particularly the nature of Nigerian national culture and the economy, appear to shape the Service’s human capital development efforts.

Further, the interview sample size is also another potential limiting factor of the research design. It could be argued for instance, that twenty-eight (28) civil servants are not large or representative enough to provide any basis for generalised conclusion on approaches to HCD in the Nigerian civil service. However, it is crucial to note that I make no claim for
‘general’ representative of my sample, neither am I directly preoccupied with such criteria as internal and external validities, replicability, measurement validity, and so on, which are all preoccupations of a quantitative research. I maintain instead, that the findings from this study can be regarded as indicative of broader trends of approaches to HCD in the civil services of SSA countries. Indeed, if there should be an issue with regards to the sample size, then it should be an advantage to this research, because my findings would amount to an underestimation, rather than an overestimation or misrepresentation of the issues investigated in this research.

Overall, it is plausible to argue therefore, that the perceived limitations of the research design were not substantial enough, to suggest that the findings from this study are unreliable or put a question mark on its trustworthiness and authenticity. The findings from this study and conclusions derived are therefore, valid and dependable for further investigation on strategies for improved and innovative approaches to human capital developing in the civil services of DCs, especially in SSA.

4.13.2 Practical problems encountered during the research

Admittedly, there were a number of problems and barriers that militated against the smooth conduct of this research. The first major issues was that of getting ethical approval from the University of Manchester for the fieldwork in Nigeria, which unfortunately degenerated into a protracted process and lasted for well over seven months. There was also the initial challenge of securing appropriate research participants, who meet the sampling criteria and were willing to engage in an audio recorded face to face interview. Getting this commitment was rather tricky, as most of the civil servants approached, were sceptical or afraid to comment on certain ‘procedural’ and ‘sensitive’ issues, because they ‘did not want any trouble’, to borrow the words of one respondent. I was however, able to mitigate this challenge by working hard to gain the trust of my eventual participants. I assured them of their complete anonymity and confidentiality at all times during and after the study. In addition, I also constantly reminded them that the data collected from them will be handled with confidentiality and utmost professionalism. Therefore, to ensure that respondents are kept safe, I adopted an anonymization strategy that ensures that all traces linking respondents to interview data are completely removed through the use of pronouns.
4.14 Reflection on ethical considerations

There are a range of ethical issues that should be taken into account when undertaking social science research or any research for that matter. Research ethics has been defined as a ‘code of behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work or are affected by it’ (Wells, 1994: 284, cited in Anderson, 2004). Figure 4.8, outlines the main ethical issue that arose at each key stage of the research process and is followed by a discussion on how these were addressed.

Figure 4.8: Ethical considerations in the research process

All research enquiries need to work within general principles of acceptable behaviour and practice (Anderson, 2004). My primary concern in this study was to ensure that such behaviour pervaded each stage of the research process. In doing this, I adhered to all ethical requirements of the University of Manchester, particularly that of the School of
Environment, Education and Development (SEED), as well as the CIPD’s Code of Professional Conduct. The formulating and clarification of research topic was entirely my choice, with advice from the supervisory team. While the sponsor – Ebonyi State Government recognised their right to quality research, they also acknowledged my right to be free from coercion of any form. The research brief broadly stipulated that the study should be in any area of HCD, HRD or HRM within the Nigerian public sector, with a key requirement being that the study had to bring a significant addition to the government’s knowledge base in terms of both relevance and utility. I was totally given the freedom of deciding what aspect of HCD, HRD or HRM to engage with and the public sector organisations to work with. This freedom was very vital in maintaining the level of enthusiasm and motivation needed to successfully complete a PhD thesis.

Gaining access to the relevant government MDAs proved to be a somewhat protracted exercise, because of bureaucratic bottle-necks and the transition and restructuring that were ongoing in the Federal service at the time. After a few iterative processes, my proposal was eventually approved by the Head of Service and the CMD I had approached. Approval of the research proposal was based on the understanding that the findings of the research will be made available to OHCSF.

To ensure that I adhered to the ethical requirements involved in data collection, processing and storing, and analysis and reporting, this research was undertaken in a way that:

- Was professional and responsible (takes account of privacy and confidentiality).
- Collected data in an appropriate way.
- Involved informed consent by those being researched.
- Did not involve deception.
- Data was carefully interpreted (Anderson, 2004).

I also ensured that all relevant permissions were gained prior to the commencement of the fieldwork and I was always prepared to (re)negotiate access with individuals and the case organisation, while not compromising ethical standards. While on filed, I made sure that I got permission before examining or copying relevant files, correspondence or other

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23 This code has been adopted because the researcher is a professional member of the CIPD and is therefore, bound by their ethical standards. These codes are: Accuracy of information; Confidentiality of personal information; Equal opportunities and non-discriminatory practices and Fair dealing in the treatment of individuals.
governmental documents, even as I took responsibility for maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

Participation was absolutely voluntary and participants were first provided information sheets detailing the key elements of the research and what they are expected to do in very simple terms (See Appendix B4). All the information contained in the information sheet were explained thoroughly so that there was no room for ambiguities, and that participants have all the right information they need to enable them give an informed consent. They were given at least two weeks to decide whether or not they want to participate and for them to ask any pertinent questions that might be bordering them.

Eventual participants were also informed of their right to decline participation and that participation is entirely voluntary and that their acceptance to participate can be willingly revoked at any time during the research process. I continually assured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality during and after the study. In all, no one was made to participate in this study against their will and no undue influence was exerted in order to persuade any participant to take part. I have also made efforts to report back to participants the findings and recommendations of the research, so that they can see the way I have presented the information they provided.

4.15 Criteria for assessing quality: Research trustworthiness and authenticity

It seems to be beyond doubt that a qualitative discursive research also needs concepts and criteria to assess the quality of its findings. Yet, as Wodak and Meyer (2013: 31) note, ‘the classical concepts of validity, reliability and objectivity used in quantitative research cannot be applied in unmodified ways’. In accessing the reliability and validity of this thesis therefore, I concur with Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) argument that an alternative to reliability and validity is needed in the context qualitative research, particularly a research of this nature. Therefore, to establish and assess the quality of this study, I adopt Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) trustworthiness and authenticity criteria, instead of the widely used reliability and validity criteria, which in the traditional sense, presupposes that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible – a position I do not agree with. Figure 4.9 illustrates these issues and I contend here the findings from this research are both trustworthy and authentic, as the discussion that follows highlight.
**Figure 4.9:** Assessing the overall quality of research findings

**Source:** Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994).

### 4.15.1 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a development and management research as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) comprises of *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability* all which emphasis cannons of good practice and professionalism. The findings from this study meets the above criteria, because not only did I adhere strictly to the canons of good practice in the collection of data, but I also analysed the same in a reliable and professional manner within the confines of acceptable ethical standards (including the standards set by the University of Manchester). In specific terms, apart from gaining informed consent of participants and ensuring their absolute anonymity throughout the course of the research and thereafter, efforts were also made to communicate research findings to them to confirm that I have understood the context of their social world (although many have not made any comment on the report as of the time of submitting this thesis).

Further, I also triangulated data to reduce bias and enhance the contextual uniqueness and significant of the aspect of the social world being studied (Bryman & Bell, 2011) through what Geertz (1973) calls *thick description*. This was achieved through the use of narrative discourse analysis. This approach becomes crucial, considering the point made by Guba and Lincoln (1994), that thick description provides others with a ‘database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other milieus’.
Similarly, dependability was also achieved, as I have made meticulous efforts to keep complete records of all the research process, beginning from problem formulation to the selection of participants, data analysis methods and the entire research process. Therefore, while acknowledging the subjective nature of this research, it is evident that I have acted in good faith by not overtly allowing personal values or theoretical inclination to be a deciding factor in the conduct of this research and findings derived from it (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4.15.2 Authenticity

The emphasis of this criterion as Bryman and Bell (2011) note, is to raise a wider set of issues concerning the wider ‘political’ impact of research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) cited in Bryman and Bell (2011: 398-399) identify the following as the key elements of the authenticity criteria:

1. **Fairness** (does the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting?).
2. **Ontological authenticity** (does the research help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu?).
3. **Educative authenticity** (does the research help members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting?).
4. **Catalytic authenticity** (has the research acted as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances?).
5. **Tactical authenticity** (has the research empowered members to take the steps necessary for engaging in action?).

These criteria are akin to the concept of action research and highlight the need of research efforts to have practical relevance and utility aside academic purposes. While they are mainly forward looking, I have taken adequate measure to ensure fair representation of all the viewpoints of my participants, as subsequent chapters of this study clearly reveal. It is my hope that this thesis will impact positively on the stakeholders that were communicated the research findings and with time, will score high on the remainder of the authenticity criteria.
4.16 The politics of research: Reflexivity

It might well be true as Nazaruk (2011) argues that it is impossible to totally eliminate the presence of authorship in any social science research. Although without a univocal definition in the social sciences, I take research reflexivity here to mean the ways in which researchers should reflect upon their own practices (Mikkelson, 2005). Saunders et al (2009: 292) define the term as ‘the concept used in the social sciences to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the object of research’. Bryman and Bell (2011: 700) provide an expanded definition, arguing that reflexivity connotes that researchers ‘should reflect on the implications of their methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate and try to be aware of how personal idiosyncrasies, and implicit assumptions, affect their approach to study. Reflexivity also entails sensitivity to the researcher’s cultural, political, and social context’.

In the context of this thesis and as a poststructuralist, being reflexive is to acknowledge my role as a researcher being part and parcel of the construction of knowledge and that my writing and analysis is a reflection of my own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that I bring to this research (Creswell, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Given my ontological and epistemological standpoints, I was aware of the need to de-centre myself ‘as a privileged voice within the narrative’. Rather, my emphasis centred on how to allow multiple voices to appear and disrupt each other, bearing in mind that there will always be multiple accounts of a research project (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Creswell (2007: 180) citing Weis and Fine (2000), provide major points which guided my reflexive thoughts throughout the course of this research:

- Should I write about what people say or recognize that sometimes they cannot remember or choose not to remember?
- What are my political reflexivities that need to come into my report?
- Has my writing connected the voices and stories of individuals back to the set of historic, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated?
- How far should I go in theorizing the words of participants?
- Have I considered how my words could be used for progressive, conservative, and repressive social policies?
- Have I backed into the passive voice and decoupled my responsibility from my interpretation?
To what extent has my analysis (and writing) offered an alternative to common sense or the dominant discourse?

In line with the points enumerated above, I acknowledge here that I am implicated in the construction of the knowledge presented in this thesis, as my writings and the final text is arguably a product of the interactive process between me as a researcher and the interviewed civil servants as the researched (Creswell, 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Yet, this ‘implication’ does not in any way diminish the flaw the research process or the utility of the findings in this thesis and the recommendations therefrom. Rather, it enhances the quality and value of this study. This is consistent with Bishop and Shepherd’s (2011: 1283) position that ‘being reflexive and providing these reflections for public scrutiny is often considered a key element of ethical, rigorous qualitative research’.

4.17 Chapter summary and conclusions

In this chapter, I have given a detailed account of the methodological and practical issues that underpin the conduct of this study and some of their limitations. In the process, I provided a brief explanation of the role of ideas and discourse in development theorising and why Discourse Analysis, particularly SKAD is a suitable overarching methodological framework for this study. I also utilised Saunders et al.’s (2009) ‘research onion’ to explain the choice of methods and the overall design of this study. In doing so, I addressed a number of key issues, including: the research philosophy and research approach, which constitute the two outer layers of the ‘research onion’.

As explained, my philosophy for this study is anchored on a poststructuralist epistemology and social constructivist ontology, which views institutional and organisational reality as constructed, complex, historical and relativists and allows for an in-depth investigation of civil service HCD in context. In terms of research approach, I combined some elements of both deductive and inductive approaches to adopt an abductive approach to the empirical investigation, in an attempt to maintain some level of coherency between theory and practice. In this regard, the theoretical framework developed in chapter three is deductively used as an analytical lens to investigate the Nigerian civil service, and insights drawn from the research findings are then inductively used to develop a theoretically-grounded yet practically-oriented framework for improved HCD practice in the Service.

I also considered three more layers of the ‘research onion’ in this chapter to outline the research design along three dimensions: research strategy, research choice and time.
horizon. I argued here that the study was a multi-method longitudinal case-study, where data was collected utilising a range of qualitative data collection techniques to enable for an in-depth and context sensitive investigation of the Nigerian Federal Service as the main unit of analysis and account for historical changes in its approaches to human capital and skills development. The choice of the Nigerian Federal Service as a suitable typical case was also discussed. Finally, the innermost layer of the research onion was considered to detail and justify my strategies for data collection and analysis. I identified document analysis and semi-structured interviews as specific methods for data collection.

This method of data collection is consistent with contemporary approaches to discursive research and has been utilised by a number of scholars in social science Discourse Analysis. For example, Hajer (1995), in his comparative investigation of political discussions on acid rain in Great Britain and Holland, used expert interviews and several scientific and political documents to reconstruct the basic argument structures of the discourse in question. Similarly, Gottweis (1998), used experts interviews and archival documents covering a decade of scientific and policy fields in genetic engineering to account for the politics of ‘governing molecules’ in Europe and the US. The methods chosen here, was also utilised by Keller (1998), in his investigation of the processes of public discussion concerning household waste disposal polices in France and Germany. In all, I adopted this type of ‘triangulated’ approach to data collection, because its methodological richness arguably permits a broader empirical underpinning of discourse research, than is usually possible in approaches rooted in linguistics or discourse theory (Keller, 2013).

In line with the discursive qualitative approach that I have taken in this study, data analysis and interpretation was based on the narrative discourse approach, following Hajer’s (2006) five systematic steps: sites of argumentation, analysis for positioning effects, identify key incidents, analysis of practices in particular cases of argumentation, and Interpretation. The chapter also gave due consideration to the issues of research validity and credibility. These dimensions were assessed using Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) authenticity and trustworthy criteria. It is felt that the research findings and conclusions derived from this study achieved a high level of credibility, transferability, dependability, fairness and authenticity. This implies that the findings could be generalised and transferred to inform innovative approaches to human capital and capability development in the public services of DCs as well as inform further research in this area.

With regard to ethics, I pointed out that I ensured that professionalism, informed consent and all other ethical requirements of the University of Manchester pervaded each key stage
of the research process, in order to eliminate the risk of harm to participants and to avoid deception. Consideration was also given to some of the challenges I encountered during fieldwork and to how these were mitigated to ensure the successful completion of the empirical investigation and the thesis itself. Finally, a section on ‘reflexivity’ was included to give me the opportunity to acknowledge my role as part and parcel of the construction of the knowledge that I seek to report in this thesis.

I now turn to the empirical section of this thesis and proceed to more practical issues of rethinking human capital development in the Nigerian civil service, drawing on from both theoretical discussion and results from my empirical inquiry.
Chapter 5

Discourses of human capital and capability development in Nigeria’s federal civil service: Approaches and limitations

An effective poverty reduction strategy process and a productive partnership can be built only on a platform of strong public capacity: capacity to formulate policies; capacity to build consensus; capacity to implement reform; and capacity to monitor results, learn lessons, and adapt accordingly. Building the requisite capacities turns out to be a formidable challenge.


5.1 Introduction

As the arguments in the preceding chapters indicate, capability development, particularly human capability development has become a dominant discourse in contemporary debates on strategies for rapid development in SSA (refer especially to chapter 3). It is now widely acknowledged that it is only through effective capability development that SSA countries can strengthen and sustain the foundation necessary for societal transformation (Kaplan, 2008; Hope, 2011). As already highlighted in Chapter 2, this is especially significant for the civil service in SSA, considering that numerous efforts aimed at repositioning the service to effectively play its role in national development have been persistently hampered by capability challenges (Hanson, Kararach & Shaw, 2012). The quote at the beginning of this chapter attributed to Levy and Kpundeh (2004), perhaps most succinctly captures this constructed reality. The capacities to plan, manage, implement, and account for results have indeed, become critical for achieving development objectives (UN, 2002).

It is against this backdrop that this chapter critically explores the main policies and discourses that shape the standards for capability development and management in the NFCS. The aim of this effort is to understand the nature of the human capital and capability challenges facing the Nigerian federal civil service in contemporary contexts – a stated research agenda for this study (refer to chapter 2, 2.9). It suffices to note that while the discourse on civil service capability development is admittedly a broad subject, my emphasis here is mainly on human capability development (HCD). In particular, my focus is on the institutional arrangements and policies that underpin current approaches to HCD and management in the NFCS. In this regard, the chapter critically assesses current policies that govern the development and management of human resources in the NFCS, and argues that
current approaches appear largely inadequate to the needs of a modern bureaucracy in a knowledge-based globalising world.

It is important to stress however that while the focus here is on discourses and social constructions of human capital and capability development, I am more interested in the materiality of construction than with the construction of meanings, although these are interrelated (Garrick, 1998). The focus on the materiality of discourse here is consistent with the SKAD approach that underpins my analysis in this thesis and is intended to give practical relevance to the issues discussed.

Consistent with the theoretical model developed in chapter 3 (see 3.9), I have approached the chapter from a skills/capability development and explanatory angle, based on the document analysis of official government policies and civil service documents24. These documents are synthesised with interview data and some relevant literatures on Nigeria’s political economy in order to make sense of key national policies and process related dominant discourses on human capital that circulate in the context of the NFCS. Some statistics are also provided, but are mainly for reflection on issues and not necessarily for analytical purposes.

The chapter is developed in two broad parts and takes a discursive-thematic approach. Consistent with Garavan’s (2007) levels of context, the first part explores the nature and dynamics of contemporary human capital and capability challenges in the NFCS within the broader context of Nigeria’s political economy. The second part examines critically, the discourses and specific policies that shape current approaches to human capability development and management in the NFCS, focusing on five key domains: structures and institutional frameworks, recruitment and selection, training and development, leadership and management development and talent development and management.

5.2 Understanding the nature and dynamics of contemporary human capital and capability challenge facing the NFCS

The nature and dynamics of the human capital and capability challenges vis-à-vis civil service efficiency in Nigeria, is perhaps, best understood when placed in the context of the NFCS’ inability to train, retrain and utilise their human resource (Saasa, 2007; McCourt, 2013). In this regard, the NFCS appears to face similar kinds of human resourcing

challenges confronting many public services in DCs. Specifically, these challenges range from securing skilled and capable people, dealing with the deficiencies of the education system to navigating the dynamic demographics of an increasingly international mobile labour force (Gonzalez, et al., 2008; CIPD, 2010). Figure 5.1 diagrams the key capability challenges faced by the NFCS.

**Figure 5.1:** Schematic of the human capital and capability challenges faced by the NFCS

As Figure 5.1 illustrates, the main challenge for the NFCS, appears to be how to recruit, develop and retain adequate human capital and promote their capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of the Service and its contributions to Nigeria’s socio-economic and human development (Gonzalez, et al., 2008; CIPD, 2010). In addition to internal organisation issues, it would appear that these challenges have been engendered by the dynamics of the Nigerian political economy. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, it seems that inadequacies in the Nigeria’s educational system coupled with unfavourable socio-economic and employment conditions have combined to create a number of fundamental human capital challenges for the NFCS, as briefly discussed in the next sub-sections.

### 5.2.1 Low educational and skills capability: A skills gap

The constraints in Nigeria’s educational system coupled with uncoordinated approaches to national skills and human capital development have arguably created a mismatch between human resource needs, especially in the civil service and existing skills in Nigeria – a skills gap. Despite the expansion in the education system, the level of literacy in Nigeria is still comparatively low when compared to other DCs and emerging markets. The World Bank
(2014), estimates that only about 61% of Nigerian adults aged 15 and above are literate, compared to Zimbabwe (92%), Ghana (67%), Indonesia (93%), Brazil (90%) and South Africa (93%). The country has consistently spent less than 5% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education since 2008, and its pupils regularly rank at the bottom of international comparisons (OECD 2008). This seeming neglect of education means that Nigeria’s schooling system and skills development are in considerable disarray and, according to UNESCO (2012), teacher quality and infrastructural deficiencies are big problems.

Although Nigeria has been witnessing impressive growths in the number of its university graduates in recent times (see OCED, 2013 for recent estimates), the problem however, is that the numbers who are ‘industry-ready’ and technologically savvy is alarmingly small. It appears that Nigeria’s educational system tends to produce graduates who lack job skills for employment than those the economy requires to remain vibrant. The Vocational training landscape has equally not been effective for a number of systemic reasons, which according to UNESCO (2012) includes:

- Formal education system favours general education above vocational education;
- Government strategies for skills development are either response to a crisis or temporary social measure to tackle unemployment;
- Existing programs lack appropriate funding, use outdated curricula and are short of qualified teaching staff;
- There is limited horizontal coordination across different ministries/agencies and vertically between federal and state;
- Implementation strategies not based on timely or accurate labour market information;
- Absence of transparent quality assurance mechanisms;
- Absence of mechanism for recognition of skills acquired in the informal sector.

The constraints in Nigeria’s educational system have contributed to the country’s inability to produce job-ready young people, even as many of its workers appear to lack the skills to fill the jobs that are being generated. This means that there is not a large university talent pool to recruit from, with most workers lacking in basic skills, especially in technical and cognitive skills. Therefore, problems of training and skills arise, meaning that the NFCS have to inevitably carry the burden of training and developing employees almost from the scratch.
The problem of skills gap is very disturbing considering that in a rapidly changing world of intense social-Darwinism, it has become imperative for countries to possess a mass of human capital with the right knowledge and competencies in order to deal with the emerging exigencies of the highly competitive global economy, if they hope to survive. This mismatch has resulted in decreasing industrial capacity utilization, rising unemployment, threats of social insecurity by jobless youths. Other problems include inadequate resource input and consequent low output and overdependence on government as an employer of labour.

### 5.2.2 Brain drain (Skilled emigration)

The complex interplay between unfavourable internal conditions and the impacts of demographic challenges has arguably engendered increased international mobility of highly skilled workers from developing to developed countries in recent years (Gibson & Lowell, 2001). This increased movement has also been facilitated in part by the liberalisation of national policies in many developed countries to allow for the admission of highly skilled individuals (Gibson & McKenzie, 2011). This demand is largely met by developing countries – including Nigeria, triggering an exodus of skilled personnel from the region (Lowell, 2001).

This already precarious situation is made worse, by the dynamics of the contemporary international political economy, including the internationalisation of the HR function and the activities of transnationals. Arguably, globalisation, lack of a favourable socio-economic and political environment, including increasing unemployment, especially among the youth, has led to increased skilled-emigration, resulting in brain drain and serious skills gap in the region. As Lowell and Finlay (2001: 3) argue:

> Emigration of highly skilled persons from developing to developed countries has increased over the past decade. On the one hand, there has been accelerating demand for skilled workers in developed economies experiencing labour shortages. On the other hand, better wages and employment conditions, better information, recruitment, and cheaper transportation are encouraging skilled migrants to seek jobs in developed economies.

Figure 5.2, appears to provide some diagrammatical validity to this conventional wisdom. Like most social processes, the consequences of skilled emigration from Nigeria – as well as other SSA countries, is a balance of direct and indirect impacts, and presents the country
with a serious skills-gap challenge, leading to what many (e.g. Lowel, 2001) have characterised as the *brain drain*\(^{25}\) (see: Gibson & McKenzie, 2011).

**Figure 5.2:** Migration and the brain drain phenomenon

While it has to be acknowledged that some amount of mobility is essential if Nigeria is to integrate into the global economy, a large outflow of skilled persons poses the threat, which can adversely impact local growth and development. Lowell (2001: 1) concurs with this assertion, arguing that ‘theory and research suggest that the direct impact of a brain drain, that is a sizable loss of highly educated natives abroad, represents a reduction in the accumulation of human capital or knowledge’. It could be argued then that the underutilization of existing capacity and the loss of same through brain drain have made Nigeria to remain largely underdeveloped in comparative terms (Aluko & Aluko, 2011).

\(^{25}\) Despite the apparent lop-sidedness in the pattern of international skilled emigration, some commentators (e.g. Gibson & McKenzie, 2011), has nonetheless suggested that brain drain can generate some kind of double-loop effects that may lead to positive economic gains for the migrant source countries (Lowell, 2011). Indeed, as noted by Lowell (2001:1), ‘the bulk of the policy literature is uncomfortable with the term brain drain and prefers terms such as “brain gain” or “brain circulation”. The contention of this school is that the term ‘drain’, conveys a strong implication of serious loss, but there is no ‘hard evidence’ to conclude that such a loss actually occurs in practice (Gibson & McKenzie, 2011).

5.2.3 Scarcity and its costs: Rising labour costs, recruitment difficulties and talent crunch

With the benefit of hindsight, it is plausible to argue that as a result of the problems described above, as well as limited governments’ fiscal resources, especially during the period of World Bank and IMF-induced Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), the civil service in Nigeria as in most SSA countries increasingly find it difficult to recruit and retain the requisite skilled human resource – a talent crunch (Saasa, 2007; Jackson, 2004).

The issue of talent crunch has led to the so-called ‘talent war’ (Wooldridge, 2006). As already highlighted in chapter 3 (refer to 3.7), this phenomenon is off course not peculiar to Nigeria. However, it is instructive to point out that Nigeria’s own ‘talent war’ is primarily the product of very poor economic performance, aided by globalisation and massive brain drain and not the shrinking of its workforce – as most of its population are in their twenties or younger (FGN & UNDP, 2009; UNDP, 2011). Similarly, because of the internationalisation of the labour market, many organisations and institutions in Nigeria including the NFCS lack the financial resources and strategy to compete effectively with foreign firms for the attraction and retention of Nigeria’s brightest talents.

It is also the case that the working environment is not enabling enough to at least provide these ‘talents’ with some sort of psychological reward of working in a dynamic and progressive society. Thus, leaving them with no choice, than migrate out of Nigeria in search of improved working conditions and better living standards elsewhere. These issues further engender the brain drain phenomenon with its attendant wide-ranging and devastating consequences for Nigeria and the rest of Africa.

It is this realisation that has perhaps, encouraged recent development policy discourses (e.g. Ugal & Betiang, 2003; Eade, 2003; Dauda, 2010; Son, 2010), to argue that rapid and sustainable national development will, generally remain a mirage for most SSA countries, including Nigeria, unless far-reaching policy and institutional reforms that facilitate capacity and human development are undertaken and the outcomes effectively managed. Given this realisation, it will not be misplaced to suggest therefore that an urgent priority for SSA countries, should be to develop a strategy that enables them effectively develop the requisite human capital who are capable of adapting to global challenges and making a difference to the quest for sustainable national development. They should also at the same time, pay critical attention to the management and retention of already developed skilled performers through appropriate TM programmes (CIPD, 2006, 2010; Brown et al, 2001).
The point needs to be reemphasised here that while human capability development admittedly encompasses a wide range of dimensions including healthcare, nutrition, population control, and education and skills development. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the term HCD is used to cover mainly training and skills development. And although other aspects of HCD might be used for illustrative purposes, my major focus is on these two dimensions. This is so because training and skills development are more directly related to the themes and issues that underpin this research and also to the character of the Nigerian federal civil service. It is against this backdrop that the next section critically explores the discourses of human capability development in the NFCS with the aim of understanding the nature of the current capabilities problems facing the Service. This assessment is intended to help set the context for discussing renewed approaches to human capital and capability development processes in the Federal service.

5.3 Discourses of human capital and capability development in the NFCS: Making sense of current policies and management practices

The efficiency of any organisation, including the civil service is likely to be determined largely by the calibre of people recruited into an organization as well as policies relating to their training, career development, employment conditions and general management (Balogun, 2003; Crawshaw et al., 2014). The importance of the human element to the efficiency and effectiveness of the NFCS cannot be overemphasised, considering that in any organisation (whether public or private), it is the human element that commands, directs, organizes, controls and maximizes other factors of production (de Silva, 1997; McGuire, 2014).

If this is the case, then improving the human capability of the NFCS, through a coordinated and strategic approach to people development and management has therefore become imperative. Doing this arguably requires an understanding of the nature and context of the human capability challenges facing the Service and possible solutions, through a critical discursive (re)construction of current approaches to human resource development and management.

Indeed, following Sambrook (2007: 16), human capability development ‘can be conceptualized as a discursive and social construction’. This argument is consistent with my previous point in chapter 4 that social phenomena, including the CD process are created through language and symbolic ordering or meaning systems, of which discourses play a major role in establishing. As already noted in chapter 4, a discursive construction is a
bundle of discursive resources, or a linguistic repertoire (Sambrook, 2007). Overtime, as we use these repertoires to frame an aspect of social life in a particular way, highlighting dominant discourses and playing down others, they gradually become materialities – a constructed reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

In the context of this research, these types of constructions are pervasive and include such ‘organisational practices’ as ‘talent management’ and ‘capability development’. In the specific case of the NFCS, there has also been a recent discursive shift from ‘manpower development’ to ‘workforce development’. These are all new ways of framing existing or emerging theories and social phenomena, which are interpreted and talked about in new ways (Sambrook, 2007). As a discursive construction, HCD in the NFCS is therefore, a particular way of framing changes in training, learning and development and other HRM/D practices, through choosing a particular bundle of discursive resources, such as ‘mandatory training’ or ‘personal development,’ ‘training officers’ or ‘learning facilitators’.

So, what discourses underpin approaches to human capital and capability development in the NFCS? In illuminating this question, it is important to recognise that developing and managing people in the NFCS, as in any other organisation, is a complex process. As already discussed in chapters 3, human capital and capability development is a broad and continuously evolving area of activity concerned not only with the training and development of individuals, but also with wider developmental processes at individual, organisational and national levels (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010). Perhaps, this explains why there is no consensus on what aspect of human capital and capability development is more relevant to the needs of the public service. In general terms however, scholars (e.g. Mankin, 2001; Garavan, 2007; McGuire, 2014) have identified a plethora of roles and components within organisations that are crucial to people development and CD. Among these are:

- Recruitment and selection.
- Training and development.
- Human capital development.
- Organisational development.
- Talent development.
- Management and leadership development.
- Change agent.
- HRM/HRD processes and structures.
Given the complexity of each of these components, and recognising the problematic issues of ‘defining’ capability development roles, especially within the context of the civil service (Sambrook, 2007, McGuire, 2014), it might be more useful to identify specific aspects of human capability development that are more relevant to this study. In this regard, my focus here is on five key aspects: structures and institutional framework for human capital and capability development in the NFCS, recruitment and selection, training and development, management and leadership development, and talent management. These dimensions are presented diagrammatically as Figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3:** Components of human capital and capability development practices explored in the NFCS

![Diagram of human capital and capability development components](image)

Source: Author (2015).

Following Sambrook (2007), I argue here that the dimensions illustrated in Figure 5.3 can influence how policies for human capital and capability development is articulated and enacted in a given context, thus shaping multiple and possibly competing discourses of human capital in the NFCS. These components are discursive practices and their effects on working selves and on the NFCS as organisation are multifaceted. As already stated at the beginning of the chapter, my emphasis here is mainly on the materiality of construction rather than on the construction of meanings. This approach is intended to help me in exploring discourses and approaches to HCD in the NFCS - the why, with emphasis on who
is involved (the human dimension, including trainers, management developers, managers) – the how, with emphasis on what is involved (process and structures). I now consider each in turn.

5.3.1 Structures and institutional framework for human capital and capability development in the NFCS

There are various institutional arrangements for the development and utilisation of human resources in the NFCS and the structure of HCD in the NFCS is largely centralised, with some element of decentralisation. The key institutions with oversight responsibilities for policy articulation and implementation, as well as quality assurance on human capital issues are the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) and the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC). Ideally, these bodies are to ensure that the number of civil servants is neither too large nor too small and that they are all usefully deployed (OHSCF, 2010). A brief examination of the roles of both the OHCSF and the FCSC will help situate their (ir)relevance to HCD in the Civil Service.

5.3.1.1 The Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF)

The OHCSF provides general direction, guidance and leadership to the Civil Service through three key offices:

3 Service Policies and Strategies Office (SPSO), which is expected to develop, implement and communicate programmes, policies and initiatives aimed at improving:
   - Efficiency and effectiveness of the Federal Civil Service (FCS);
   - Utilization of resources across the FCS;
   - Improved coordination and governance of the FCS; and
   - Service delivery and responsiveness across the FCS (OHSCF, 2013).

4 Career Management Office (CMO), which has the mandate of managing the career of officers in the pool of the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHSCF, 2013). The office is also expected to liaise with the Federal Civil Service Commission on matters of appointment, promotion and discipline, with a view to achieving optimal utilisation of human resource and providing efficient and effective service delivery with the Civil Service (OHSCF, 2013). The CMO is therefore, theoretically is saddled with enormous HCD responsibilities, including: learning and development, employee mobility, employee wellbeing and staff records and benefits administration; and
Common Services Office (CSO), which is responsible for the overall administration of activities that cut across the offices in the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation. It is also responsible for several core HRM function in the Civil Service, including the management and maintenance of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) Secretariat; and dealing with matters relating to staff welfare and training.

5.3.1.2 Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC)

In addition to the OHCSF, Section 153(1)d of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Part I(d) paragraph II of the third Schedule vests the FCSC with the power to:

1. Appoint persons to offices in the Federal Civil Service; and
2. Dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding such offices

This implies that the responsibility for recruitment, development and management of Federal civil servants are vested in the Commission. However, from time to time, it delegates its authority with regards to appointment, promotion and discipline to MDAs. The Commission in addition to regularly issuing guidelines for appointment, promotion and discipline in the Civil Service, is also expected to perform the following key functions:

1. Appoint qualified candidates to man the different Ministries/Extra-Ministerial Departments in the Federal Civil Service.
2. Ensure that such appointments maintain/represent the Federal character of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
3. Make recommendations to the Federal Government on Personnel policies aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Federal Civil Service; and
4. Ensure that Personnel decisions are taken objectively, promptly and competently in accordance with the policies and interest of the Federal Government (FCSC, 2014).

The Commission’s other important activities include: maintaining up-to-date records of civil servants; processing and determining applications for transfer and secondment; posting of recruited civil servants to the relevant MDAs; approving acting appointments and providing general guidance to the 36 States’ Civil Service Commissions on all HR matters and other matters within its purview (OHCSF, 2010; FCSC, 2014).

In addition to the OHCSF and the FCSC, another organ of the Federal Government of Nigeria that is important with regards to HCD in the NFCS, is the Office of the Secretary to
the Government of the federation (OSGF). The main function of this Office in relation to human capital and capability development lies in its co-ordination of appointments to statutory bodies and agencies (OHCSF, 2010).

In practice, there is considerable overlap in the roles of the three institutions in the governance of the NFCS. The interface between them, especially the FCSC-OHCSF and OHCSF-OSGF need sharper clarification. For example, while the FCSC makes appointments, it is the OHCSF that handles deployments and transfers. With the two institutions sharing responsibility for the quality of the civil service workforce, it is difficult to determine who should be held accountable if things go wrong (FGN, 2009).

Apart from these centralised agencies that are supposed to coordinate HCD and management activities within the Federal Civil Service, there are the so-called personnel departments of MDAs, which are much more in number and curiously, bear most of the responsibilities for human capital development (OHCSF, 2010). Indeed, more often by default than by design, the entire process of human capital and capability development falls to these personnel departments of MDAs, largely because the responsibility for human capital planning within the Service is poorly defined (Olaopa, 2012). Unfortunately, personnel departments might really not be the most ideal arrangement for this role, as human capital has profound implications for the effectiveness of any organisation, including the civil service.

5.3.2 Recruitment and selection

As highlighted in chapter two (2.2), one of the defining characteristics of the civil service in all contexts, is the principle of selection by merit. If this is indeed the case, then it does not require much analysis to see that the process of recruiting and selecting of civil servants plays a pivotally important role in shaping the effectiveness and performance of the civil service. In the context of the Nigerian federal service, the preferred terminology for recruitment and selection is 'staffing' or 'appointment' and is defined as 'the process of recruiting those who are not already part of the FSC to fill a particular job role' (OHCSF, 2010).

As already pointed out, the responsibility for appointing federal civil servants is constitutionally vested in the Federal Civil Service Commission (FSCS). In practice however, authority for appointment of junior staff to posts graded GL\textsuperscript{26} 01 to 06 is usually

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\textsuperscript{26} There are three main cadres in the public service, these are classified by their grade levels, depicting the hierarchy; Junior staff (GL\textsuperscript{26} 01- 06), Senior (GL 07- 12) Management (GL 13 -17). The management cadre is also referred to as the directorate cadre (Briggs, 2007).
delegated by the Commissions to ministries and extra ministerial offices, while it reserves the right to exclusively appoint the entry grades of senior staff on GL 07 - 10. Appointments to posts graded GL 12 - 14 and GL 15 - 17 (management and directorate cadres) are done directly by the Commission in consultation with the head of the federal civil service, as the need arises and in response to advertised vacancies (FRN, 2000: Rule 12102). This is clearly stated in Section 170 of 1999 Constitution and is meant to guard against possible delays (Yaro, 2014).

Whether for junior or senior posts or for managerial or directorate level, the appointment of federal civil servants in Nigeria is guided by three major factors: availability of vacancies, qualifications of the potential applicants, and the Federal Character Policy (OHSCF, 2010). Federal character or *quota system* in local parlance, is both a constitutional and emotive matter, which is crucial in determining appointments into the federal civil service. The policy which is enshrined in section 14 (3) and (4) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, states that:

> The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also common national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall not be predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies.

Without going into much details, the antecedents of the policy can be traced to the colonial period when recruitment into the Nigerian Armed Forces was processed through ‘quota system’ to ensure that no one particular section of the country dominated the military (Akinwale, 2014). In a heterogonous society like Nigeria, it is almost impossible to evade the issue of representation in the public service, because ‘when an agency is dominated by individuals from one ethnic group, the un-represented groups are likely to cry foul, and for good reasons too’ (Balogun, 2003: 11). The implementation of the policy is constitutionally vested in the Federal Character Commission (FCC). The main mandate of the Commission in respect to recruitment into the federal service is contained in Part IV of the (Act) establishing the Commission. Box 5.1 outlines the mandate and the basic principles that should theoretically guide the application of the Policy in relation to recruitment into the NFSC, as stated in the Federal Character Commission Handbook (1996).

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27 Available vacancies are usually declared by MDAs and forwarded to the civil service commission through the office of the head of civil service of the federation. Awareness for such vacancies are publicized through advertisements and notices in at least two national dailies. The specific qualifications and skills required for various categories are presented in the schemes of service (2000).
Box 5.1: The mandate of the FCC and the principles guiding Federal character in Nigeria

i. The Federal Character Commission is mandated by Section 4 (1)(g) of its Enabling Statute to ensure, inter alia, that all Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments, Parastatals and other Government Agencies have a clear criteria including conditions to be fulfilled and comprehensive guidelines on the procedure for determining eligibility as well as the procedure for employment into the Public Service.

ii. In view of the above, and in order to ensure smooth implementation of the Federal Character Policy on employment into the Federal Public Service without in any way compromising merit, the Commission requires all employers of labour in the federal civil service to comply with extant regulations of the Commission on employment.

iii. The purpose of the guidelines is to streamline the selection process, such that the best and most competent persons from each state of the Federation are employed thereby ensuring that the principle of merit is upheld. Accordingly, the following process shall be followed in filling all existing vacancies, particularly at the entry level in all Public Service Establishments, nationwide:

iv. Vacancies should be advertised in at least two newspapers circulating nationally, giving prospective candidates, a minimum of six weeks to apply. This is to enable wide dissemination of the information so as to attract the best materials from all parts of the country.

v. Where vacancies are advertised on the internet, this should not, for now, preclude similar advert in two newspapers aforesaid and prospective candidates should still be given six weeks to apply. This requirement is necessary given the low level of internet access by a vast majority of the populace.

vi. Employers of labour should ensure that they have comprehensive job description for each vacant position as well as comprehensive academic and cognate experience required for filling such vacancies.

vii. Only candidates who have met the basic minimum requirements for each position should be shortlisted for interview or other selection process. Under no condition should an unqualified candidate be shortlisted purportedly on the basis of federal character. However, once a candidate has met the basic minimum requirements, he should not be penalised in favour of another or other candidates who might possess higher qualifications but should qualify to compete for positions reserved for his State.

viii. Qualified and competent candidates are to be shortlisted for interview or other selection mode on State basis, and drawn as much as possible, in equal number from each State of the Federation, indicating also, their Local Government Area. A quarter of the number of candidates from each State shall be drawn from the Federal Capital Territory.

ix. The best and most competent candidates from each State of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory shall be shortlisted to compete for positions reserved for their respective States.

x. Where an aptitude test or any other type of written or oral test is required as part of the selection process, the compilation of results should be on State by State basis, to enable the best from each State and the Federal Capital Territory be employed.

xi. The list of shortlisted candidates as well as the final list of candidates offered employment shall be forwarded to the Commission.

xii. To ensure compliance with the above selection process, the Commission requests for representation as observer at all recruitment interview for prospective employees.

xiii. Accordingly, it shall be notified of and invited to such recruitment exercise at least two weeks in advance. It shall be the responsibility of all Permanent Secretaries/Chief Executives of all Ministries/Extra-Ministerial Departments, Parastatals, Agencies and other Federal Government Establishments to ensure compliance with the above process.


As can be inferred from Box 5.1, the basic idea of the federal character policy is to ensure an even representation of the many diverse nationalities that make up Nigeria. It could be argued then that theoretically there is nothing wrong with the policy, as it is intended to help manage Nigeria’s complex heterogeneity and promote diversity, by ensuring fair representation of all the states, ethnic and sectional interests in the federal civil service. But whilst this might be the case, the main issue lie in its application as I discuss in section 5.5.
5.3.3 Training and development

Training and development (T&D) is particularly important for the Nigerian federal civil service, considering that the gains associated with the process, including improved performance and increased efficiency that accompany employee development, are central to improvements in service delivery. Bringing together this duality of function and purpose, it is not hard to understand why it is important to link individual needs with T&D interventions that support the achievement of organisational strategic objectives, especially in the public service (Crawshaw et al., 2014).

Indeed, in the specific case of Nigeria where diversity exerts tremendous influence on politics and public administration, the capacity to increase the benefits and reduce the costs of this heterogeneity, especially within the civil service constitutes a critical challenge. Therefore, training and developing civil servants in such a way that they have the knowledge and skills required to cope with this challenge, as well as the challenges of the changing context of the civil service, have become a crucial need (Bergenhenegouwen, 1990). Civil servants also enjoy extrinsic and intrinsic rewards engendered by skill development and improved performance (McGuire, 2014).

Perhaps, it is this understanding that underscores the current effort to shift from the managerial culture of ‘organisational-led’ training to ‘development oriented’ approaches, including continuous professional development (CPD) in the Federal Civil Service. As provision 020702(a) of Public Service Rule (2008) states, ‘there shall be structured and sustained training for career progression in the service including continuous professional training and development’. This shift in approach is also reflected in the contents of the National Training Policy (2013: 8), which states that its mission is:

To encourage a learning culture, providing learning and development opportunities for all Public Servants that will produce internally self-reliant and self-sufficient human capital capable of meeting the dynamic challenges of building a progressive, economically and socially advanced Nigeria.

The document further states that T&D in the NFSC should be geared towards:

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28 Over the past recent years, there has been something of a ‘language turn’ in contemporary discourses on training to increasingly emphasise the primacy of learning over training (Sloman, 2001). However, while I acknowledge this primacy, considering that the intended outcome of any training is learning (Mathews et al., 2004), I have nonetheless decided to stick with the term ‘training’ here. This is in line with current usage in the Nigerian federal service and the wording of the policy concerning this matter in the Nigerian context (i.e. The National Training Policy).
Continuous process of strengthening the abilities of job holders to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives and understand and deal with development needs and other related challenges in a broad, systematic and sustained manner.

The objectives of the Policy clearly encapsulate the need for human capacity development through T&D and CPD. In this regard, the policy claims that its main goals are to:

- Provide a working environment where continuous learning and development takes place.
- Ensure that employees are supported and enabled to meet the changing demands of the Public Service and its service users.
- Ensure that the Public Service achieves its strategic objectives.
- Facilitate employee development at work and/or personal development through appropriate assistance to broaden, deepen and thereby further enhance their existing' skills base (National Training Policy document, 2013: 9).

These goals are in line with the various public service reforms which have sought to use training and development as an important strategy for enhancing professionalism in the civil service and making it operationally effective and more result-oriented. T&D is also to serve as one of the criteria for assessing the suitability of officers for promotion. Towards this end, the Revised Guideline for Training in the Federal Civil Service (2004), states that the general principles to guide T&D efforts in ministries and extra-ministerial departments are supposed to be strategic and needs-based. Table 5.1, lists these generic principles.
Table 5.1: Generic guiding principles for training and development in the NFSC

i. Officers should, as a first step, be posted to areas of their expertise before they are sponsored on training programmes that will enable them function more effectively.

ii. Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments should conduct an in-house induction course within four weeks of appointment. The Manpower Development Office of the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation should organise Centralised Induction Course for officers recruited or promoted into grade level 07-10 within three months of their appointments or promotion.

iii. Officers should not be released for or sponsored on courses simply to enable them acquire certificates and qualifications. Rather, training should be systematic, progressional and aimed primarily at developing skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for performing specific schedule of duties.

iv. On-the-job and in-house methods of training should be used extensively by ministries and departments, especially in the training of junior staff as they tend to be cheaper and more effective.

v. After training, an officer should be deployed to a post to which the training undertaken applies so that maximum use of the skills and knowledge acquired can be made and the service can derive full benefits from the investment made in the officer.

vi. In designing and/or identifying courses, efforts should be made to keep course periods to the shortest possible time within which the set objectives can be achieved.

vii. 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.

viii. All in-house training programmes conducted by Ministries/Extra-Ministerial Departments should include in their curricula topics on National Ethics and Anti-corruption Drive in the Public Service. In this regard, the Services’ Code of Conduct Bureau is readily available for use.


In addition to these generic guidelines listed in Table 5.1, the National Training Policy (2013) also recommends a competency-based approach to T&D in the FCS, at least nominally. Ideally, this approach should involve ‘identifying the particular skills and competencies needed by departments and individuals and providing the necessary framework and resources to enable these skills and competencies to be developed’ (National Training Policy document, 2013: 11).

A fundamental principle of the competency framework then, is that each job shall be performed by the person who has the best matching set of skills, because improved organisational efficiency results when the right people are in the right jobs with the right skills and abilities (NTP, 2013). From the foregoing analysis, it seems reasonable to suggest
that the administrators of the NFCS are not oblivious of the centrality of T&D to the effectiveness of the Service, but again the problem lies in the practical side.

5.3.4 Management and leadership development

Effective management and leadership is key to an organisation’s success (CIPD, 2014b). This means that developing managers and leaders to help sustain their performance at the highest levels possible has become a particularly crucial issue for the NFCS in an age of the learning organisation (McGuire, 2014). Despite this recognition however, it is rather surprising that very few studies has attempted to examine this issue in the context of the Nigerian public sector and the NFCS in particular. This domain is arguably a valuable research area for further inquiry.

Having said that, there are a range of different approaches that may be appropriate to the development of management and leadership capability, including: formal, informal, planned, experiential, collective, individual and etc. (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010). In the context of the NFCS and as illustrated in Figure 5.4, the approach adopted appears to be largely formal, planned, ‘taught’ and individual-based. This much was highlighted in the National Training Policy (2013: 18) document, which states that ‘different categories of public servants shall receive three main types of training over the span of their career’: induction, in-service and pre-retirement training.

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29 While I recognise that management development and leadership development can be treated as two distinct, albeit interrelated processes, I have nonetheless decided two treat both concepts simultaneously here, because of space and also in line with current understanding in the NFCS.
Figure 5.4: Approaches to management and leadership development in the NFCS

Source: Developed from ideas contained in the National Training Policy (2013: 18 – 27).

The emphasis of management and leadership development practices in the NFCS also appears to be largely on training rather than on learning. Perhaps, this is why the National Training Policy document (2013: 18 - 19) for instance, states that:

Within the prescriptions of the competency catalogue to be developed by the Office of the Head of Service of the Federal all public servants shall receive training that will enable them perform excellently on their jobs…Managerial and Technical Training shall be provided to meet the proficiency levels within each competency area required by a job holder to successfully discharge the duties and responsibilities of his or her job.

It is rather curious that the NFCS has continued to focus on formal training as the main strategy for developing its managers and leaders, when current trends are increasingly towards learning and the utilisation of a variety of methods, including a mix of information learning and training activities such as coaching and mentoring, action research, e-learning, knowledge management and organisational strengthening (Pearson, 2011). Of course training remains an important element in developing effective managers and leaders, but
there is now a growing recognition that it has not been as effective as desired, and that human capability development is ‘more than the transfer of knowledge and skills to individuals’ (Pearson 2011: 8). This argument is based on the realisation that while training is useful in providing technical skills, it appears insufficient for deeper capacity development, as it does not necessarily transform people or organisations (Lucas, 2014; Pearson, 2011).

One possible fad in management and leadership development in the NFCS is the ‘competency-based’ approach to almost everything in the Service. Drawing on the rise of competency-based management and more recently competency-based ‘HRM/D’ practice, current policies for management and leadership capability development in the NFCS, now claim that competency-based training and development is its preferred approach in the ‘transformation’ of its leaders and managers. According to the NTP document (2013: 13), this resort to the ‘competency-based approach’ is because:

To eliminate the guesswork, subjectivity and one-size fits all approach to training and development of employees for optimum performance, it has become imperative that the federal public service adopts a competency-based approach to training and development. This approach is based on the principle that organizational performance will result from having the right people, in the right jobs with the right skills and abilities. It is basically a needs-based and outcome-based approach to public service training and education.

Although attractive, the basic problem with the competency-based approach, is that there is no competency model that can be applied to build the ideal manager/leader, largely because ‘the contribution of knowledge, skills and experiences is difficult to isolate from other contextual factors’ and this presents problems with quantification and categorisation (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010: 374).

As Binney et al. (2005) point out, the ability to judge when particular skills and approaches are relevant and desirable in a given context is key to efficient performance in organisations, and the public service is not an exception. Following Binney (2005), I argue therefore that management and leadership in the NFCS should not be reduced to any single list of competencies. This is in realisation that effective management and leadership happen when individuals engage completely with a situation. The ‘magic’ that can transform a list

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30 Binney et al. (2005: 10–11) have argued that ‘there is no competency model that can be applied to build the ideal leader. Leaders are effective when they are able to bring how they really are to the task they have chosen: when they engage fully with others, when they retain the capacity to think clearly under huge pressure, when they recognise self-doubt as a powerful aid, when they accept that ‘good enough’ is often a whole better than perfection, when they work with others ‘as they are’ rather than expecting blind loyalty. Leaders command respect because they are real: passionate, hard-working and committed, but not perfect.’
of skills from ‘competence’ to ‘excellence’ is often to do with the essence of the individual and how that person engages with the context in which they find themselves, the people with whom they are working, and with themselves.

5.3.5 Talent development and management

As already highlighted in this current text (refer to chapter 3, 3.7), contemporary approaches to human capital and capability development contain much rhetoric about talent development and management. In this rhetoric, ‘systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of those individuals with high potential who are of particular value to an organisation’ are seen as crucial (CIPD, 2010: 2). The effect of this development has been the privileging of talent management as key to organisational ‘survival’ (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010).

Despite the increasing popularity of TM as key to human capital and capability development, the issue of TM is still scantly spoken about in the NFCS. The evidence from this study indicates that there is no ‘formal’ talent development and management framework in the NFCS. As one senior manager told me:

   We have policies but we have not come up and tagged anyone talent management policy…Just as we have training policies, we could also have well documented talent policies. But for now we don’t have outright policy on that.

   (Fieldwork data, 2013).

Although TM is not explicitly mentioned, the availability of the right ‘talents’ is nonetheless, considered important to the ‘transformation’ of the NFCS. One interviewee aptly puts it this way:

   If you look at the public service, their allowances, and the structures and other things differ from the core private sectors. These are aimed at attracting certain talents to a certain critical sectors that are needed.

   (Fieldwork data, 2013)

The Revised Federal Civil Service Handbook (2001: 50), also acknowledges that the ‘prevalence of serious capacity gap at all levels’ and the ‘non-articulation of talent management strategy and succession planning to develop future leaders’ are key challenges confronting the NFCS. It appears from the received narratives that the absence of a TM framework in the NFCS is rather deliberate and is engendered largely by a pervading misconception among senior management about what TM really is. A very high ranking
civil servant for example, had this to say when I asked him to describe his role in helping manage his organisational talents:

Let me clear the concept of talented people. The concept of talented people emanated from the issue of high flyers. High flyers are people that seem to be competent and when they join organisation they don't stay long, but move to other organization. That is the concept of high flyers. It’s in order to retain the high flyers that the issue of talent management now comes into play. But for us in the Centre here, what we normally tell management is that it’s better to make your organisation employer of choice. Employer of choice in the sense that you should be able to attract the calibre of staff you really want and you should be able to do much to keep them.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

A similar view was echoed by another senior civil servant who was rather dismissive of the whole idea of TM and questions its utility and difference with existing HR bundles. As s/he puts it:

Let me say this that talent management comes as a result of prevailing problems. For instance, if you carry out a study on an organization and the labour turnover of skilled or competent staff is high; the issue of talent management now comes in. Now if the conventional public service is analysed, we are likely to see more challenges of career planning/management…But the problems could be manifested in various ways. And one of the areas the problem could manifest if you think of talent management like I said at the beginning; the issue of competent people comes in and they don’t stay, then whatever terminology we choose to describe it does not make any difference. But if you go to some other organizations, you may have an ageing work force, it is still management problem. We now have to approach it as an ageing problem by thinking of how you could recruit young ones for replacement and succession planning…Whether it is talent management, career planning and any other intervention, you must provide the link. But you may at a particular point in time, have one problem manifesting.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

It also appears that there is some confusion between TM and other HRM/D practices, particularly succession planning going by what one interviewee said:

When we even talk of talent management in an organisation, we also have to back it up with succession planning. Because when you are talking about talent management, the goal is to retain the staff as much as possible. But you should also have backups, then you have succession planning that, Yes, this my competent staff, supposing he is leaving, what happens? In other words, the competent person will also be training other people. When you look at the whole thing, all is about effective management of human resources.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).
Therefore, instead of any strategic effort at TM, managers and top administrators in the NFCS claim that there are more concerned with being an employer of choice. This approach according to one director is because TM will be dysfunctional in an organisational context that is an ‘employer of choice’, given that:

…the highly skilled man power is highly mobile, in other words, they can easily change employers and that is why the issue of talent management comes in. For real talent management you have to be employer of choice. When you an employer of choice, your people will stay. Organisation that are employers of choice have their own problem (nobody wants to leave)...I can even assure you that if you install talent management practices into an organization for a long time it will bring a new problem, another challenge will come. For instance, if you go to some organizations, they will tell you okay you can go on retirement and have your one year, two years leave. These are organisations that are employer of choice and people don't plan to leave such organisation and they are being forced to leave through that incentive.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

From the foregoing analysis, a number of assumptions can be made regarding TM practice in the NFCS:

- It appears that there is a pervading confusion and insufficient understanding among top management about the meaning and ‘true’ purpose of TM.
- TM is largely not viewed as a viable tool for organisational transformation.
- TM is narrowly conceptualised by top management and seen as nothing more than succession planning or career planning.

The implications of this rather limited understanding of TM to human capital and capability development in the NFCS are wide-ranging and profound. Given the issues associated with skills gap and skilled emigration in Nigeria documented earlier, I argue here that the absence of TM framework, is a critical missing link in the NFCS’ quest for effective capacity development.

This argument is bolstered by the realisation that while succession planning or career planning are admittedly central to the idea of TM, the concept is much more than that and comprises ‘a more comprehensive and integrated bundle of activities, the aim of which is to secure the flow of talent in an organization, bearing in mind that talent is a major corporate resource’ (Armstrong, 2009: 580). Indeed, as previously highlighted in Chapter 3, issues relating to TM will continue to be central to the human capital and capability development agenda and there is arguably a case for the NFCS to develop and implement a TM and development strategy, which not only focuses on attracting the right people, but also
provides them with the right environment to utilise their skills – a capability approach to TM and to people development more broadly (Downs & Swailes, 2013).

5.4 The challenges of human capital and capability development in the NFCS: Limitations of current approaches and emerging issues

Looking critically at the general guiding principles and policies for human capability development in the NFSC discussed in preceding section, some of them appear relatively well articulated in theoretical terms, but the main issue lies in the practical side. For instance, the federal character policy is supposed to guide fair and merit-based representational recruitment and selection into the NFCS, in practice however, the policy seems to have been subverted by administrators who have chosen to interpret it largely as a crude form of ethnic balancing.

This development has arguably resulted in group cohesion and elite manipulation leading to the recruitment of some bureaucrats without the prerequisite qualifications, experience and skills into the federal civil service and the promotion of same persons to prominent positions such as Directors and Permanent Secretaries (Adamolekun, 1999b). As one interview respondent laments:

We don’t run a merit-based public sector. And because you don’t have a merit based public service, you discover that some persons from certain part of the country can get into the Service not necessarily based on their qualification, but based on where they come from.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

The situation described above, arguably have serious implications for the efficiency of the NFCS, as it erodes professionalism and can lead to a demotivated workforce. Perhaps, this is why many, especially Southerners have therefore, called for the abrogation of quota system in the federal civil service, arguing that the policy is a discriminatory tool for recruitment and at odds with the merit principle, which is supposed to be an underlining feature of any civil service. Despite these calls however, the federal character policy, still enjoys a lot of political support, especially from those in the advantaged areas – mainly the Northern states of Nigeria, who see it as tool for representative bureaucracy.

Whatever the case, what is hardly debatable, is that the politicization of the federal character principle, has negatively affected the merit principle that is supposed to guide the recruitment and selection of federal civil servants in Nigeria. This is so, because politicians have largely ‘hijacked’ the implementation of the policy and tend to give their cronies the
opportunity of employment in the civil service at the detriment of the merit principle in the Service (Akinwale, 2014). A recent editorial comment in one national newspaper aptly captures this argument thus:

There is a convincing argument that though the federal character principle is backed by the constitution, it has become outdated. Every part of the country now has competent people that can compete for important public positions in the land. It is therefore puzzling that for just immediate political gains, certain individuals and groups are ready to abjure the provisions of the nation’s constitution in favour of what appears to be a selfish agenda.


Therefore, while federal character is arguably a well thought out policy, as it is meant to promote diversity and equal representation of Nigerians in the federal civil service, its continued utility as recruitment and selection policy appears untenable and questionable. It is my contention therefore, that the policy is an invalid selection method, because it negates the principle of selection by merit, which is one of the defining characteristics of any civil service.

It also goes without saying that the issue of diversity does not end with recruitment and selection of civil servants, but importantly extends to the day-to-day management of interpersonal and inter-group relations in the civil service (Balogun, 2003). It makes more sense therefore, to expose senior bureaucrats to the appropriate sensitivity training, so that networks of relations would be properly managed, instead of focusing on quota system in recruitment as a diversity management strategy, to the detriment of merit-based approaches to the selection of qualified civil servants.

It is also the case that deployment of personnel in the NFCS has not always taken into consideration their areas of specialisation and expertise as stipulated in the Service’s training manual, neither has selection for training always based on the espoused competency approach. The evidence from the received narratives suggests that there are officers that are sponsored for training based on their connection to some powerful and influential individuals in the Service and/or in the society. As one of the interview respondents succinctly puts it:

There are supposed to be training guidelines, but we have discovered that training is not given to the people that need it most and that is the problem….The most unfortunate thing is that this [problem] is supposed to be controlled and checked by the management, but they are the same people starting it. Imagine somebody who has spent about twenty five
years in service and is due to retire soon going for an international or local training that is geared for capacity development, when there are people who have so many years to serve who need to update their knowledge and experience to take to work and are not sent for training. But because this person is ‘on top’ [well connected or in a decision making position], they send them on training and by the time they come back, there are retired within a year or less. It’s just for the money. What is the point of going for training then, so we discover it is more of an ambitious thing.  

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

What is more, the issue of systematic and ‘progressional’ T&D is still not a culture in the federal service, resulting in a fragmented approach based largely on guesswork or offered merely as welfare inducements, whereby people are nominated for training as a form of reward for loyalty to their bosses and not necessarily because they need such training to better perform in their roles (NTP, 2013). The Revised Civil Service Handbook (2010: 49) blames this situation on a number of factors including:

i. Unavailability of reliable data on training needs.

ii. Officers negotiating their own training without regard to organizational goals.

iii. Lack of monitoring mechanisms for determining the capacity of trained personnel to contribute meaningfully to organizational goals.

iv. Inadequate linkages between training output and the duty post.

v. Over-centralization of decision-making systems, resulting in monopolization of power and decision-making authority by a few at the top hierarchy of the Service.

These factors perhaps, help explain the absence of any talent development and management framework in the NFCS. It also largely explains the haphazard nature of human capital development in the Service, which is largely devoid of a consistent methodology in clarifying key T&D issues including questions regarding: who is to be trained and in what? By whom and how are they to be trained and how should results of training be evaluated? (NTP, 2013).

One would have expected that the adoption of the much touted ‘competency-based’ approach to T&D would have a least helped tackle some of these issues. Yet, the evidence suggests that this has yet to happen, as the model appears to only exist on paper, without much practical value. As I was told by one mid-level manager when I probed further on an answer he gave about training in his department:

I have never seen anybody doing needs assessment in terms of the skills we’re lacking, so where would the list of the required skills come from? Once in a while, they send in consultants from God knows where to come
and train. Those ones just come with their own list (list of competencies) without any imputes from the workers and collect their money and leave. If they say there are competencies for civil servants, maybe it’s true, but I have never seen any. Maybe it exists on paper, but I doubt if many people here know of anything like that.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

This lack of a systematic approach to needs or capacity assessment and to human capital planning more broadly, creates a situation where a lot of time and resources are wasted by the NFCS implementing T&D interventions that do not meet specific organisational needs, because there are no linkages between training and the competencies required for effective job performance in specific job roles. This development is particularly worrying, considering that T&D interventions that do not meet specific needs can compromise the capability of an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives (McGuire, 2014). In the context of the NFCS, this means the presence of certain deficiencies in respect to the qualities and skills of its management and leadership base when compared with other public services at the global level. At a wider societal level, it also implies the inability of government to achieve its goals of providing a better life for its citizenry as intended in various developmental initiatives.

This development is arguably the result of the breakdown in the institutional capacities and formal mechanisms for identifying, planning and implementing HCD initiatives. More broadly, it is also symptomatic of fundamental problems related to growth in the Service and the failure of the institutions responsible for human capital development to transform their systems in line with emerging challenges. Despite the existence of the OHCSF and NFCS and other institutional frameworks for HCD as discussed in the preceding section, it appears that there has been relatively little attention to the pressing need to manage, anticipate and plan for the growth of the Federal Civil Service. The absence of any comprehensive human capital and capability development plans and the uncoordinated and sometimes, arbitrary approach to people development in the Service are clear indications of this lack of coordination.

With the benefit of hindsight, it could also be argued that the uncoordinated approach to human capital and capability development arose largely because of the reliance on traditional ‘personnel’ departments, which see their role as basically ‘one of general staff maintenance on a short-term basis’ (Olaopa, 2012: 203). Even at this ‘basic’ level, there was little systematic planning for either short-term or long-term human capital needs, to allow for the forecasting of key human capital trends, including turnover and retirement attrition rates, anticipated vacancies and projected training needs.
Staff increases are calculated to equal budget allotments or for patronage, rather than for any functional corporate reason, such as the need for increased analytical skills, inadequacy in certain skills area and so on. The implication of this is that new employee requests are never matched with the size of the functional targets in order to derive maximum utility for the tax payer (Olaopa, 2012). This uncoordinated approach to human capital and capability development has also arguably engendered a number of emerging human capability challenges that if not urgently tackled, could further erode the capacity of the NFCS:

- Leadership crises and pipe-line challenges.
- Unsystematic workforce planning.
- Over staffing.
- Lack of mobility.

Given this, it therefore seems to be beyond doubt, that achieving the goal of effectiveness and efficiency in the NFCS, require serious rethinking of the processes of human capital and capability development. In this regard, HCD should be seen as a continuous and strategic process of strengthening the abilities of civil servants to perform core functions, solve problems and define and achieve developmental and other societal objectives in a broad, coordinated and sustainable manner. Simply put, HCD in the NFCS should be about the promotion of civil service ethos and retention of talent through rigorous and coordinated HCD interventions. But whilst this argument is valid and arguably critical, the evidence from the field study however indicates that talent development and management in the NFCS is almost a non-existing practice and perhaps, constitute the missing link in the Service’s capacity development agenda.

As previously highlighted in Chapter 3, TM is of course one element within HRD, which itself might be considered part of wider human capability development strategies, but it has a key role to play in actively recruiting the workforce of the future, improving the quality of current and future employees and enabling the development of distributed management and leadership (Tarique & Schuller, 2010). Given this, it is plausible to suggest that issues relating to TM will continue to be central to the capability development agenda and there is arguably a case for the NFCS to develop and implement a TM and development strategy, which not only focuses on attracting the right people, but also provides them with the right environment to utilise their skills – a capability approach to TM and to people development more broadly (Downs & Swailes, 2013). This argument derives from the understanding that:
The breath of competencies required in the public sector is different from that required in the private sector. Specifically, public servants require more than technical skills; they require a broad spectrum of knowledge, skills, abilities, plus firm grounding in public-sector values and ethics.

Second, the kind of learning that applies to public servants – that is adult learning – is distinct from youth learning. Adult learning builds upon a lifetime of experiences (CAPAM, 2005; cited in Olaopa, 2011: 3 – 4).

At the heart of effective human capital and capability development in the NFCS then, should be a recognition that every job role requires a unique set of knowledge, skills, attitude and experience, which should be possessed by the civil servant filling such role. Simply put, this implies a strategic approach to human capital and capability development in the NFCS.

5.5 Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has critically analysed the nature and dynamics of the human capital challenges facing the NFCS and brought the focus on the critical skills and talent shortages that currently face the Service. As I argued in this chapter, this problem arose for a number of reasons, two of which appear rather crucial, viz: the disproportionate focus on economic growth and inherent constraints in Nigeria’s educational system. Inadequacies in education and skills development and unfavourable socio-economic climate has created a number of human capital challenges, including skills-gaps and talent crunch, which impact on the quality of the available labour pool from where the NFCS must recruit from. In the context of this study, this means an overriding need to develop the human resources of the NFCS, and to do this predominantly within work contexts (Maikudi, 2012; Adewumi, 2012).

Paradoxically however, instead of fulfilling this role, the Nigeria federal civil service seems to have systematically divested itself of this responsibility, as manifested in its inability to develop a coordinated HCD and management strategy within the Service. This is not very surprising, considering Jackson’s (2004), argument that HCD in Nigeria – as in many other DCs, can best be understood as a complex historical dynamic that has created a number of paradoxes overtime. In the context of the NFCS, it would appear that the main paradox is essentially between the nature of its operational environment (i.e. Nigeria’s political economy), on the one hand, and the critical need to develop adequate human capacity in the Service on the other (Jackson, 2004). These paradoxes need to be dialectically understood.

31 Following Garrick (1998), it is important to stress that the term dialectic here is not used in the Hegelian sense of a synthesis of opposing tendencies in the thesis and antithesis. In this regard, the term ‘dialectical’ needs to be distinguished from the conventional Hegelian and Marxian usages of dialectic which would relate human capital development to a privileged ‘system’ of needs and societal class divisions. I have instead drawn...
if the challenges of reforming the civil service and rethinking approaches to its human capital development are to be understood in any meaningful context.

It also appears from what was said in this chapter that issues of skills development has become a taken for granted development discourse agenda in Nigeria, such that the managers/administrators of the NFCS are yet to fully understand the centrality of human capital and capability development to organisational transformation. Perhaps, this explains why policies and discourses governing the development and utilization of the human resources in the NFCS have largely failed to grapple with the realities of contemporary human capability challenges facing the modern Civil Service, which is why present approaches appear largely arbitrary and still driven mainly by traditional HRM systems. As discussed here, this development has led to a situation where critical organisational processes including recruitment and T&D, remains largely unsystematic and driven by other mundane considerations apart from organisational needs and/or individual merit.

This state of affairs is not sustainable and the human resource function must urgently transform itself, in order to facilitate compliance with the merit principle in the Nigerian federal civil service. However, whilst the transformation of the HRM/D system is important and indeed critical, it is just one aspect of the story – I address this in Chapter 7. The other aspect which is the focus of the next chapter, concerns my earlier argument that the character of the civil service is the product of its operational and environmental contexts. Taken further, this implies that the efficiency of the civil service is linked to the character of the State.

Consistent with Olaopa (2012), the main issue in this regard, is to determine whether a State is an enabling one or not. By enabling, I am referring to a capable state: a state which has the capacity to provide an atmosphere conducive for the operations of its institutions, including the civil service. In the context of this research, the critical question that then logically follows is: to what extent has the Nigerian state been able to provide an enabling environment for the development of a competent and efficient civil service?

Addressing this question requires a critical examination of the character of the Nigerian state, including its institutions, structures and rules of the game, with a view of determining the extent to which contextual issues have promoted or inhibited efforts at civil service capability development reforms. The pivot of the next chapter is therefore hinged on the on post-structuralism’s theory of power, which represents a major departure from both Marxist and Freudian understandings of power.
centrality of one of the main research question that this study set out to illuminate: How and to what extent has the features of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic structures, systems, processes or skill-sets impacted on civil service human capital and capability development? (refer to Chapter 1, 1.4). In exploring these issues I synthesise interview data with documents from the NFCS and relevant literatures on Nigeria’s political economy.
Chapter 6

Structures, institutions and rules of the game: A critical assessment of contextual obstacles to human capital development reforms in the NFCS

Public administrations are embedded in a complex, interdependent system. This system incorporates not only the bureaucratic apparatus as a whole, but also political institutions and social, economic, and political interests more broadly.


6.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of this study as stated in Chapter 1, is to help reframe the discourse and build theory in explaining how civil service human capital and skills development can be furthered in SSA amidst contextual constraints, using the Nigerian experience (refer to Chapter 1, 1.4). In doing this, it is important to reemphasize as already highlighted in Chapter 3 that development policies are largely influenced by the contexts in which they are developed. Therefore, rethinking any aspect of the development process, including human capital development, arguably requires a critical understanding of the historical, structural and institutional contexts within which development policies are constructed and experienced; as well as the nature of the policy process, the pervading dominant discourses and the interest of the actors involved in the formulation and implementation of policies (refer to Chapter 2, 2.5.2).

I have already discussed Nigeria’s policy contexts as well as the discourses of human capital and capability development in the last chapter. It is to structural and institutional issues, the nature of the policy process and the interests/incentives that motivate actors that I now turn to in this current chapter. This approach is consistent with the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3 and becomes especially critical in the light of Moncrieffe and Luttrell’s (2005: 3), argument that ‘effective development programmes must be grounded in an understanding of the economic, social, political and institutional factors that drive, or block, change within a specific country or region and this requires thinking more strategically about change’.

It is precisely in this regard that this chapter critically explores the interplay and positioning effects between people, the environment and the state in the development of human capital
within the NFCS. In doing this, the chapter analyses some of the underlying and sometimes implicit structural, quasi-structural and institutional discourses that have influenced and continues to influence the contents and implementation trajectories of policies for human and institutional CD in the NFCS. The chapter also critically analyses the interests and incentives that influence the decisions of governing elites and other powerful interest groups in Nigeria, in order to understand how favourable policies for rethinking human capital development in the NFCS can be (re)constructed. The current chapter is therefore, immediately connected with the previous one, and is intended to help refine understanding about how the standards for CD policies are negotiated within the NFCS, as a background to identifying realistic strategies for the rethinking approaches to human capital and capacity development in the NFCS.

I have approached this chapter from a discursive-thematic angle, based on the synthesis of semi-structured interview data and relevant literatures on Nigeria’s political economy. The chapter is structured into two broad parts. Part one explores the discourse on institutional and structural constraints, with a view to understand the main contextual issues that influence the contents and implementation trajectories of capability development policies in the NFCS. Part two considers the discourse on power, patronage and incentives in relation to the policy process in NFCS.

6.2 How and to what extent has Nigeria’s contextual features impacted on civil service human capital and capability development?

Consistent with the theoretical framework developed in chapter three, it is important to recognise that rethinking any aspect of the social process requires a critical understanding of the structural, institutional and socio-political contexts within which policies are constructed and experienced. This is particularly important in the context of this thesis, when one considers Larbi’s (2006) argument that most of the contemporary problems faced by many SSA countries, including Nigeria, revolve around contextual constraints to development.

The findings from this study appear to support this assertion and one of the dominant discourses that emerged from the received narratives, suggest that efforts at improving the capabilities of the civil service in Nigeria have largely failed as a result of embedded structural and institutional constraints. This finding is consistent with that of Heymans and Pycroft (2003)\(^\text{32}\) as well as with Utomi et al.’s (2007) work on the political economy of

\(^{32}\) This was a report prepared for the DFID, as part of its *Drivers of Change in Nigeria* project.
reform in Nigeria, who argue in their different works that any effort at policy reforms in Nigeria needs to be structural with an institutional dimension.

As already highlighted in chapter three, structural features of a country are factors and processes that are potentially causally linked to institutions, albeit in complex and dynamic ways (Heymans & Pycroft, 2003). Some of the identified dominant structural and institutional features that appear to seriously impact on human capability development in Nigeria’s civil service include: natural resource endowments and the structure of the country’s economy; ethnic composition; the skills base and human resources; distribution of income and wealth (inequalities), institutional voids and declining public service institutional capacity. I now begin to critically explore some of these structural and institutional features in relation to capability development efforts in the NFSC, in the sub-sections that follow. For analytical purpose and to ensure lucidity, I have grouped these issues into two broad discourse themes: structural constraints discourse and institutional voids and low institutional capacity discourse.

6.2.1 Structural constraints discourse: A non-diversified economy dominated by oil

Since Nigeria’s first crude export in 1958, the oil industry has steadily developed and presently accounts for almost half of GDP, 85 percent of foreign exchange earnings, and about 70 percent of government revenues (UNDP, 2014). To say that oil now profoundly influences the character of the Nigerian state and has led to a dramatic shift in the structure of Nigeria’s political economy, is to merely state the obvious.

However, respondents’ account of the nature of the Nigerian political economy suggest that historically, oil windfall has brought almost no benefits for the ‘ordinary’ Nigerian. Rather, it has heightened inequality, resource competition and the inefficiency of State institutions, including the civil service. As one interviewee aptly puts it:

…My position is that our crude [i.e. Nigeria’s oil] is more of a punishment than a blessing. If you ask me, of what use has it been to us as a nation? Honestly I’ll say nothing. It has only encouraged corruption and the reckless embezzlement of public funds and other vices that guarantees our continued underdevelopment. It has made us lazy. Just look at the agricultural sector, it used to be a major source of national income, but today we cannot even feed ourselves as a nation. We import virtually everything: rice, fish, exercise books, razor blades, even matches, name it, everything!

(Fieldwork data, 2013).
Whereas it could be argued that the above view is somewhat emotive, it should be acknowledged also, that there is some validity in the issues raised. In this sense, it seems that the growth of the oil industry in Nigeria has ensured that the country has been unable to develop any other significant sector of its economy, including the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. Oil wealth arguably offers great potential for stimulating economic growth and improving human development. However, it appears that the political, economic and social effects of oil in Nigeria have made sustained non-oil growth and diversification a difficult prospect, such that most observers are of the view that Nigeria is ‘oil-cursed’ (Utomi et al., 2007).

Despite low labour costs, Nigeria has unexplainably found it difficult to attract significant investment other than in oil, mainly because it has neglected institutional arrangements to support investment in other sectors, including human development. This has led to the development of a mono-economic structure that is unable to flexibly generate incomes, jobs and opportunities. This places the country at a disadvantage, constraining both economic and human capital development. This situation has been described by scholars as the ‘paradox of plenty’.

A growing literature is exploring the empirical robustness and dynamics of this ‘paradox of plenty’ or ‘resource curse theory’, and is searching for possible economic, political and institutional explanations (see for example: Basedau, 2005; Basedau & Lacher, 2006). Among the stronger political and institutional explanations, is that rents generated from minerals (and other easily accessible resources) can either be channelled into the productive economy, or be captured by the ruling elite for personal enrichment and power purposes (Amundsen, 2010).

The later point appears to be the case in Nigeria. The evidence from the literature and data from the interviews conducted, corroborate this claim and suggests that the (mis)management of revenues from oil and the subversion of national wealth by few powerful individuals, appear to be at the heart of Nigeria’s reform implementation and capability development difficulties. As one interviewee laments:

The oil sector has become an enclave of some sort that is reserved for a privileged few [and directly generates few jobs]. Those that have access to oil wells and the enormous wealth that flows from it, control virtually

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33 Several studies have explored these issues, including the DFID’s Drivers of Change (2003) report that draws attention to the links between mismanagement of oil revenues, weak public accountability and lack of growth in the non-oil economy in Nigeria.
everything that happens in government at all levels and even the public service is not spared.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

It could be argued therefore, that Nigeria’s oil wealth has led to a configuration of socio-economic interest groups in which the most influential will in the short term, often feel threatened by productivity and capability-enhancing policies. An interviewee summed up this development thus:

Let me tell you this: it is not everybody that wants to see government institutions and agencies become world class enterprises, as this will spoil their show…By show, I mean the huge benefits that they derive from the weakness of government agencies and the civil service.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

Apart from obstructing reform policy outcomes, the abundance of oil wealth and the non-diversification of the economy, has also created a fundamental problem for the civil service in Nigeria: that of low institutional capacity, discussed later in this chapter. This is consistent with Amundsen’s (2010: 3) argument that ‘rich resources can lead to institutional decay when politicians are obstructing, manipulating, rising above, and/or dismantling the rule of law and the state institutions of control and redistribution, in order to extract the rents and use them for private purposes’. In the context of the Nigeria, the weakness of the federal civil service means that the Service is unable to withstand kleptocratic pressures and the subversion of civil service ethos from those that have access to oil wealth (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Collier 2003).

In all, the lack of diversification of the Nigerian economy has profound implications for civil service CD reform outcomes and to national development more broadly. The lack of a diversified economy has also stunted the development of a private sector based ‘national bourgeoisie’ or middle class, and thus the development of independent civic institutions. This rather unfortunate development arguably negatively impacts on human development and on the patterns of relationship between the State and its citizens, as the next section illustrates.

6.2.2 The breakdown in the institutional relationships between civil society and the State discourse

Another compelling dominant discourse theme that emerged from this study, as a possible explanation for the ineffectiveness of CD efforts in the NFCS, is the nature of State-Society relations. The evidence indicates that relations between state and society are such as to lead
to a lack of sustained citizen pressure on government for improved economic governance and social development. The abundance of oil wealth discussed in the preceding section, means that the government is able to generate its revenues without necessarily taxing its citizens. The availability of this ‘easy wealth’, engenders a seeming lack of accountability politics which paying taxes helps promote, because taxpayers are more likely to hold their leaders accountable for use of their tax money. Amundsen (2010: 7) aptly puts this argument this way:

A sense of social contract, where government is viewed as being responsible for using taxpayers’ money to provide public goods and social services, is lacking in Nigeria. This has led to very low public expectations of government, and very little pressure on government to improve its performance.

Perhaps, this is why recruitment into the public service or political appointments in Nigeria are seen as an avenue to ‘slice one’s share from the national cake’, since an average Nigerian expects nothing from the government. Respondents were unanimous in describing this phenomenon, as the process of ‘sharing the national cake’. A recent contribution to the BBC’s Letters from Africa series by Nigerian writer – Adaobi Nwaubani (2014), succinctly summarises the ‘sharing the national cake’ discourse, implying that it is the foundation of Nigeria’s corruption challenge. See Box 6.1.

**Box 6.1: Sharing Nigeria's cake**

> In Nigeria, news of a person’s success in an election often travels at the speed of lightning, over rivers and mountains and past fields and forests, to his kindred in all corners of the globe. Those with no jobs believe their days of unemployment are coming to an end; those with no education think it will soon pose no barrier to climbing the corporate ladder; those in faraway lands begin plans to return home. Soon, these kith and kin launch their pilgrimage towards the successful candidate. They ring his phone; they send text messages; they knock at his gate. They offer to help his campaign in any way they can; they organise prayer sessions for his victory, usually late at night in his living room.

> In Nigeria, the culture has always been that anyone who gets into power, who suddenly finds himself holding a knife with which to cut the national cake, must invite his clan to both slice and eat it with him. The most unforgivable sin a politician can commit is to forget ‘his people’ after he assumes office. He must ‘remember’ his sisters, brothers, cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws, friends, schoolmates, and so on. Preferably through contracts, appointments and jobs. Failure to do so will lead to taunts and ostracism and on the day his tenure expires, he will find himself completely alone. Long after his funeral, the bitter tongues will continue wagging. Local history will forever record him as having denied his kindred their turn.

> In many parts of the world, it requires years of steady progress for one’s economic circumstances to radically transform. Here in Nigeria, all it takes is an election, and a new political appointment. Suddenly, a child goes from capturing crustaceans in the creeks to an exclusive school in Abuja.

> Voracious kith and kin are the main force behind Nigeria’s corruption problem. Imagine the thousands lined up with outstretched palms behind each political office holder. Try telling them that you intend to reform the system now that it is finally their turn to eat.

With the benefit of hindsight, it could be argued that the situation described above as well as those highlighted in Box 6.1 have been engendered largely by the inability of the Nigerian State to provide the basic needs of the people, which has resulted to stronger allegiances between people and the so called ethnic authorities. A very high ranking civil servant interviewed, describes this process as the ‘our turn syndrome’ and suggest that successive Nigerian governments are to be blamed:

What we are seeing in Nigeria, is a clear case of government irresponsibility, especially from the federal government. How do you explain the level of poverty and rising unemployment, but every day we hear that Millions of dollars is missing either in the NNPC, pension fund or somewhere else? I was listening to news the other day and the number that was being mentioned as unemployed youths was simply mind-bugging. The government has neglected the people, and the people have in turn neglected the government. You can’t really blame them for not wanting to be good followers or if they choose to concentrate their energies on regional or ethnic issues.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

Peter Ekeh’s (1975) model of two publics is therefore, broadly applicable to Nigeria’s situation such that the ‘primordial public’ – links to ethnic, communal and local groups are generally strong, but the ‘civic public’, which comprises government at all levels, is viewed with indifference or distrust by citizens. As Utomi et al. (2007: 15) point out, ‘unequal participation in the two public realms tends to result in institutions of government being used for predatory purposes in order to serve private or communal interests’. This issue is increasingly becoming a major source of impediment to human capital development and the creation of capabilities in the NFCS and one interview commented that:

…what I have also noticed is that a lot of civil servants tend to bring tribalism and ethnicism into the workplace…There was one occasion where I had rightly failed someone in a promotion exam and advised this person to enrol for more training before attempting the exam again, but instead of accepting my candid recommendation, he went and reported me to the permanent secretary claiming that I had failed him, because he is not my brother and that I had passed all the people from my side, which of course was not true; and please don't ask me what the permanent secretary did.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).
This account appears to have been corroborated by another respondent, who told me that:

People automatically feel that you owe them one favour of the other just because both of you are from the same part of the country. A junior colleague worked up to me one day and asked why I had queried him, knowing fully well that both of us are from the same place.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

The repeated periods of military rule in Nigeria, which seriously slowed down the development of strong tradition of public accountability in Nigeria, has only acted to exacerbate these issues, thereby further heightening the weakness of state-society relations in Nigeria (Utomi at al., 2007). The potential created by the return to democracy in 1999, an active and critical media, a literary and intellectual tradition, and a growing number of civil society organisations, still remains only a potential and is yet to materialise.

6.2.3 Institutional voids and low institutional capacity discourse

Perhaps nothing better demonstrates the dynamic interfaces between structures, institutions and rules of the game, than the manner in which Nigeria’s institutional informality has become so powerful and self-perpetuating that it has assumed a somewhat quasi-structural characteristics (Utomi et al., 2007). The findings from this study indicate, that a major problem faced in developing civil service capacity in the NFCS, is the problem of low institutional capacity in the Service, occasioned largely by Nigeria’s institutional voids.

As already pointed out in chapter 2 (refer to 2.5.1), institutions are broadly categorised as formal and informal. Generally speaking, formal institutions are relatively effective in those contexts where there appear to be high institutional capacities for the enforcement of the rule of law, including a sound regulatory framework and an exchange environment that is relatively free from corruption (Khanna & Palepu, 1997; Helmke & Levitsky, 2006). On the other hand, informal institutions seems to become pertinent in those economies where exchange actors and stakeholders anticipate that both regulation and accountability is going to be an issue, due to deficient legal and enforcement frameworks (Mair & Marti, 2009; Khanna & Palepu, 2000).

If we place these descriptions in the context of the NFCS, it appears that formal institutions have become largely inefficient and is unable to reduce uncertainties or enhance the reliability between actors, for reasons ranging from lack of effective regulatory frameworks, inability to enforce contracts and questions concerning the rule of law, which results in
institutional void(s). Civil service institutions with low institutional capability, arguably generates unwanted consequences for society, including the over-exploitation of human and natural resources (UNDP, 2013). In the context of the NFCS this means that the ability of the NFCS to identify problems, develop and evaluate policy alternatives and to operationalise the programmes of government has become seriously impeded. The findings from this study, suggest that these incapacities manifest in several ways, including: legal, regulatory and enforcement voids; poor management practices and indiscipline; and lack of accountability and corruption. One interviewer had this to say when I asked him to describe the kinds of institutional constraints s/he tend to encounter when trying to deliver project objectives:

One of the most serious issues I encounter in delivering project objectives is the inability of several MDAs to adhere to statutory rules and regulations governing the civil service.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

Other respondents’ accounts on the nature of institutional constraints in the NFCS, also suggest that one of the major issues militating against effective capacity development in the Service, is the problem of poor regulation and lack of enforcement. These issues were aptly surmised by one interviewee thus:

We have a real problem of regulation and holding people to account for their actions in the civil service. It is not uncommon to see a situation where a senior civil servant runs an office as if it’s his personal business. And because of this lack regulation, you see them also delegating most of their responsibilities to junior colleagues, either because they (i.e. the senior civil servants) don’t have the skill to perform such responsibilities, or simply because they don’t want to do it.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

Another senior civil servant corroborates this view when s/he noted that:

We encounter quite a number of intuitional constraints when trying to deliver project and reform objectives. There is the issue of lack of discipline among many civil servants because of the porousness of the disciplinary process...There is also the issue of non-accountability and corruption in the civil service. People ask me why we have so much impunity in the service and I tell them it’s because it is allowed. We simply haven’t done much to enforce the existing civil service rules.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).
The challenge of regulation and the lack of enforcement or accountably creates a number of problems for the operations of the NFCS. First, it arguably engenders serious lack of transparency in the operations of both the civil service and public sector organisations (PSOs) generally in Nigeria. This perhaps, helps explain why corruption and perfidious behaviours have become so pervasive in the NFCS. Second, it results in long bureaucratic procedures in the process of delivering public goods and services to the citizenry, which is why one of the respondents was of the opinion that ‘with what is going on in the civil service, it will be difficult to talk of any transformation.’ (Fieldwork data, 2013).

6.2.3.3 The implications of low institutional capacity

The implications of low institutional capacity on the NFCS are profound and ensures that the volume and quality of the products and services provided by the federal civil service in Nigeria are grossly inadequate and/or ineffective; even as stakeholders have little information about the extent to which the civil service has achieved its objectives or not (Devas, 2002; Haque, 2003). Perhaps, this is why Olaopa (2010), argues that the civil service in most developing countries signals the worst tendencies of the ‘dead hand’ of bureaucracy: corrupted, inefficient, poor services, and cumbersome red tape. Olaopa’s sentiment was shared by one of my respondent who was of the view that ‘our civil service is in disarray’. In their words:

If we are to tell ourselves the truth, then our civil service in disarray. The delivery capacity of federal service must be improved upon…Information hoarding and lack of transparency is one issue I’d like to see change in the operations of the civil service. The civil service operates like a secret service and the general public knows little to nothing about what is going on. There is the need for the public to know what is going on, after all we are here to serve them. Well I believe things will change soon. You know the long periods of military rule really affected the mentality and operational style of the service.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

This state of affairs is very disturbing and needs to be urgently addressed. It is within this context therefore, that in discussing the notion of civil service human capital development, as a fundamental to the emergence of a more capable State in SSA, there should be a critical recognition of the need to address the twin challenges of institutional voids and low institutional capability in the civil service, in a manner that situates the problems and responses in the sub-continent’s realities and development priorities (UNDP, 2013; Saasa, 2007).
These responses, should also address the critical linkages of these issues to reform policy formation and implementation, as well as pay close attention to how all of these interact to impact on the ability of SSA to meet its economic, governance and human development challenges (Saasa, 2007; UNDP, 2013; Edigheji, 2008). At the heart of this paradigm shift, should equally be the recognition of the critical role of politics and that of key actors in the success or otherwise of development policies. Indeed, it should be evident from what has been said so far in this thesis that political and social systems, operate according to underlying rules and relationships in the state-provider-civil society nexus (Heymans & Pycroft, 2003).

As I argue in the section that follows, the nature of these rules and relationships, might of course be contested and negotiated by different actors, but it is the more ‘powerful’ that eventually defines what the ‘acceptable’ standards become. If this is the case, then it makes some sense to argue that any strategy for change requires an understanding of what incentivizes the powerful, and the extent to which their decisions create space for agents to either drive or prevent change. This becomes especially important, considering Landell-Mills, et al.’s (2007: 2), argument that ‘in order to understand how policies favourable to development can be put in place it is essential to analyse the incentives that influence the decisions of governing elites, other powerful interest groups and change agents in civil society, the private sector and the government bureaucracy.’

It is against this backdrop that the next part of this chapter analyses the interests and incentives that influence the decisions of governing elites and other powerful interest groups in Nigeria, in order to understand how favourable policies for rethinking human capital development can be (re)constructed. The section provides in-depth analyses of how issues of power relations, and interest, intersect to influence reform policies, particularly human capital development reforms in Nigeria’s federal civil service. The section is of course immediately connected with the previous one, and is intended to help illuminate on the processes of policy decision making in the NFCS.

6.3 Actors, interests and rules of the game: Understanding how the standards for CD policies are negotiated within the NFCS

As already pointed out in chapter six, development programmes, including CD efforts are more likely to succeed when key players have an incentive to make it succeed (UNDP, 2012; Adam & Decon, 2009; Steinmo, et al., 1992). Corollarily, it could be argued that when a society’s key actors are threatened by a development programme, they may have an
incentive to make it fail (UNDP, 2012). When considered in the context of this study, the critical question that logically follows is: what incentivizes/motivates actors to cooperate with one another or not in the Nigerian context and what implication does this have for effective capacity development in the NFCS?

Illuminating this question is perhaps one of the most decisive pieces of analysis to understand what kind of policies that should be constructed for effective CD in the Nigerian civil service, as in many SSA counties. Yet an answer to this question cannot be fully articulated until there is clarity on the formal and informal rules of the game, and the underlying issues/interests that motivate actors to take policy decision(s) in the Nigerian public service.

As already indicated, all actors in a given society have interests, incentives and privileges, which they are always almost solely interested in protecting (UNDP, 2012; Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth, 1992). The findings from this thesis resonates with this view and suggest that the nature and direction of CD policy process in Nigeria, is shaped largely by the interconnections between the mutual interests and contestations or cooperative synergies that emerge between three large groups of actors’ depicted in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1:** Actors and incentives synergies

![Figure 6.1: Actors and incentives synergies](image)

Source: Adapted from Booth and Therkildsen (2012: 8).

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34 The interconnections between actors and their interests and policies in Nigeria’s CD efforts and poor long-term development performance more broadly are explored in a growing literature (see for example Amundsen, 2010; Utomi et al., 2007). A common theme that appears to run-through these studies is that weak and ineffective state institutions have had a serious impact on Nigeria’s development efforts.
Whereas all of the three large groups of actors illustrated in Figure 6.1 arguably have the capacity to significantly influence the capacity development process in the NFCS, it appears that the ruling political elites are perhaps, the *critical* or *veto players*, without whom, it might be difficult to produce any meaningful policy changes within the Service\(^{35}\) (Acosta & Pettit, 2013). One senior civil servant puts it this way:

> Whatever we do here (*i.e.* in the civil service) is decided by Ministers who are only answerable to Mr. President. We can only advise them on what to do, but we cannot question their final decision. You discover that even when implementing reforms, it is what the Minister prioritizes that sees the light of the day, it doesn’t matter how important your views may be. That is the nature of civil service work and we have to constantly deal with these kinds of structural issues when implementing capability development reforms in all the MDAs.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

This much has since been acknowledged by no less a person than former President Obasanjo when he noted that:

> Civil Service Rules by themselves will not lead to good governance if they are not backed by political will and the preparedness of government to impose total adherence to these rules to promote public good.

(The Obasanjo Reforms, 2005: iv).

Countless studies (e.g.: Heckey, 2012; Booth & Therkildsen, 2012; Utomi et al., 2007), have demonstrated that historically, it has been quite rare to see an ideal state of affairs where the three groups of actors illustrated in Figure 6.1 effectively cooperate in ways that generate sustained social and economic benefits for society. As Acosta and Pettit (2013: 17 - 18), note ‘joint or cooperative action is likely to take place when:

- There are fewer individuals (who can keep track of one another’s actions);
- Individuals have converging interests along the same dimension or issue;
- Individuals tend to share longer time horizons, and
- There are credible enforcement mechanisms to ensure cooperation.’

In the case of Nigeria, this has not been the case and cooperation has proved particularly difficult because of diverse interests or backgrounds of key actors, who have short-term interests and also mistrust one another. This development is in part, as a result of ethnic and religious divide, which have become not only deep rooted, but increasingly defines national

\(^{35}\) In addition to political elites, other important actor groups, who are important, but not necessarily *decisive* for producing policy changes include: religious leaders, business leaders, INGOs and the press.
life in Nigeria\textsuperscript{36}. As Amundsen (2010: ix) observes, ‘Nigeria is deeply divided by regional, religious, ethnic, economic and political rifts.’ As one respondent opines:

\begin{quote}
We (\textit{i.e.} Nigerians) cannot shy away from the fact that many Nigerians see themselves as different people. Instead of coming together for national development, some prefer to stick with members of their ethnic group or those they are comfortable working with (Italics mine). (Fieldwork data, 2013).
\end{quote}

It is therefore, not surprising that in Nigeria today, the relationships among the actor groups illustrated in Figure 6.1 are typically of a sort that appears to stifle development outcomes. It appears from the findings of this study that these relationships are anything but mutual, cooperative and synergistic, but are seemingly antagonistic, exploitative, perverse and almost always contested. The reasons for this development are not farfetched, if one considers Acosta and Pettit’s (2013) point that sources of revenue largely shape the incentives of power holders to be more responsive to some groups than others. For political elites in Nigeria, this simply amounts to the desire to remain relevant – constructed as \textit{political survival} in local parlance:\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{quote}
…sometimes I am tempted to think that all what our politicians and leaders are concerned about is just themselves and how to survive politically. Nothing matters to them except how they’ll remain relevant and influential. Do you see the type of money people spend during elections? That is unacceptable. I mean being in office shouldn’t be a do or die affair. Why would anyone spend that much money if they’re not sure of recovering them? Something must be wrong and this cannot continue. (Fieldwork data, 2013).
\end{quote}

Another respondent puts it this way:

\begin{quote}
The nature of our political culture is worrying and I have said on several occasions that we need to change our mentality about public service. Some public office holders think that it is their birth right to remain in office. They do everything to achieve this aim and I can’t even begin to mention
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Nigeria’s diverse population is made up of about 200 ethnic groups, with 500 indigenous languages and two major religions – Islam and Christianity, although some people remain traditional worshipers (Nigerianext.com, 2015).

\textsuperscript{37} It is important to note that the activities of actors in Nigeria as elsewhere, are arguably bound or limited by the prevailing formal or informal power relations (Acosta & Pettit, 2013). This implies that actors would necessarily have to cooperate or contest among themselves for continued relevance in the policy space. It should be noted also, that not all forms of corporation are formalised, long term or ideologically based (Acosta & Pettit, 2013). It is the case that in Nigeria, temporary alignment of alliances often occurs around specific areas of interests at one given period of time – for example during national elections. Needless to say, that different cluster of actors has of course, formed \textit{revolving or rotating} coalitions. As Acosta and Pettit (2013: 18) argue, these forms of corporation, although valid, are however, ‘unlikely to lead to sustained or even continuous development changes overtime.
some of the things we see here. Don’t forget that some top positions in the federal service is politicised, so a lot of people get sent here as politicians. If you look at what some people earn and their peeks of office, then you’ll understand why they’ll do anything to remain politically relevant.

Simplifying radically and following a number of scholars (e.g. Booth & Therkildsen, 2012; Sangmpam, 2007), I contend here therefore that members of Nigeria’s political elites when in office, are motivated to a great extent by the desire to stay in power and are largely concerned to regain power when out of office. Of course this argument is generally true of most politicians in many contexts, including the so called developed countries. However, as Booth and Therkildsen (2012: 8), were quick to point out, the differences across countries and contexts lies in:

…the way this general motivation gets translated into incentives to behave in one way rather than another as a result of the specific characteristics of the political and socio-economic system of the country. Similarly, state officials and sector actors have the same basic motivations in all societies, but the incentives they face are structured in different ways.

As already discussed in this current chapter, the characteristics of Nigeria’s socio-political system and the ‘rules of the game’ that define the policy process is profoundly shaped by the abundance of oil wealth and the contestations of this wealth thereof. It suffices here to add however, as Utomi et al. (2007: 13) note, ‘as in many, but not all, natural-resource-rich countries, there has been a tendency in Nigeria for those in politics to seek rewards through control of these resources rather than by creating an environment that is conducive to broad-based economic growth’.

The incentives motivating bureaucrats and other actors in the NFCS, have therefore, been largely defined by the oil economy and the accompanying struggle for resource control. In the specific case of capacity development policies, the findings from this study suggest that in Nigeria, political elites and top State bureaucrats select policies that they perceive will directly or indirectly help them and their agents to gain or retain power. As one senior civil servant told me:

…most civil servants are not committed to the core values of the public service. They are more like agents or representatives of top politicians and business men and are only concerned with protecting the interest of these people. All the people you see here are loyal to somebody, who they look out for in terms of contract, employment opportunities and things like that. You can’t even query some of them, unless you want to be queried yourself, you can even lose your job…You see a lot of them getting promoted easily ahead of better qualified and senior colleagues, but there’s nothing anybody can do, we can only complain in private. They have very
powerful friends everywhere, who are willing to do everything to maintain their influence in society. 

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

This almost exclusive focus on what has been described as ‘power grabbing’ by some respondents, arguably defines CD policy direction and shapes elites’ decision making for CD in the NFCS. The section that follows critically explores the underlying issues that shape elite decision making in the NFSC and the consequences for CD in the Service.

6.4 Power relations and policy decision in the NFCS

The way in which power is embodied and exercised in public institutions, including the arrangements that shape policy-making overtime are important to the decision making process (Matheson, 2002). The balance of powers and institutions and the ways civil servants are held accountable appear to determine the way decisions are made in the NFCS. This is especially so considering that the dynamics of power relations ‘influences how ambiguity is made sense of, and who makes sense of it, as well as the basis upon which risks are taken: that is, who benefits from the outcome of the decision, and how do they benefit?’ (Jackson, 2004: 73). As already highlighted, all policy processes, including HCD takes place in a context. In my case, the immediate context is the federal civil service as an organisation, which in turn, is situated in the broader Nigerian environment. It is important to therefore, understand how this context impact on policy decision making in the NFCS, especially because contextual factors are the building blocks of the rules of the game in any given context.

Hofstede (1980; 2001) makes a compelling argument in favour of national contexts, and points out that because nations are political entities, variations are bound in their forms of government, legal systems, education system, human resource development systems and other aspects of national life, all of which are outcomes of a cultural consensus. Hofstede (2001) describes this process as the dimensions of national culture and identifies four broad dimensions, which was later increased to five (Hofstede, 2001), and more recently to six (Hofstede et al., 2010). These dimensions are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation and indulgence vs restraint (Hofstede et al., 2010). Table 6.1, diagrams these dimensions and its meaning.
Table 6.1: Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural dimension</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power distance</td>
<td>The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance</td>
<td>The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism vs collectivism</td>
<td>The degree to which individuals are supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated into groups, usually around family. It has to do with whether people’s self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “We”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity vs femininity</td>
<td>The distribution of emotional roles between the genders. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term versus short-term orientation</td>
<td>This dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgence vs restraint</td>
<td>The extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on their socialisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Using Hofstede’s (1983; 2010) dimensions highlighted in Table 6.1 as a basis of analysis, it is possible to get a good idea regarding the deep contextual issues influencing the process of policy decision making and public service management more broadly in Nigeria. Although Hofstede’s (1983) original work does not include Nigeria, Iguisi (1994), using his model provides specific information on the power relations and management culture in Nigeria based on a cross-country study of three cement producing companies based in the Netherlands and Nigeria respectively.

Iguisi’s (1994) results indicate that Nigeria has a higher power distance than most Western countries, a lower individualism, a high masculinity and is lower in uncertainty avoidance than the Netherlands. Iguisi’s (1994) results from an additional questionnaire indicate that family is more important than work for an average Nigerian manager. Yet, position rather than accomplishment is seen as a source of respect by many Nigerians. These results also indicate that Nigerian managers favour paternalistic management, which means that consultative management is a very unpopular option.
Although these results are fairly limited and compare only with a European country’s culture: Netherlands, they nonetheless go some way in providing a good overview of the deep cultural issues that drive the policy process and public service management practices in Nigeria. The findings from this study resonate with some of the issues highlighted in Iguisi’s (1994) work and indicate that the NFCS is control-oriented. Decisions for CD policies are therefore, largely top-down and autocratic in nature. As one head of department told me:

Everything we do here have been passed down right from the Minister’s office, down to permanent secretary, then to the director, deputy-director, just like that, before it finally gets to us. We can’t alter it, our job is just to implement it to the best of our abilities.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

The implication of this apparent non-participatory or non-consultative approach, is that access to the decision-making process is largely restricted, by closely guarding information and not communicating openly to people lower down the hierarchy. This perhaps, explains the rather ‘tepid’ reaction of a number of mid-level civil servants when I asked them about their inputs into the contents of the capacity development programmes they are being meant to undertake. One respondent puts it this way:

Nobody borders to ask us (i.e. civil servants) what areas we are interested to improve ourselves in. All that matters is that training is an annual thing and in most MDAs it is compulsory. So people just go because their promotion is tied to some of these trainings and not necessarily because it is of any use to them…All the decisions on which programmes we will attend are in most cases decided by the Permanent Secretary or the Director and the next thing you’ll see is just your name on the notice board.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

With the benefit of hindsight and as pointed out earlier, it appears that these conditions arose largely because informal institutions have become critical in shaping the policy contents and implementation direction of capacity development programmes in the NFCS, as in other sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The situation described above, helps explain why in the NFCS ‘power is not always legitimized by authority – i.e. legitimized power stemming from constitutions, laws or procedures’ (Hyden, 2008: 12). The anticipated causal relations arising from these kinds of relationships can be summarized as shown in Figure 6.2, and has arguably led to the personalisation of the policy process as briefly discussed in the next sub-section.
The personalisation of the policy process and the phantom Civil Service

As can be inferred from Figure 6.2, it seems that CD policy decisions are tailored to benefit mainly the elites within the NFCS and their cronies and/or patrons outside. The policy process is therefore, largely personalised rather than vested in formal institutions. Policy making seems to be driven primarily by informal processes of interest group lobbying rather than robust, formalised and consultative processes. Consequently policies tend to serve the interests of the ruling elite rather than the general public.

The personalisation of the policy process in the NFCS, arguably constitutes a further critical turning point that has pushed the Service away from developing the requisite capacities for policy implementation and engendered the emergence of what I would like to call the ‘phantom civil service’. Following Grindle (2010), I describe this type of civil service as a *de facto* civil service, where selection and promotion are based on other considerations aside merit and competence, where the career ladder is fuzzy and not accessed through regularized demonstration of credentials of education, performance, or other form of merit criteria.

In this kind of system, civil servants perform duties for their patrons or political party and not necessarily for the state or the service. The rules of the game in this system are largely informal and institutionalised through norms, procedures and dominant discourses. A high ranking official in the NFCS appears to support this view, when describing the operations of the department where she works:
It is difficult to get anything done here if you don’t know somebody very influential in government. There are laid down operational rules and regulations, but a lot of people do not follow them, because of their connections. I have been here long enough and I can tell you that what matters most is not what you know, but who you know. I am not saying that this is a good thing, but that is the unfortunate reality we have been dealing with for years.

(Fieldwork data, 2013)

This view is corroborated by another senior civil servant, who lamented that he cannot take certain decisions, because according to him, his ‘hands are tied’. As he puts it:

There are some decisions that I will ordinarily want to change, but I cannot do so, because my hands are tied. I cannot act contrary to what my superiors want.

(Fieldwork data, 2013).

The implication of this is that the quality of CD policy decisions are often not well-informed, as information that could have been obtained from other parts of the organization are largely never sought and used. In line with the theoretical framework developed in chapter three (see Figure 3.5), this phenomenon is arguably reflective of Nigeria’s post-colonial systems of management, which unlike post-instrumental systems, is generally less calculative and encourages less consultation and information seeking from other parts of the organization to help reduce risks in decision-making (Jackson, 2004).

This development is not in any way unique to Nigeria, even as it could be argued that some form of ‘information hoarding’ is necessary in the public service for national security purposes. While this might be the case, I argue here that access to complete information is key to policy effectives. In this regard, a useful way to dealing with the problem of incomplete information in policy decision making is by allowing tactical participation, because:

Tactical participation may encourage staff lower down the hierarchy to implement decisions, and foster ownership of decisions, but may still have limited overall benefits for such staff and their wider communities. Wider stakeholder participation of decision-making may further reduce the risks of making bad decisions, and broaden out the base of beneficiaries of decision outcomes.

(Jackson, 2004: 74).

For post-colonial and post-instrumental management systems like Nigeria, this type of approach to decision-making may pose major threats to governing elites, who may want to

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38 Vroom and Yetton’s (1973) decision tree, illustrates this example of decision-making and is discussed in detail in Jackson (1993).
obscure any efforts to reconstruct the prevailing governance system. Therefore, for this type of decision-making to be operational, it arguably requires a completely different type of organizational governance, which does not threaten the position of elites. As highlighted earlier in this current chapter and in chapter 6 (refer to Box 6.4), a useful strategy for achieving this type of turnaround is through effective State capacity development. Indeed, as Fukuda-Parr and Hulme (2009), argue, the issue of state capability has become crucial not only to improving public policy processes and reconstructing governance structures, but also to institutional development, poverty eradication and societal transformation more broadly. The next section briefly considers the issue of state capacity in relation to capability development in the NFCS.

6.5 The (in)capable Nigerian State and the challenges of capability development in the NFCS

Over the past recent years, a research consensus has coalesced around the idea that a capable state is key to the transformation of the civil service for the effective delivery of development goals. The issue of building a more capable State in DCs, is now both desirable and critical, especially considering that:

People living with ineffective states have long suffered the consequences in terms of postponed growth and social development. But an even bigger cost may now threaten states that postpone reforms: political and social unrest and, in some cases, disintegration exacting a tremendous toll on stability, productive capacity, and human life (World Bank, 1997: 15).

To understand how the (in)capacity of the State in Nigeria impacts on civil service capability development, it is important to critically consider the role of governments in contemporary contexts. In discussing this issue, there is need for a recognition that the idea of State capacity does not simply mean the ability of to maintain law and order and guarantee security. Briefly and without getting entangled in the debate between minimalists and maximalists on the function of government (see: Bühlmann, Merkel & Wessels, 2008), it could be argued that the basic role of the modern State is to maintain legal order and promote good life. The State’s primary function in this regard, ‘is to regulate social relations as a way of protecting individuals and groups against harmful conduct by others’ (Oladipo, 2001: 8). The State is also expected ‘to provide decent life for the people by ensuring that things work in various aspects of social or collective life, including health care delivery, education, food security, adequate transportation and other infrastructural facilities, etc.’ (Olaopa, 2012: 115 – 116).
Considering these ideas about the role of a State, it could be argued therefore, that an incapable State is one, which consistently neglects these practices and discourses. This implies that the State does not ‘possess attributes that include the presence of a good environment for democracy to thrive; a system that empowers the citizenry to engage legitimately in economic activities and where institutions deliver services efficiently; and where human potentialities are fully exploited’ (AGF, 2007: 9). When this argument is placed in the Nigerian context, it becomes clear that the State has not been very effective nor performed its basic functions and has largely been an incapable one for a number of reasons.

In this regard, one of the clear manifestations of the phenomenon of state incapacity in Nigeria is the low level of ‘shared understandings’ among the people on the goals of society or the role of the State. As Birch (1977: 32) has since pointed out, this has arguably resulted in the failure to get the disparate and heterogeneous entities that were merged to create Nigeria by the British, to ‘submerge their local loyalties into feelings of loyalty and support for the larger entity’. The implication of this failure at national integration is the inability of Nigerians to develop a shared sense of nationhood, which is increasingly acknowledged as a basic requirement for rapid development of any nation-State (See: Bühlmann, et al. 2008). Hence, Nigeria has since independence, remained a ‘nation space’, rather than a nation, and has been unable to evolve any coherent philosophy for harmonising the coexistence and integration of its ‘constituent parts into a discernible, functional whole’ (Soyinka, 2009, cited in Olaopa, 2012: 114).

This lack of functionality inadvertently leads to weak State institutions, which itself, is another manifestation of State incapability in Nigeria. The absence of strong socio-political and economic institutions means that the entire process of national development, including social, economic and political, has been seriously jeopardised in Nigeria. This development has serious implications for the continued existence of Nigeria as an entity, considering that the State is a discursive abstraction, a mere ‘artificial social construction’, which derives its existence only from ‘the concrete institutions through which the state expresses itself in the real world’ (Onyeoziri, 2005: 56).

The existence of the State is arguably, meaningless unless through a complex assemblage of institutions, practices, people and discourses which provide social order (OpenLearn, 2014). It is the repetition of these practices and discourses, including governance, administrative, regulatory and enforcement functions on daily basis, which create the impression of States as permanent and continuous entities (Bühlmann et al. 2008; OpenLearn, 2014). If these
functions work well, then the State is deemed capable and its stability is assured. Conversely, if the performance is poor, then the state is largely perceived as incapable and its legitimacy might be questioned by the citizenry.

If this argument is valid, then it does not require much analysis to see that the institutions of the State in Nigeria have failed to provide the required concreteness, necessary to transform the country into a capable State. Without going into an extensive elaboration of the failings of governance and public policies in Nigeria, it suffices to note that the gap between potential and achievement is one that has become a national embarrassment for Nigeria and a source of disquiet, both within and outside the country (Awoarawo, 2012; Olaopa, 2012).

A most recent expression of this gap is reflected in the UN’s (2014) *Millennium Development Goals Report*, which indicates that Nigeria is home to some of the poorest people on earth, accounting for about 9% of the global extreme poor. It is also very worrying that despite its enormous potentials, the country notoriously accounts for over 14% of global maternal mortalities, with about 400,000 annual deaths (see the UN’s MDG report, 2014).

Available statistics also suggest that Nigeria’s human capital and its overall human development have not improved significantly over the past recent years; even as it is unlikely that the country will achieve any of the MDGs by 2015 (Amundsen, 2010; UNDP, 2014). For instance, the UNDP’s (2014) *human development report* still ranks the country ‘low’ in terms of its human development. Out of 187 countries in the report, Nigeria is ranked 152 with a HDI of 0.504, which is slightly above the regional average of 0.502 for SSA (See Table 6.2). At a basic level, this implies that Nigeria fared better than only thirty-five (35) countries in the quality and overall wellbeing of its citizens, if such indices such as: economic performance, life expectancy, literacy rates, water, nutrition, sanitation status, health risks and technology utilisation are taken into consideration (UNDP, 2014).
Table 6.2: Trends in Nigeria’s Human Development Index (2005 – 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Low human development</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.493</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td>0.694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.463</td>
<td>0.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0.449</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.446</td>
<td>0.443</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.441</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Whilst the statistics in Table 6.2 may not be totally infallible, it nonetheless highlights very large gaps that exist in Nigeria’s human capital development, especially when compared with the HDI of other developing countries like China (0.719); Brazil (0.744); India (0.586), South Africa (0.658), and the so called MINT\(^{39}\) countries.

These are symptoms and further evidence of the incapacity of the Nigerian State and have serious negative implications for civil service capability development on the country’s national development more broadly. As a result of these gaps, it is now widely accepted in contemporary discourses on the problems of Nigeria that there is an acute shortage of skilled workforce, and a lack of the required human capital in the country’s civil service to make rapid national development a reality.

Therefore, it could be argued that the ability of the NFCS to develop its capabilities and become effective and efficient in policy development and implementation will to a large extent, depend on Nigeria’s ability to develop its national human capital and equip them with the requisite skills and competencies necessary to be locally productive and globally competitive through appropriate national human capital and capability programmes.

\(^{39}\) Coined by the man who also coined the term BRICS – Jim O’Neill, the MINT countries: Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey have been identified as emerging economic giants, due to a combination of factors including, favourable demographics, abundant natural resources and strategic geo-political location.
6.5.1 The consequences and implications of declining State capability for capability development in the NFCS

Like other institutions of the State in Nigeria, the federal civil service has not been immune to the consequences of the declining capability of the state to perform its basic functions as briefly discussed in section 6.5 above. In order to understand how the character of the Nigerian state impacts on CD in the NFCS, it is useful to briefly recall the basic function of the Service in national development. As already earlier highlighted in the previous chapters, the civil service has emerged as the primary institution used by the government for achieving the economic, political and social goals of the state (refer to chapter 2, 2.2). To perform this function effectively the Service must however, develop certain kinds of institutional behaviours and attitudes that enables it to constantly reinvent itself in line with emerging global trends, particularly the knowledge and innovation imperatives (Olaopa, 2012). As previously argued in Chapter 2 (refer to 2.3), the context for future human capital reforms and by extension, the performance of the civil service, will to a very large extent be determined by that the way in which the Service adapts to the ‘knowledge imperatives’ and innovation.

Developing these behaviours arguably requires a willingness to bend formal rules to achieve objectives, resisting pressures of patronage and nepotism, and subscribing to an ethic of professionalism (Palmer, 1989, cited in Olaopa, 2012). This is especially crucial for the NFCS, considering that the restricting nature of its operational environment and the formalistic manner in which rules are applied are some of the major issues that have militated against effective capability development in the Service. Unfortunately however, if the insights provided by one of the interview respondents are anything to go by, then it appears that the administrative context of the Nigerian civil service still does not provide an environment conducive for this kind of innovative behaviours to happen:

You see, no matter how well you know something, if the atmosphere is not conducive for you to give out your best, you will not be able to give out your best, because your best is tied to certain factors. The atmosphere here and most other MDAs is nothing to write home about.  
(Fieldwork data, 2103).

These ‘certain factors’ referred to by the interviewee cannot be divorced from the weaknesses of the Nigerian State and its institutions discussed in the preceding section. Admittedly, the NFCS has over the years, made significant contributions to Nigeria’s national development. However, it appears that the capacity to perform its own basic
functions has also been dwindling, especially since the advent of the Military into Nigerian politics or what has been described by some historians (e.g. Aworawo, 2003) as the era of ‘new-federalism’40.

Since the so called new-federalism phase (see Olaopa, 2012), new governments have all formed new agencies, often on political rather than functional considerations. Apart from blatant patronage, many senior positions have also been created to reflect the so called ‘national character’, by ensuring representation of geo-political areas, states and even local governments in in the NFCS. This development has had several implications for the NFCS and Utomi et al. (2007), has already identified quite a few:

- *Duplication and lack of co-ordination*, which has contributed to fragmentation and has tended to benefit elites, rather than improving service delivery in areas critical to economic growth and poverty alleviation, such as health, education and infrastructure.
- *Discontinuity*, which often make it difficult for an agency to maintain its programmes, funding and objectives. Many projects are abandoned or indefinitely postponed as governments, ministers and ministries change.
- *Patronage and politicisation*, especially in appointments of civil servants have meant that core human capital requirements have not always been taken care of. As already pointed out, many civil servants are also expected to return favours to their patrons. This arguably compromises the roles of civil servants and undermines their efficiency.
- *Blurred accountability*: Duplication, politicisation of management appointments and control and ownership structures has obfuscated accountability arrangements.

The issues highlighted above have serious implications for the operational effectiveness of the NFCS, and must be urgently addressed if the Service is to improve its institutional capacity and lead the process of societal transformation in Nigeria.

40 As earlier mentioned, 15 January 1966 marked the first military coup in Nigeria, signalling the first in a long line of military regimes to direct the political and administrative affairs of the country. This coup and the subsequent truncation of the first republic marked the end of what has been described as the ‘old federalism’ in Nigeria and a shaky beginning of a new one. The enactment of Decree No. 34 of 24 May 1966, changed the political structure of Nigeria from a federal to a centralised unitary State. This implied an arbitrarily return to the pre-1954 unified civil service (Akindele, 1966).
6.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I have critically explored some of the fundamental contextual issues that have influenced and continue to influence the contents and implementation trajectories of policies for human and institutional CD in the NFCS. In doing so, I analysed the interests and incentives that influence the decisions of governing elites and other powerful interest groups in Nigeria, and argued that Nigeria’s structural and institutional peculiarities, appears to have encouraged serious misallocation of resources and the use of human capital primarily in order to succeed in the power struggle and for short term benefits of a few, rather than to promote development. Policy making has therefore, become largely personalised and driven mainly by informal processes of interest group lobbying rather than robust, formalised and consultative processes (Utomi et al., 2007; Amundsen, 2010).

The implication of this development is that improving the capabilities of the federal civil service has become a major challenge, considering that ‘reform’ policies tend to serve the interests of a few powerful elite, who are bent on maintaining the status quo, rather than the entire civil service or the general public. In the context of Nigeria, this phenomenon has been described by some (see for example: Olaopa, 2013), as vested interests or ‘cabals’ in local parlance. These ‘cabals’ ensure that reform policy implementation, which is already a complex process, also becomes a messy process in Nigeria.

Given the above, it could be argued that reforms should be about achieving the possible, as distinct from a preoccupation with the ‘theoretically optimal’ (Abonyi et al., 2013). The basic preoccupation of reforms, including CD efforts, should therefore, be on how to design and implement effective reform measures – reforms that will address key aspects of specific problems, and do so in a way that will lead to improvements (Olaopa, 2013; Abonyi et al., 2013). While this argument may seem rather obvious, the problem however, is that addressing specific problems or making improvements to embedded social practices and processes, especially in developing contexts, is not often an easy task.

This problem is of course not unique to Nigeria, as the international experience suggests that policies, once adopted, are not always implemented as envisioned and do not necessarily achieve the intended results, largely because of the contextual challenges associated with reform policy implementation (Brynard, 2007; Brynard, 2007; Mthethwa, 2012). The reasons for these difficulties are not farfetched, considering that reform involves changing rules, regulations, laws, institutions; and ultimately changing incentives, expectations,
capabilities and behaviours, to bring about improvements or changes in norms, processes and practices (Abonyi et al., 2013). Simply put, reform is about change.

The problem however, as highlighted in this chapter is that not all actors in a given social group might be desirous of change. Generally speaking, actors seem to support changes in the socio-economic and political order only when it does not threaten their own privileges; and may oppose it if they perceive that their interests are threatened (UNDP, 2013). As I argued in this chapter, this appears to be the case with the NFCS, as the received narratives suggest that not all major stakeholders in the Service are desirous of change, either because they benefit from the current status quo, or they anticipate that it will benefit them in the near future. As I pointed out previously in Chapter 6, conflicting interests of powerful stakeholders, means that there are people in the NFCS, who may talk about reform, but walk against it by promoting their own personal and group’s interest, thus leading to ‘a deep disarticulation of the relationship between the idea of reform and the implementation of the idea’ (Olaopa, 2013: 12).

Given the above and with the benefit of hindsight, it makes some sense to suggest that a major problem militating against human and institutional capacity development in the NFCS, is the issue of what could best be described as a conception-reality gap. This gap or disconnection is often understood as an implementation or execution problem and has serious implications for civil service CD and national development generally. Effective implementation and civil service CD have never been more critical than in contemporary contexts, in part due to the issues associated with the changing nature of government discussed previously in chapter 2 of this current text (refer to 2.3.1).

The increased awareness among citizens and events of the past recent years, means that governments, especially in SSA, face a groundswell of anger and distrust that is creating an unhealthy gulf in State-society relations (refer to 6.2.2). Increasing poverty levels and widening inequalities in SSA for instance, means that citizens now expect much more from their government, so much so that the margin for error has become ‘delicately’ narrow. In this regard, the civil service in Nigeria, as in many DCs, is therefore increasingly looked upon as the agency to meet the critical and urgent demands to curb poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and inequalities in contemporary times (Ayee, 2008).

And while this assertion is valid and certainly critical, the problem however, is that the capacity challenges presently faced by the federal civil service in Nigeria as in many DCs, have greatly diminished its capacity to implement reform policies and lead the process of
‘self-reformation’ and national development. This thesis is of course about helping revamp that capacity and capability. It is precisely in this regard that the next chapter, which is the concluding chapter of this thesis, outlines my suggestions for a new agenda for human capital and capability development in the civil services of SSA counties, using the experience of the Nigerian federal civil service.
Chapter 7

Rethinking civil service human capital development: New agendas for capability development

What we call the beginning is often the end.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

– Eliot, 1974

7.1 Introduction

Eliot’s (1974) tercet above succinctly captures the essence and nature of this chapter. The end is indeed, where I start from in this concluding chapter. As the title suggests, the chapter is about highlighting strategies and new agendas that can help in resolving the human capital and capability challenges facing the civil service in developing contexts, using the experience(s) of the Nigerian federal civil service. This is a stated objective of this research.

The chapter is structured into four main parts and starts by recapping the key themes and issues that have driven this study. The second part advances arguments for rethinking the processes of civil service human capital and capability development in the midst of institutional voids and structural constraints in the NFCS. The third section outlines the recommendations that emerge from this study and its key contributions to knowledge. The chapter concludes by proving a critical reflexive overview of the entire research process, highlighting some limitations and identifying relevant agendas for possible future research.

7.2 Summary of key themes and issues

As the analyses in this thesis have illustrated, the growing economic importance of knowledge-based services and products is driving the need for higher level skills in diverse industries, thanks to the growing impact of demographic trends and globalisation (Larbi, 2006). Globalisation, itself a highly contested and polarized concept, is widely understood ‘as a process in which there is a growth in the functional integration of national economies’ (Edward & Ress, 2006: 5). While the outcomes of this pervasive integration remain uneven and is often mired in emotive debates, what is hardly debated however, is that a truly knowledge driven global economy has emerged, in which distinct national economies as well as strategies of national economic management are becoming increasingly irrelevant (Edwards & Rees, 2006). Simply put: the world is changing at a bewildering pace. These changes, engendered largely by advances in ICT and the growing KBE discourse, have
increased the demand for intelligent workers who can extract the most out of technology, as well as for people at higher levels to create and adapt technology to new uses (UN, 2014; McGuire, 2014).

Issues related to civil service human capital and capability development in the twenty-first century have therefore assumed a complex twist, requiring not only ‘conventional’ remedies such as civil service reforms, political support, and more managerial flexibility; but importantly, it now requires a consideration of the changing nature of public service and the changing environmental context more broadly (Soni, 2004). Given this, it is plausible to argue that traditional human resource (HR) management approaches no longer work, especially within the context of the civil service. This is why it has become imperative to rethink approaches to developing people in the civil service, especially in DCs, with emphasis on capability and skills development.

This study responded to this need and makes a significant contribution to a growing body of literature that explores strategies for improved human capital development in the public services of DCs, using the Nigerian experience. In doing this, I specifically interrogated the case of the Nigerian federal civil service (NFCS) to illustrate the dynamics of a typical civil service human resource policy implementation and capability development efforts, as an essentially contested and complex process, influenced largely by politics, economics, culture, power relations, interests of key stakeholders and dominant discourses. These explorations helped situate the nature of the current human capability challenges facing the NFCS.

In exploring these issues, I utilised data from the semi-structured interviews and some selected official policy documents from the Federal Government of Nigeria and the NFCS (e.g. the 2004 National Policy on Education, the Vision 20:20:20 blueprint and the 2010 Federal Civil Service Handbook). The narratives from these ‘texts’ were synthesised with relevant literatures on Nigeria’s politico-economic history and assessed in terms of discourses and examples in order to help make sense of the key issues necessary for rethinking human capital development and (re)constructing new agendas for capability development in the NFCS.

Rather than focus on a restricted menu of theories and lose sight of the bigger picture, this study adopted a multi-faced approach and narrative discourse analysis in its analysis. This approach was informed by the poststructuralist and social constructivist philosophy underlying this study. Although influenced largely by Sen’s (1985) capability approach, the
study was not based on any single HR/HRD theory or CD framework. Some might argue that this approach has the potentiality of rendering my analysis too descriptive, but this is by no means the case, as the value and suitability of a multidimensional approach for this study was enhanced by the design and methodology of the research, which emphasised a mixed-approach or triangulation for data collection, thereby mitigating this limitation.

The study was designed as an exploratory qualitative case study, and was based on a discursive methodology. The subject of this study and its philosophical underpinnings align it with a qualitative approach, because the focus was upon developing new understandings and possibly new approaches/theory of human capital (Creswell, 2003). Following Strauss and Corbin (1998: 11), this approach was deemed appropriate in the context of this study, considering that ‘qualitative methods are useful in explorations of understandings, for uncovering novel insights and for accessing intricate details, thought processes and emotions’. Moreover, the approach also enabled me explore the dynamics of power relations, the taken for granted dimensions of skills formations and the historical and socio-economic factors underlying civil service human capital development processes in the Nigerian context.

A focus on these kinds of contextual issues became especially important, considering that human capital and capability development processes depends not only on many facets of the HRD system, but crucially on the socio-economic, political, cultural and discursive contexts within which they are practiced (Lavigna & Hays, 2005). As the findings of this study indicate, the absence of legitimate and transparent socio-political institutions in Nigeria for instance, means that the civil service merit system, including the federal character policy, have been subverted and controlled by privileged groups and elites. Talent might of course be ‘recruited’ in this context, but as I argued, this is often through political or familial associations or other informal ‘personalised’ processes.

This implies that there are critical behavioural and procedural issues to address in rethinking human capital development in the NFCS, in order to facilitate the transformation of the Service and support innovation and K4D at all societal levels. It is these structural, behavioural and procedural issues that the recommendations in this thesis seeks to address. To be more precise, the suggestions outlined here address the limitations in human capital development efforts in the NFCS discussed in chapter 6, as well as larger issues of capability development in Nigeria discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. To ensure clarity, I have grouped these recommendations into two broad categories: policy or practice-based recommendations and theoretical and methodological recommendations.
Towards a future policy agenda: Policy and practice-based recommendations

As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, the civil service is essential to the socio-economic, political and human advancement of Nigeria, as in other DCs. Given this, it becomes imperative that the NFCS develops the required capabilities to perform its basic functions and lead the process of national transformation. Evolving these capabilities, arguably require new mind-sets and attitudes and a rethinking of current practices. As highlighted in Chapter 2 (2.3 & 2.4), there have been major shifts in the factors influencing the civil service in all contexts, including Nigeria. Contemporary trends, such as widespread use of new technologies, changing work patterns and the knowledge imperatives, means that the composition and nature of the Nigerian federal civil service will have to fundamentally change to keep up with emerging exigencies.

There is a sense therefore, to suggest that civil service human resource capability constraints must be addressed from a multi-level and innovative perspective. In this regard, and following Soni (2004: 158), it appears that a useful approach for SSA countries, is to develop a strategy that helps in ‘…raising the image of government workers, providing competent and reliable leadership in government agencies, conducting career development and training of existing personnel, and actively recruiting, particularly in technological and scientific fields’.

This implies that many of the traditional skills hitherto required of civil servants will have to be replaced with new and more complex set of competencies/skills. Considering the issues raised in this study, all of these will have to be done simultaneously to adequately respond to the human resource challenges faced by the civil service in Nigeria, as in many other DCs (CIPD, 2010; Gonzales et al., 2008). In the context of the NFCS, this implies an urgent need to evolve a new human capital and capability development strategy, which will encourage civil servants to acquire new competencies and skills in specialised fields of knowledge. The development of the required human capital and capability development strategy is central to the transformative framework developed in this thesis, as outlined in the next sub-section.
7.3.2 Introducing a transformative framework for civil service human capability development

Figure 7.1 diagrams a transformative framework for effective capability development in Nigeria’s federal service. The focus of this model is on evolving a new vision for capability development that facilitates the reconstructing of the NFCS, ensuring that the operations of the Service is not only innovative, effective-oriented and flexible, but is also underpinned by professionalism and the availability of the right information for policy decisions.

**Figure 7.1:** Framework for rethinking HC in Nigeria

Source: Author, 2015.

In view of the issues highlighted in Figure 7.1, a capable and re-constructed civil service becomes one which is both efficient in service delivery and in policy formulation and implementation. Following Olaopa (2012: 195), this capability is demonstrated in efficient policy management, which will ‘be reoriented to enable greater information flow towards the success of programmes and projects.’ Policy management will consequently be
reimagined to enable greater information flow towards the success of programmes and projects. Effective implementation will therefore, ideally depend on the following:

- Defining objectives and formulating strategic plans.
- Preparing better sector strategies to translate the plans.
- Monitoring and evaluation of plans in order to keep track of what is happening and what should have happened at every leg of implementation.

The implications of this type of reorientation, is that policy work will become depersonalised and dependent on systems and decision informed by stakeholder analyses. Taken further, this means that policies will be set within the framework of informed political priorities, inter-governmental and inter-sectorial relationships, reflecting the needs of the society it is meant to serve.

Achieving this level of transformation arguably demands that serious attention be paid to the availability of skills upgrading opportunities, and the provision of resources and incentives that encourage lifelong learning. It also requires a critical audit of the character, education and adaptability of current workforce. Specifically, this means a shift from the largely generalist orientation currently prevalent in the civil service, to a more specialist disposition (Olaopa, 2012). It is pertinent to point out however, that in order to ensure that specialisation does not become an encumbrance to the skills of civil servants, avenues for continuous professional development and other relevant learning, must be in place to encourage people to expand their horizons.

Given all of these ideas as well as those outlined in Figure 7.1, the relevant policy agenda for rethinking civil service human capital development in Nigeria appears rather large. While this can be a daunting prospect, it is important to recognise that progress in any area is helpful in and of itself. As Goldin and Reinert (2012: 246) admonish, ‘not being able to do everything should not be an excuse to do nothing.’

While the policies recommended here do not necessarily constitute a magic wand for resolving all the civil service capability issues highlighted in this study, they can nonetheless make a significant difference in helping the civil service in Nigeria and those in other SSA countries in resolving some of the current human and institutional capability development challenges confronting them. These capability issues include skills gaps, skilled emigration (brain drain), low institutional capacity, leadership challenges and diminishing professionalism. I will proceed by identifying the relevant policy agendas and practical
strategies proposed for tackling these issues and for rethinking civil service human capital development.

7.3.3 Policies and strategies for rethinking civil service human capital development: An integrated approach

One of the most important truisms about the process of human capital and capability development as illustrated throughout this thesis is that it is a system (Lavigna & Hays, 2005; McGuire, 2014). This means that all components for developing and managing people should ideally be interrelated and integrated. It is also the case that in terms of evolution, orientation, structure and features, a country’s civil service is largely a product of its socio-political, cultural and historical experiences (Monye-Emina, 2012). If these views are correct – even partly, then it makes some sense to suggest that civil service human capital and capability development should be seen as part of the broader socio-political and other contextual environment that influence (or even control) resourcing decisions (Lavigna & Hays, 2005).

This implies that the reconstructed civil service needs an integrated approach to human capital development and management wherein selection, appraisal, staff development, project effectiveness and broader organisational goals are interwoven into a unified analytical matrix. The right achievement of this balance will arguably ensure the right mix of organisational goals, employee capability, potential and training instrument (Olaopa, 2012). The implication of this, is that any policy for rethinking human capital development in the context of the NFCS should be integrated in nature. An integrative approach involves more than one type of capability variable. In this regard, the policy recommendations and practical strategies for rethinking civil service human capital development in Nigeria are multifaceted and summarised in the form of a policy checklist outlined in Table 7.1.
### Table 7.1: Policy checklist for rethinking civil service human capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Dimension</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th>Policy impact area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Installation of integrated and effective public service human resources information system</strong></td>
<td>The development of an efficient information system to generate meaningful and reliable data across a range of human resource and capability development activities. Expanding opportunities for skills-related capacity development through appropriate ‘gap’ analysis.</td>
<td>Recruitment and selection system. Workforce planning. The pipeline challenge. Embedded patronage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic talent development and management</strong></td>
<td>Developing an integrated strategy for attracting, developing and retaining of talented people and skilled personnel.</td>
<td>Skills gaps. Talent crunch/shortages. Skilled emigration (brain drain). Leadership problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional capacity development and restructuring of civil service governance system</strong></td>
<td>Focusing on strategies to increase the operational capacities of the civil service by instituting a new governance system and career and professional development schemes.</td>
<td>Institutional (in)capacity Embedded patronage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National economic diversification</strong></td>
<td>Restructuring the national economy to focus less on oil. Develop other sectors of the economy to, generate employment, encourage entrepreneurship and foster K4D.</td>
<td>Structural constrains Patronage Institutional voids and constraints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author, 2015.

As can be gleaned from Table 7.1, the policies for rethinking civil service human capital development in Nigeria are broad and are intended to systematically tackle the capability problems faced by the civil service at both macro, meso and micro levels. Importantly and in line with the Sen’s (1985) CA underpinning this study, the emphasis of the policies/strategies recommended here is not only on reducing skills gaps, but also on improving the opportunities available for individuals to utilise the already developed human capital which in turn enhances individuals’ satisfaction and retention. I will proceed by describing the essential features of the strategies illustrated in Table 7.1.
7.3.3.1 Installation of integrated and effective public service human resources information system

Given the emerging challenges to human capital and capability development in NFCS highlighted in Chapter 5 (refer to 5.4), especially the lack of reliable data and absence of a consistent methodology for clarifying key human capital needs, the Service must ensure that information systems are in place to generate meaningful and reliable data across a range of human resource activities. In this regard, data to be gathered should include workforce competencies and skills mix, demographic trends, training needs and so on. The entire civil service workforce should be profiled in order to have usable and reliable information with which to make decisions in such areas as recruiting, training, retaining, promoting and rewarding talent.

A useful way of doing this is for the NFCS to develop a professionalised service and a responsive human resource system that is able to manage workforce size and career system much more systematically and transparently. It is also necessary for the NFCS to be more efficient with its payroll and personnel information system. Indeed, the development of a functional public service human resources information system is a crucial issue if the NFCS is to save its recruitment and selection system from the whims of shrewd politicians and their collaborating civil servants (Olaopa, 2012). The system is also critical for the restructuring of traditional, paper-based HRM/D records system and helps eliminate the problem of unsystematic training and development in the NFCS.

It is important to stress however that any information system to be installed will need to be compatible with the existing payroll system and interface with the system already been used by the Career Management Office within the OHCSF. For the proposed system to succeed it is also essential to have competent project steering committee and management team; even as professional human resource and middle managers should have an input into the project from the onset, as critical stakeholders. The involvement of HR and middle managers is especially crucial in order to minimise resistance and sabotage, and the tendency for a project of this nature to inexorably become an IT expert project, with human resource managers relegated to the background.

Overall, the establishment of an integrated human resources information system in the NFCS will help address the need for transition from basic personnel administration to human capital development and management through need-based recruitment system and systematic workforce planning. It will also curb the pipeline challenge and embedded
patronage because it will be useful in monitoring deployment and transfers as well as in reviewing progress of right-sizing strategies.

7.3.3.2 Strategic management and leadership development

Central to the quest of rethinking human capital development in the NFCS is the need to ensure that the Service has the right number of managers and leaders with the right skills, knowledge, qualifications, experience and attitudes to carry out effectively the various tasks that are necessary to meet the organisation’s overall aims and objectives. This need arguably requires the installation of a system of staff development through planned experiences as civil servants climb the ladder. This system will run well only within the framework of an integrated job planning, vacancy determination, recruitment and selection processes, deployment, staff development activities, promotion, discipline, pay and compensation and exiting/retirement systems.

As have been highlighted throughout this thesis, the greatest asset of the NFCS – as any other organisation, is its human capital. Without the right management and leadership for instance, other resources of the NFCS will remain idle and unproductive. If this is the case, then it is crucial for the NFCS that the right managers and leaders are developed and effectively utilised. The suggestions that follow outline how this goal can be achieved.

A strategic management and leadership in the NFCS should start with the setting up of integrated processes of regular audit of current skills and competencies of the entire workforce with a special emphasis on mid-level managers, as basis for projecting future personnel needs in line with national and sectoral priorities and resource availabilities and constraints. With a strong human capital in place, systematic attention need to be put on the vacancy determination and selection processes, which are two core elements to bringing new people into the Service. The challenge really is one of how to minimise or totally remove arbitrariness, and therefore exclusively use criteria demanded by merit, even within the context of diversity management and federal character.

As pointed out in Chapter 5, one of the major issues militating against effective human capital development in the NFCS is the arbitrary nature of key people resourcing processes, including T&D and management and leadership development processes resulting in skills shortages in the Service. This has in turn engendered the use of ‘quick measures’ to address the skills and capacity gaps in the NFCS, including lateral entry and contract appointments, sometimes in a manner that are hardly transparent, in spite of the presence of relevant rules and regulations. Indeed, there are differing opinions and perceptions about the extent to
which the civil service can benefit from entry of skills from other sectors. This practice is off
course hardly used in the NFCS, except where specific incentives are targeted considering
that most professionals are deterred from joining the Service because of its low
remuneration and constraining work environment. The real issue of injecting the skills of
lateral entrants however, is that of how to ensure that those bringing them are not doing so
for reasons of patronage or ‘political loyalty’ over and above core capacity considerations.
Besides, it is also necessary to avoid a situation where the selection system will become very
arbitrary and demoralising for serving personnel, to an extent that outweighs whatever
benefits that are likely to come from lateral entry.

Given the changing work context described earlier in Chapter 2 (refer to 2.3), there is also
the need to explore alternatives to lifetime employment as currently practiced in the NFCS.
Also, a mechanism for increased use of contract appointment at differential wages at
managerial and technical levels should be devised as a means of addressing the current
inbreeding that appears to be at the root of the NFCS’ incapacity for self-transformation.

To be able to develop a strategic management and leadership development system for the
NFCS, there is need for the Service to tackle a few human capital challenges through a
reform process managed within the context of a continuous learning and incremental
improvement approach. In this regard, a strategic approach to management and leadership
development in the NFCS need to address the following key issues:

- How present and future management skills and leadership requirements in the NFCS
  are determined, planned, managed and updated, and make the process more
  transparent.

- How outstanding performers are identified and deployed into alternate assignments
  for development and eventually accelerated into more responsibilities in order to
  create a competency-based competitive system capable of throwing up a new
  generation of managers and leaders with sufficient skills, knowledge and motivation
  to apply to the operations and management of the NFCS.

- How employees, especially mid-level managers are encouraged to improve their
  work methods and reach their higher standards and how are they rewarded for such
  achievements.

- The recruitment and selection process, with a particular attention of how to bring in
  lateral entries and talents from other sectors to ensure that the NFCS has access to
  the best talents available without creating disincentives for the current workforce.

- The process and instruments of evaluating managers and leaders in the NFCS.
Considering the contextual constraints to civil service human and capability development highlighted in Chapter 6, the strategic management and leadership development system proposed here recognises that current approaches to public administration in the NFCS, has evolved by accretion of the mix of different reform solutions overtime and diluted by politically inspired tinkering and neglect (Olaopa, 2012; Adamolekun, 1999a). In order for the approach being proposed to be able to address the critical human capital and capability gaps in the NFCS, the focus should be on four main change domains:

i. The changing roles of federal civil servants in the context of the changing role of the State and a knowledge and information inspired 21st century.

ii. The capability requirements of managers and leaders in the NFCS to achieve performance objectives and the Service’s strategic objectives, especially with regard to the critical areas of human capital, stakeholder engagement, customer relation and information management.

iii. The systemic and operational obstacles to being more effective manager and leader in the NFCS; and

iv. Appropriate ethics in the civil service required for behavioural and attitudinal reorientation.

7.3.3.3 Strategic talent development and management

One of the major human capital and capability problem confronting the NFCS identified in this thesis is the issues of skills gaps and talent crunch, occasioned by a number of reasons, including Nigeria’s poor educational system and continuing skilled emigration – often constructed as ‘the brain drain’. The policy changes I propose for addressing these different, but related issues fall into the broad area of strategic talent development and management (STD&M).

As I have discussed throughout this thesis, the widespread recognition that capacity constraints are a critical obstacle to development is reflected in growing attention to the need for education and training facilities and opportunities in DCs. At the same time and as pointed out in Chapter 5, the internationalisation of ‘everything’ means that developed countries increasingly reach out to less-developed countries, including SSA in their quest for talented professionals and for those who can help bridge skills scarcity in advanced economies. Harsh domestic economic and social realities, coupled with a range of financial and psychological incentives also provide motivation for skilled emigration from SSA, thus resulting in a ‘brain drain’ (Goldin & Reineet, 2012).
The issue of ‘brain drain’ has assumed a centrality in policy discussions and the evidence on the impact is mixed, reflecting disparate circumstances and policy responses. However, a point of common agreement is that there is need for countries, especially DCs to develop strategies to enable them attract and retain the required talents that will help drive the process of national development. Despite this recognition, the evidence from this study suggests that TM is currently not a priority within the NFCS and I argue that this is a critical missing factor is the Service’s quest for capability development.

As pointed out in Chapters 3 and 6, there is a plethora of TD&M roles and components within organisations, some of which are arguably overlapping. While none of these roles are less important, the dimensions that appear more relevant to the human capital and capability issues discussed in this thesis include:

- **Workforce planning:** A systematic approach to workforce planning will ensure that recruitment and selection in the civil service are not only tailored to meet immediate human capital needs, but is part of an integrated strategy of managing talents and developing civil servants capabilities to meet current and emerging organisational needs.

- **Succession planning:** A carefully designed succession plan will help the civil service deal with many of its leadership and management challenges, by anticipating specific areas of leadership/management deficiencies and taking proactive steps to addressing these through a number of TM bundles, including: coaching, mentoring, shadowing and exchange programmes.

- **Leadership and management development:** The importance of a new vision for civil service leadership and management cannot be overemphasised. As I discussed in Chapter 6, this is one issue that has militated against effective CD in the NFCS.

- **Recruitment and selection:** Recruitment into the civil service, should not just been seen as a means of creating employment for political party faithful or for rewarding cronies. Recruitment should be a strategic and systematic process, tailored to meet the present and future challenges of the civil service. Against this backdrop, I recommend the discontinuity of the federal character policy currently utilised as the basis of recruitment into the NFCS.

In operationalising the policies recommended here it is important to understand, as I discussed in Chapter 6 that policy implementation does not occur in a vacuum, but is largely influenced by the contexts within which it is constructed and practised, the capacity of those
responsible for policy formulation, the interests of key stakeholders involved in the policy process and the dominant discourses and ideas pervading in a given context. The influence of dominant discourses is especially significant in the context of this thesis, considering my previous argument in Chapter 4, that discourse(s) is the mechanism through which ideas become ‘actionable’ within a given context (Hay, 2006). If this is the case, then it does not require much analysis to see that development policies and practices are shaped by the ideas and discourses prevalent within a particular social and cultural context – the meaning system.

Therefore, in order to better understand how capabilities can be sustainably developed within the public services of DCs, especially Nigeria, it is important for scholars to focus attention on the (re)construction of human capital and CD as discursive practice. While I acknowledge that there might be several important ways of doing this, it is my position here however, that an important approach is through the social (re)construction of the discourses that shape development policies in developing contexts, using discourse analysis.41 This position is consistent with that of Lawless et al. (2010), who note that it is through conversations that the deep assumptions driving the development of people can be explored and identified. I explore this approach further in the section that follows.

7.4 Methodological recommendations: (Re)constructing civil service human capital and CD as a discursive practice

As Goldin and Reinert (2012: 274) argue, ideas and discourses are potentially the most influence on development. Globalisation and technological progress means that ideas and dominant knowledge are transmitted and exchanged pervasively across all contexts. Yet, as I pointed out in Chapter 6, external influences can only become meaningful and embedded in a given context only once they have been domesticated or institutionalised and acted upon by groups and individuals through discourses and discursive practices. Discourse then can be (re)conceptualised as an artefact of communal interchange (Lawless, et al. 2010), thus the need to speak of multiple, and potentially competing discourses and discursive practices (Gergen, 1995).

Theorised like this, discourse becomes what Hope (2011: 7) describes as ‘essential communication’, which is taken to mean a ‘communication which has an implicit or explicit

41 There is a growing body of work exploring human resource development as discursive practice (e.g.: Sambrook, 1998; Rigg & Trehan, 2002; Fenwick, 2004; Rigg, 2005; Francis, 2007; Sambrook, 2007; Lawless & Stewart, 2009). Rigg and Trehan (2002) also explored HRD in small organisations from a discourse practice and introduced the distinction between discursive practice and discursive resource.
goal which is driven by underlying cognitive features (such as ideas) which become evident as part of the policy processes (Hope, 2011: 7). Discourse in this context, makes it possible for the analyst to understand the underlying ideas that drive action inherent within institutions, while also providing insight into the processes that transform these intangible ideas into more-tangible policy communications.

It seems an obvious point from the above analyses, that discourse and ideas are central to the policy process and key to the understanding of policy and institutional change/continuity, as they bring ideational factors to the fore in the form of communications, both communicative and coordinative (Schmidt, 2008). Linking these two ideas, it seems that much of what policy makers and civil servants do, with particular reference to the NFCS case investigated in this study, is talk. This is why the notion of discursive action is crucial.

This constitutive property of discourse enables it to create or bring to life what it refers to. This implies that language is the site where meanings are not only created, but are also changed within a particular social and cultural context. Taken further and as already discussed in chapter 4, this means that knowledge is a set of social practices, often rendered practical by ideas and dominant discourses.

It is the institutionalisation of these ideas and discourses that create what we call realities, knowledge, or meaning system. It could be argued then that knowledge is a social process created through social interaction among members of a particular group, in which actors construct common truths and compete about what is true and false (Lawless et al., 2010). Understanding the dynamics of the process of these institutionalisations and interactions has become especially critical, if we are to better understand the human capital and capability development processes in meaningful contexts.

Methodologically, the constructionist discursive approach recommended here, involves focusing on what administrators and senior civil servants do in the civil service, and more interestingly, how they talk about what they do. Understanding these dynamics becomes especially relevant, considering that there could be differences between what people say and claim to do and what they actually do in practice (an investigative and explorative perspective).

Thinking of human capital and capability development as discursive practice therefore, gives us a means of critically analysing what is being said, by whom, how and what consequences arise. Such an emphasis on discourse, discursive resources and discursive practices (Rigg & Trehan, 2002), is what Francis (2007), describes as a ‘practice’ approach.
to discourse analysis. This approach has the potential of advancing knowledge and refining our understanding of how policies and practices for HCD and CD can be better improved in DCs’ civil services (Sambrook, 2006). From a critical and capability perspective, it also has the potential of highlighting multiplicity of voices, including those of the ‘suppressed’, or potentially excluded, including employees, trainees and others (Lawless et al., 2010).

Admittedly, the fundamentals of this approach are not entirely new and has been utilised by a number of scholars in analysing various aspects of human capital and CD in several contexts. A practice approach to discourse is central to the SKAD framework utilised in this thesis. The approach also shares some basic similarities with other approaches to discourse analysis, including critical discourse analysis, historical-cultural discourse analysis and social actors approach to discourse, the only difference being that the focus of the approach discussed here is on practice, not language.

7.5 Beyond capability development: A heterodox perspective to rethinking civil service human capital

A major point of departure for this study has been to understand how the dynamics of the Nigerian political economy impact on civil service HCD processes, identifying dysfunctional elements in the relationships between agents and institutions, and exploring various areas of change that must be addressed to reconstruct or even construct a ‘functional’ civil service – one which is able to improve its capabilities, lead the process of national transformation and spur the creation of a knowledge-driven economy. As the discussions in this thesis have shown, the achievement of this required change is largely a question of systemic change and the restructuring of the political economy.

The dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy portrays a social contract between the state as a guardian of the common good or regulator or provider of services, a civil society able to influence public decision-making and hold government and its institutions to account, and a civil service functioning either within the rules of state regulation or responsive to citizens’ demands (UNDP, 2013). As the analyses in this thesis have illustrated, in Nigeria, as in many DCs, most aspects of this model are absent, weak or reoriented to serve the interests of narrow political elite, largely due to unequal power relations, patronage and distorted

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42 Building on this approach, Rigg (2005) argued that research can be enriched through study of both the content (what) of communication between organisation members and their communicative practices (how). Rigg also noted that discursive studies have tended to be undervalued as “an obsession with talk” and “an intellectual luxury” yet demonstrates the practical utility of the methodological approach for advancing understanding. In another example, Francis (2007) treated language as social practice, demonstrating how this ability to act strategically was shaped by a variety of discursive practices at corporate level and beyond.
incentives. As the findings of this study indicate, it appears that Nigeria’s abundance of oil revenue has bolstered the interests of key actors in using the civil service as an instrument to maintain power, which has tended to obscure bureaucratic efficiency. Consequently, indiscipline and unaccountability has become an endemic feature of activities of federal service in Nigeria, with oil wealth, institutionalised patronage and clientele system, ensuring that the incentive structures of civil servants and other agents in the economy is constantly distorted (UNDP, 2012). This erodes the effectiveness of the public sector and makes the development of human and institutional capacities extremely difficult.

In this kind of context, developing civil service capacity is necessary and of course crucial, but it will be largely insufficient to achieve the transformational change necessary to improve the effectiveness of the Nigerian federal service, without addressing fundamental constraints. No matter how innovative and aggressive the civil service becomes in attracting applicants, and no matter how many HRM/D best practices the Service implements – transformation will be elusive unless the fundamental conditions are right. The simple point then is that developing human capital and improving the capability of the civil service in Nigeria, will largely be unsuccessful and perhaps, remain a mirage unless certain preconditions exist.

Against this backdrop and in the light of the issues discussed throughout this thesis, I contend here that addressing the wider structural issues of the Nigerian state and closing the institutional voids inherent in the polity, are central to any efforts at improving civil service capacities. This also applies for other sectors of the Nigerian economy, considering that the state makes a vital contribution to development (particularly CD), when its role matches its institutional capacity. But State capability is not destiny; it can and must be improved. The political secret is for the Nigerian government to be fairly impervious to plea for favours and rent-seeking, considering that serious reforms that will facilitate CD will always almost be thwarted by the ability of powerful interest groups to block changes which threaten the ‘rents’ they receive from the partially reformed economy.

The critical challenge for Nigeria and other SSA countries therefore, is to build a competitive and diversified economy, which not only sells its commodities (i.e. crude oil) but also its services. Emphasis should be on true reforms, those that facilitate the public interest of many as opposed to the particular short term interest of a few. Importantly, aggressive strategic national human capital development must always be thought of as a
means to long term inclusive development, poverty eradication and the promotion of rapid CD. This is arguably where the story begins.

Indeed, it is now common knowledge that the enhancement of human capabilities and the development of a society’s knowledge, through education and coordinated approaches to CD interventions are essential components of the development process (UN, 2011). As was demonstrated throughout this thesis, contemporary global economic competitiveness is largely a product of the knowledge and skills of the national workforce (Brown et al., 2001; Ejere, 2011). Perhaps, this is why Harbinson (1973: 3), classically asserts that, ‘…a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else’.

As already noted the national authorities in Nigeria, as in many DCs, are admittedly not blind to this need and has over the years initiated several national policies geared towards developing human resources. In the past however, knowledge creation, capability development, innovation and human development more generally, were largely (mis)conceptualised to simply mean human capital investment or labelled controversially as manpower planning. This explains why DCs, like Nigeria for example, established the so called Manpower Development Boards at national and MDAs\(^{43}\) levels (See OHCSF, 2010).

This rather ‘traditional’ approach and an exclusive focus on human capital investment are, however, limiting and narrow within the contemporary context of the information society and knowledge-driven globalisation (McLean, 2004; McGuire, 2014). As McLean (2004) succinctly argues, within the context of open-systems thinking and the KBE discourse, it is becoming evident that there is a need for a unified, synthesized approach to human capital development within each country or region; and this requires thinking differently. And while I acknowledge that there are several important approaches to achieving a unified and synthesized profile for the human capital development process in a national context, the specific strategies proposed are as follows:

- Reorienting the educational system to focus on critical national skills: In doing this, emphasis should be on vocational and technical education through a restructuring of the curriculum and increased government and private sector investment in the education sector.

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43 Until as recently as 2012, one of the strategic offices in the Office of the Head of Civil Service in Nigeria was still referred to as ‘the Manpower Development Office’ (MDO). First established in 1962 under the umbrella of the National Economic Council, the National Manpower Board (NMB) was also prior to 2006 responsible for human resource planning in Nigeria.
• Public-private partnership for skills-related capacity building: Government should work closely with the organised private sector to profile the skills requirements of the economy and develop a national skills capacity building framework.

• Curriculum review: Working with universities and other institutions of higher learning to develop a skills-oriented curriculum, with emphasis on leadership/managerial, technical, entrepreneurial and cognitive skills.

7.6 Critical reflections, limitations and further research agenda

7.6.1 Critical reflections and limitations

The stories in this text demonstrate the complexities inherent in the formulation and implementation of human capital reform policies in the civil services of DCs, using the Nigeria experience. By so doing, I helped refine existing knowledge on the contextual factors that should be considered in developing and implementing civil service human capability reforms in DCs. The study also helped set out new development agendas and realistic policies for a more capable developmental public service in Nigeria as in other DCs.

It is important to stress however, that I make no claim that the policies suggested here are original. Although they derive mainly from the arguments and findings from this study, they also draw on the sources referenced and have admittedly featured in many conferences and conversations among development scholars and practitioners. The uniqueness of my perspective and the value added is in bringing together a broad range of different policy suggestions from different paradigms, and linking these to capability development challenges considered in this thesis.

Whereas the concern with skills and capabilities inevitably gives this study a normative dimension, the findings ultimately have to reflect accurately and incisively not what the new agendas for capability development ought to be, but how these agendas are likely to promote capability development. Further, I also emphasise the importance of relationships and power relations between agents; of integrated public service human capital and capability development and TM that engages with structural and institutional challenges; and of links between key interests, incentives and dominant discourses in support of change.

Admittedly, the discursive construction (of a subject) can be problematic (Garrick, 1998), and the issues investigated in this study are no exceptions. By ‘talking about’ civil service human capital and capability development in this thesis, I inevitably discursively constructed what is ‘sayable’ about the subject and, by implication, leaving many things
unsaid. The unsaid relate mainly to what falls outside the discourses that enable analyses of human capital in the civil service (Garrick, 1998). This represents a problem, as many more questions are raised than are answered.

**7.6.2 Further research agenda**

The findings in this thesis are largely exploratory and there is the need for researchers to undertake more research and engage in more empirical and conceptual clarifications of some of the issues raised, especially of the mechanics of patronage and the critical links between agents, structures and institutions. Methodologically therefore, a future research agenda needs to examine the complex interplay between these contextual variables by adding sophisticated comparative research designs, perhaps of country case studies.

It is also necessary for future studies to explore further the strategic implications of power relations and incentives for those links, with a particular focus on their relevance to the assumptions that have shaped capacity and human capital development strategies in the past. In this regard, an important question to scholars to consider is: how has HCD or CD been *talked into being in the NFCS*? In other words, how has HCD or CD been invented, or socially constructed by academics, donors, civil society, practitioners and other stakeholders in the Nigerian context. Other important dimensions that scholars can also investigate include how HCD is *talked about*. The emphasis here should be on how actors draw upon particular discursive resources or ways of framing how they think about, articulate and make sense of HCD within their context.

In addition, scholars can also explore how HCD and CD is *achieved* through talk, that is through discursive practices such as delivering training programmes, coaching, mentoring, advising, consulting, formulating strategies and etcetera (Lawless et al., 2010). The issue of management and leadership development in Nigeria’s public service is also another important research area that requires further scholarly explorations. The emphasis here in line with the policy checklist presented in this chapter should be on strategic leadership development programmes and new training policy. There is also the need to further illuminate on the relationship between governance/control system and management and leadership styles in the public service. The focus here should be on institutional capacity development and the restructuring of civil service governance system to enhance the development of individual and organisational capabilities for institutional renewal.
It will also be useful for scholars to further explore the impact of networks and cross-cultural dynamics on public service governance.

These explorations should be done with a realisation that the practice of public service governance is the product of relationships between stakeholders (Rao, 2013). Indeed, the type of leadership and management philosophy adopted by senior civil servants and managers will be linked to the type of governance within the public service considering that ‘it is difficult to separate the person from the system’ (Jackson, 2004: 72). Very little scholarship has attempted to explore the relationship between control systems and management styles and this research area is arguably a valuable domain for further inquiry. In this regard and considering the theoretical framework developed in chapter three (refer to 3.9) as well as the policy checklist provided in this chapter, I suggest that future studies should be concerned with the decision making process itself within the civil service, with emphasis on three main aspects: organizational governance and how this relates to management and control systems, and to access of stakeholders to the decision process; the dominant discourses and values that operate within these systems that shape organisational behaviour, for example, the contents of CD policy; and the discursive practices that may inform and institutionalise these decisions in the NFCS.

Taken together, the conclusions and recommendations in this thesis are intended to help point the way to a genuinely new vision of human capital development and effective civil service capability development in DCs, using the Nigeria example. This new vision, as I discussed throughout this thesis, particularly in this chapter, should be anchored on a robust human capability development agenda and a talent development and management framework that enables DCs’ sustainably and endogenously develop their human and institutional capacities to meet present and future challenges in a rapidly globalising world. It is my hope that the findings from this thesis will also help provide new insights and foster more debates among development practitioners, policy makers, commentators, academics, the civil society, development agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders, on effective strategies and better approaches to human capital development and management in DC’s civil services.
References


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Press.


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Utomi, P., Duncan, A. & Williams, G. (2007). The political economy of reform: The case of


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Appendix A: Nigeria: The broader scene of the research

Nigeria is a sub-Saharan West African country located within latitudes 4° N and 14° N, and longitudes 2° E and 15° E (Uluocha & Ekop, 2003). The country is bordered in the north and northwest by the Republic of Niger and to the east and northeast by the Republics of Cameroon and Chad respectively; while Benin Republic and the Atlantic Ocean share common boundaries with the country to the West and South. The country occupies a land area of about 924, 000km (AfDB/OECD, 2008; Uluocha & Ekop, 2003). Figure A1.1 below is the geographical and administrative map of Nigeria

Figure A1.1: Map of Nigeria showing the 36 States and FCT

Appendix B: Empirical study instruments

B1: OHCSF Approval Letter

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE OF THE FEDERATION
The Presidency Federal Secretariat, Phase II,
Shehu Shagari Way, Central District, P.M.B. 248,
Abuja

Office / Dept: ...........................................
Ref No: ...........................................

Telegrams: HCSFEDGOVT.
Telephone: 09-5234491

Fax: ...........................................
Date: 14th Sept., 2012

Mr. Kelechi John Ekuma,
School of Environment and Development,
The University of Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester,
United Kingdom.

RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH ACCESS

With reference to your letter dated 14th August, 2012 on the above subject, I am directed to convey the approval of the Permanent Secretary, Manpower Development Office to enable you conduct a research on ‘Capacity Development and Strategic Talent Management: Rethinking Approaches to Human Capital Development in Nigeria’ in the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

2. You are to note that on completion of your findings, you are to avail this Office with a copy of your research work please.

Dr. Habiba Lawal
Director (Training & Development)
For: Head of the Civil Service of the Federation
3rd September, 2012

Mr. Ekuma, Kelechi,
School of Environment and Development,
The University of Manchester,
U. K.

RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH ACCESS

I wish to refer to your letter in respect of the above subject matter and to inform you that Management has approved your request for Research Access.

You can therefore access information within the scope of the area of research.

Thank you.

J. B. Miyya
Zonal Coordinator
For: Director-General
Mr Kelechi John Ekuma  
Institute for Development Policy and Management  
School of Environment and Development  
University of Manchester  
kelechi.ekuma@manchester.ac.uk  

ref: ethics/12421  

9 April 2013  
Dear Mr Ekuma  

Research Ethics Committee 1  
Re: Ekuma, Metcalfe, Morgan: Capacity Development and Strategic Talent Management: Rethinking approaches to human capital development in Nigeria (12421)  

I write to confirm that the amendments to the participant information sheet and consent form, and the submission of a copy of the email scripts that will be used during recruitment satisfy the concerns of the Committee and that the above project therefore has ethical approval.  

The general conditions remain as stated in the letter of 2nd April 2013.  

Finally, I would be grateful if you could complete and return the attached form at the end of the project or by April 2014, whichever is earlier. When completing this form, please reference your project as:  

‘Ekuma, Metcalfe, Morgan: Capacity Development and Strategic Talent Management: Rethinking approaches to human capital development in Nigeria (12421)’  


Yours sincerely,  

Katy Boyle  
Secretary to University Research Ethics Committee
3 April 2013

The Centre for Management Development (CMD)
Abuja Zonal Office
Plot 673/48 Agadez Street
Off Amino Kano Crescent, Wuse II
Abuja, Nigeria

Dear Sir/Madam (the person’s name if known)

Letter of Invitation to Participate in a Research Project

You are humbly invited to take part in a Ph.D. research project entitled *Capacity Development and Strategic Talent Management: Rethinking Approaches to Human Capital Development in Nigeria*. The research critically explores contemporary approaches to the development and management of human capital in Nigeria, with the aim of identifying innovative strategies for improved practice, especially within the country’s public sector.

The principal investigator (PI) for the research is Mr. Kelechi John Ekuma, a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM) in the School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, UK; under the supervision of Drs Beverly Metcalfe and Sharon Morgan – both from the IDPM.

Please note that before contacting you, the study has already secured the permission of the Director General to access information from the CMD within the scope of the area of research. A copy of this approval is attached with this letter.

You have been chosen as a potential participant for this research because of your role within the CMD. You are deemed an important decision maker in deciding the contents and delivery of CMD’s training and capacity development programmes, especially for their public sector partners. If you accept to participate in this study, you will form part of the interviewee group made up of thirty (30) persons from your organisation. You will be required to respond to about ten open-ended questions in an interview session that will last for about one hour. Every step has been taken to ensure that the interview session does not exceed this time frame, so as to ensure that the inconvenience that the exercise might cause you is kept to its barest minimum.

It is important to unequivocally stress that the complete anonymity of all participants is guaranteed; and that all data gathered from the interview session will be handled in the most professional and confidential manner in line with the University’s acceptable research
ethical standards. No names of persons will be used in the data and any report generated thereof.

Further details of how confidentiality will be maintained and other important information regarding the conduct of the research, are contained in the Participants’ Information Sheet (PIS) that will be sent to you if you are interested in participating. You will have up to two weeks to go through the information sheet to help you decide whether to participate or not. If you do decide to take part, you will then receive a consent form which you will sign before the commencement of the interview.

I will be most grateful if this request is given a positive consideration, even as I look forward to receiving a favourable response from you.

In addition to the approval from the Director General, I have also attached with this letter, an introduction letter from my school and a photocopy of my University of Manchester student identity card for identification purposes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further clarifications.

Thank you very much for anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Kelechi John Ekuma B.A (Lagos), M.A (Cambridge), Assoc CIPD
Ph.D. Candidate
Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM)
School of Environment and Development
The University of Manchester, U.K, M13 9PL
+2348066326491
kelechi.ekuma@manchester.ac.uk
Appendix B5: Participant Information Sheet

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study that critically explores contemporary approaches to Human Capital Development (HCD) and management in the Nigerian public sector. The aim of the research is to identify innovative strategies for the development and effective management of human capital in the sector.

Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. There will be an opportunity for me to go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you may have. This should take about 15 minutes or less. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

This research will be conducted by Kelechi John Ekuma a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), in the School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, United Kingdom, under the supervision of Dr Beverly Metcalfe (beverly.metcalfe@manchester.ac.uk) and Dr. Sharon Morgan (Sharon.morgan@manchester.ac.uk).

Title of Research

The research is entitled Capacity Development and Strategic Talent Management: Rethinking Approaches to Human Capital Development in Nigeria.

What is the aim of the research?

The focus of this study is to critically explore contemporary approaches to Human Capital Development (HCD) and management in the Nigerian public sector, with the aim of highlighting inherent limitations and critical gaps. The study therefore, aims to evaluate and recommend practicable strategies that will help improve the process of developing human capital in the Nigerian public sector.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as a potential participant for this study because of your role within the Centre for Management Development (CMD). You are deemed an important decision maker in deciding the contents and delivery of CMD’s training and capacity development programmes, especially for their public sector partners.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be invited to take part in a face-to-face interview. In total I need to speak to up to thirty (30) persons as part of my study. During the interview you will be asked to respond to about ten open-ended questions. In order to minimise disruption to you and your work place every step has been taken to ensure that the interview session does not exceed one (1) hour.

What happens to the data collected?

The data collected from the interviews will form part of the analysis for a Ph.D. thesis to be submitted to the School of Environment and Development in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Manchester, UK. Other parts might also be used for publications in peer-
reviewed journals and presentations in conferences. It is important to let you know also that a copy of this research work will be made available to the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), as a summary of findings. However, all identifiers will be anonymised to prevent your identity from being known before any of this will happen. In line with the University’s policy, the data will be kept for a minimum of five (5) years from the date of collection, after which it will be totally destroyed. During this time however, the data will continue to be password protected and stored away in a locked filing cabinet within a locked office.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**
There will be complete confidentiality of all data collected from the interview process. No names of persons will be used in the data or in any report generated. Data will be securely stored on a private laptop computer with password protection, which has been specifically encrypted for this purpose at the University of Manchester. All identifiers will be removed and data access will be restricted to me (Kelechi John Ekuma) the principal investigator and my supervisors. With your permission, the interview session will be audio taped to help generate an accurate record of all discussions. However, to maintain absolute confidentiality, all information will be anonymised when transcribed and all data will be destroyed and deleted from our system as soon as it is no longer needed for this research.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part, it is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part I will describe the study and go through the information sheet. You will be given this information sheet to keep for at least two weeks and be asked to sign a consent form thereafter. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time or choose not to answer certain questions without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**
No, you will not be paid anything for taking part in this study; and participation is absolutely voluntary.

**What is the duration of the research?**
Although the entire research process is a three year project, the data gathering is anticipated to last for six months. However, your participation is limited to an interview session and will not exceed one hour.

**Where will the research be conducted?**
The research will be conducted at the head office of the Centre for Management Development (CMD) in Ikeja, Lagos, and the centre’s Abuja regional office, Nigeria.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**
Yes, the outcomes of the research will form part of a Ph.D. thesis. It might also be used for publications in peer-reviewed journals and for presentation in conferences and seminars. In addition, before I make any reports public for the first time, I will show them to you first, to get your approval regarding the way the information has been presented.

**Who has reviewed the study?**
All research in the University of Manchester is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee (REC), to protect your interest. The study has been seen by the University of Manchester Senate Ethics Committee for Human Beings Committee 1 and given a favourable opinion.
What are the details of the insurance arrangements?
Indemnity and/or compensation for this research is provided by the University of
Manchester.

What of if something goes wrong?
It is not anticipated that anything will go wrong or that any harm will come to you during
the conduct of this research. However, if you feel uncomfortable in answering any of the
questions I will be asking you during the interview session, you can either state that you do
not wish to answer, pause the interview or withdraw your consent altogether.

What if I want to complain?
If you need to complain about the conduct of this research, kindly contact me using the
contact details provided below. However, if there are any issues regarding this research that
you would prefer not to discuss with me or the supervisors of this project, please contact the
Research Practice and Governance Coordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice
and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of
Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL’, or by emailing:
Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning + (44) 0161 275 7583.

Supervisors
Dr Beverly Metcalfe (beverly.metcalfe@manchester.ac.uk)
Dr. Sharon Morgan (Sharon.morgan@manchester.ac.uk).

Contact
If you need further information or clarifications regarding this research, please contact:

Kelechi John Ekuma
Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM)
School of Environment and Development (SED)
The University of Manchester, UK, M13 9PL
kelechi.ekuma@manchester.ac.uk
+2348066326491 (Nigeria mobile)
Appendix B6: Sample Interview Guide (1)

Preamble

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and taking the time for this interview.

As you are already aware, I am a PhD student at the Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester, UK and I’m working on a study that examines issues of capacity development and talent management in the Nigerian public sector, with the aim of identifying better approaches to human capital development in the sector.

I have chosen to interview you because of your role within the federal civil service, especially in your organisation – the Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) - which I’m using as one of the case organisations for this research, and I’d like to ask you some questions about the ways you support human capital development and capacity development in your work and some of the issues you think impact on the ability of the civil service to develop organisational capabilities and drive the process of national development.

I will try not to keep you longer than an hour. I will keep track of time as we proceed – and if you need to pause, break off, attend to something urgent or anything – just let me know.

Background

As a starting point, let me give you a little background on what I am doing:
As you may have noticed, the Nigerian public service has struggled in recent years to provide quality and efficient service delivery to all stakeholders. Indeed, it would appear that the effectiveness of the sector has been profoundly eroded and its capacity to meet socio-economic and other basic objectives grossly undermined. The emerging consensus in many quarters is that this development is due largely to the dearth of a pool of competent human capital in the sector, occasioned by institutional and structural constraints and inefficient management of the Service’s already developed human capital.

This Study

The reason I am interviewing you is that I am gathering information some of the institutional and structural issues that impact on the processes of human capital development in the federal service in order to advance new policy recommendations on how the process can be improved.

So the first part of my study is to gather information about current approaches to human capital development; and the policies that drive the process in the Nigerian federal civil service; and how capacities or capabilities are developed and managed within the Service: (Doing that through these interviews as well as looking at some of the policy documents).

There are 2 key dimensions I am looking for:

v. To understand how and the extent to which the features of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic structures, systems, processes or skill-sets impact on civil service human capital reforms in the country.

vi. To understand how the standards for human capital and capability development policies are negotiated within the NFCS.

The second part will be to relate these two dimensions to the broader field of development thinking – so this will involve looking at development literature and some of the grey literature.
I hope I’m making sense – Do you have any questions about what this is all about?

PLAN FOR THIS INTERVIEW

I have a list of about twelve questions that I want to ask you

Although there are 12 questions – I expect to ask you additional (probing or clarifying) questions about the things that you have said in order to unpack some of the ideas a little further and make it more lucid and unambiguous.

But before we get to the interview, I have two (2) things to ask you:

1. I will be taking notes as we discuss, but I am wondering if it would be okay if I audio record our conversation?

The purpose is really for me – so that I have a very accurate and exact primary record of what we spoke about that I can go back to.

Yes/ No (tick as appropriate)

2. When I write the report from this fieldwork and the analysis for my thesis (and other publications), I may like to include quotations from OHCSF staff. If it comes up, would it be okay if I quoted you in the report? – And of course I won’t mention your name as all participants’ will remain anonymous.

Just to let you know that before I made any such reports public, I would show it to you first, to get your approval of the way it has been presented.

Yes/ No (tick as appropriate)

I will ask you again at the end of the interview, to know if there are any parts of our conversation that you would prefer I did not quote.

QUESTIONS

How and to which extent has the features of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic structures, systems, processes or skill-sets impacted on civil service human capital reforms in the country?

1. In your view what do you consider to be the greatest contextual factor (institutional, structural, policy, etc) affecting CSRs in Nigeria?
2. To what extend and how do you think the identified issues impact specifically on civil service human capability development in the federal service or the reforms that have been introduced to address human capital challenges in the federal service?

Structural constraints discourse

3. Can you describe the sorts of structural issues you find yourself trying to deal with when helping in implementing capability development reforms in MDAs?
4. The abundance of natural resources in Nigeria has often been sighted as major issue in Nigeria’s developmental process. In respect of the federal service, how and to what extent do you think that natural resource endowment impacts on CSRs in the federal service?
   - Provide examples if helpful.
Institutional constraints discourse

5. In your work with other public sector agencies, projects have objectives and deliverables and that sort of thing, are there any kinds of institutional constraints that you tend to encounter, and find yourself having to overcome when trying to deliver your project objectives? What are some of these?

6. What are some of the ways that you try to overcome those constraints?

OPTIONAL

7. How would you characterise the activities of the OHCSF, as it relates to developing organisational/institutional capacity in the Nigerian public service?

How Decision Making Takes Place

8. When you design your training and capability development interventions for your organisation and other MDAs, who is responsible for identifying areas of needs and how do you arrive at the final contents of these policies? How do you needs/capacity assessment?

➢ (Probe).

Issues of power and patronage

9. Considering that your organisation has the constitutional responsibility of developing and managing human and institutional capability for the NFCS, how would you describe the process of policy making, including how decisions for policy contents and implementation criteria are arrived

i. (Probe: Are decisions based on needs, are they consultative, involving all employees or do top management just decide on what to include; do they simply follow orders from politicians?).

OHCSF’s role in human and capability development

10. In general, what do you think needs to be considered or changed in the civil service’s methods of delivery and operations in order to successfully support human and institutional reforms in the federal service?

11. In your view, what strategies do you think can contribute to improved development and effective management of highly skilled human capital in the Nigerian federal public service?

12. What recommendations would you give to the OHCSF that would make it easier for you – in your work - to more effectively contribute to supporting human and institutional capability development efforts of the OHCSF and other public service agencies?

Closing

That’s all my questions. Thinking about what we talked about, is there anything you have said that you would prefer that I did not quote? I am going to be looking over what we talked about in relation to other interviews and documents as well, and I may come up with questions, or they may be some points that I’d like some clarifications about. If so, would it be okay if I emailed you or telephoned you again to ask some follow-up questions? Thanks again for your time. You have been very helpful and I’m very grateful.
Appendix B7: Sample Interview Guide (1)

Preamble

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and taking the time for this interview.

As you are already aware, I am a Ph.D. student at the Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester, UK and I’m working on a study that examine issues of capacity development and talent management in the Nigerian public sector, with the aim of identifying better approaches to human capital development in the sector.

I have chosen to interview you because of your role within the Centre for Management Development (CMD) - which I’m using as the case study for this research, and I’d like to ask you some questions about the ways you support capacity development and talent management in your work.

I will try not to keep you longer than an hour. I will keep track of time as we proceed – and if you need to pause, break off, attend to something urgent or anything – just let me know.

Background

As a starting point, let me give you a little background on what I am doing:
As you may have noticed, the Nigerian public sector has struggled in recent years to provide quality and efficient service delivery to all stakeholders. Indeed, it would appear that the effectiveness of the sector has been profoundly eroded and its capacity to meet socio-economic and other basic objectives grossly undermined. The emerging consensus in many quarters is that this development is due largely to the dearth of a pool of competent human capital in the sector, occasioned by institutional and policy incapacities and inefficient management of the sector’s already developed human capital.

This Study

The reason I am interviewing you is that I am gathering information about how the CMD understands capacity development and talent management in order to try to situate CMD’s work with MDAs (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) within the broader development literature.

So the first part of my study is to gather information about current approaches to human capital development; and the policies that drive the process in the Nigerian public sector; and how capacities are developed and managed:
(Doing that through these interviews as well as looking at some of the corporate documents).

There are 3 dimensions I am looking for:

1. At CMD, what do you mean by ‘capacity development and talent management’?
2. What approaches does the CMD use to support the development of public sector partners and what informs their training needs?
3. How does the CMD think that capacity development and talent management occur through their work? – or how does capacity development and talent management actually happen?
The second part will be to relate these three dimensions to the broader field of thinking – so this will involve looking at development literature and some of the grey literature.

I hope I’m making sense – Do you have any questions about what this is all about?

**PLAN FOR THIS INTERVIEW**

I have a list of about 10 questions that I want to ask you

Although there are 10 questions – I expect to ask you additional (probing or clarifying) questions about the things that you have said in order to unpack some of the ideas a little further and make it more lucid and unambiguous.

But before we get to the interview, I have two (2) things to ask you:

1. **I will be taking notes as we discuss, but I am wondering if it would be okay if I audio record our conversation?**

   The purpose is really for me – so that I have a very accurate and exact primary record of what we spoke about that I can go back to.

   Yes/ No (tick as appropriate)

2. **When I write the report from this fieldwork and the analysis for my thesis (and other publications), I may like to include quotations from CMD staff. If it comes up, would it be okay if I quoted you in the report? – And off course I won’t mention your name as all participants’ will remain anonymous.**

   Just to let you know that before I made any such reports public, I would show it to you first, to get your approval of the way it has been presented.

   Yes/ No (tick as appropriate)

I will ask you again at the end of the interview, to know if there are any parts of our conversation that you would prefer I did not quote.

**QUESTIONS**

*Whose Capacities?*

1. In your work, are there specific groups of public sector workers whose capacities you are particularly interested in developing? Who are these? (To do what and why?)

**Approaches to CD**

2. Can you describe the sorts of things you find yourself trying to help MDAs do better or differently?  
   - Provide examples if helpful.
3. In your work with public sector agencies, projects have objectives and deliverables and that sort of thing, are there any kinds of capacity constraints that you tend to encounter, and find yourself having to overcome? What are some of these?
What are some of the ways that you try to overcome those constraints?

OPTIONAL
- How would you characterise the activities of your organisation, as it relates to developing institutional capacity in the Nigerian public sector?

Approaches to capacity development and talent management

4. When you design your training and capacity development interventions for ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), are there specific components and strategies that you build in from the beginning, aimed at helping develop individual and organisational capacities? What are some of these activities or components?
   - (Probe: Are approaches within projects, or is the project itself that is the approach?)

OPTIONAL
- Of the approaches that you have mentioned, from experience would you highlight any as particularly effective? What are these?

How Capacity Development Occurs

5. Of these approaches, what is it about them that you think makes them successful? Why do you think they work?

6. In general, what do you think needs to be considered in CMD’s trainings and capacity development interventions in order to successfully support policy and institutional reforms in the Nigerian public sector?

CMD’s Role and Approaches to Talent management

7. How would you describe CMD’s role in helping public sector partners manage their talents.

8. Can you describe the sort of things you engage in while trying to help MDAs effectively manage their most talented employees?
   - (Probe: What informs these activities? Government policies and strategic intents; political correctness; dominant discourse and buzzwords?)

9. In your view, what strategies do you think can contribute to improved development and effective management of highly skilled human capital in the Nigerian public sector?

10. What recommendations would you give to CMD that would make it easier for you – in your work - to more effectively contribute to supporting the talent management efforts of your public sector partners?

Closing

That’s all my questions. Thinking about what we talked about, is there anything you have said that you would prefer that I did not quote? I am going to be looking over what we talked about in relation to other interviews and documents as well, and I may come up with questions, or they may be some points that I’d like some clarifications about. If so, would it be okay if I emailed you or telephoned you again to ask some follow-up questions? Thanks again for your time. It’s been very helpful and I’m very grateful.
Appendix B7: CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below. Please tick box as appropriate.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any service.

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

4. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

5. I understand that a copy of this research work will be made available to the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF), as a summary of findings.

I agree to take part in the above project.

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