

African Journal of Business, Economics and Management

Journal homepage: <https://academiansedu.org/ajbem/>

Research Article

Executive Education and Leadership Agility in Nigeria's Public Sector: Implications for Adaptive Governance and State Capacity

Agboola, Oluwafemi, PhD**Department: International Relations, Atiba University, Oyo, Nigeria**Email: agboolaoluwafemi01@gmail.com**ORCID: 0009-0005-5703-3326*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 22 May 2026

Received in revised form: 17 June 2026

Accepted: 08 July 2026

Available online: 14 August 2026

Keywords:

Executive education, Leadership agility, Adaptive governance, State capacity, Digital governance, Public sector reform, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

Despite high levels of investment in attempts to strengthen the institution, the performance of the public sector continues to be weak in Nigeria. The aim of this study is to explore the level of contribution of executive education to add value to governance in Nigeria's public administration in terms of leadership agility. Based on the above theories, the study is grounded on the Human Capital Theory and the Adaptive Governance Theory, which is used to reflect on the role of leadership training in achieving the effectiveness of an organisation and institutional adaptation.

The study adopted a qualitative documentary research design, which involved a reflexive thematic analysis of 42 policy documents, government documents and reports, institutional publications and development partner reports that were purposely selected. The results demonstrate that Executive education enhances leadership agility in three dimensions: strategic decision making, digital readiness, and crisis-response. The National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) evidence reveals improved leadership development which facilitated increased coordination between State Primary Health Care Boards and increased use of responsive feedback mechanisms. But the findings of the ministries in the Anambra State government and leadership trainings conducted through the Lagos State Public Service Staff Development Centre (PSSDC) suggest that in practice, new leadership skills are sometimes stifled by poor accountability mechanisms and lack of supportive framework within the organisation. On this basis, the improvement of individual leadership ability does not necessarily lead to a better performance of the institutions.

The study contributes to the Capacity-Structure Paradox, which posits that an increase of leadership capability may not lead to better governance outcomes where institution structures are weak. Overall, the study shows that executive education is not enough to transform governance and should be supported by organizational process and accountability system reform and improvements in digital governance systems. The results provide important lessons to the public sector reform and leadership development in Nigeria and other developing countries with governance challenges.

1. Introduction**INTRODUCTION**

Governance is now taking place in an unpredictable, unstable, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, where change is accelerating in technology, the world is becoming interconnected and institutions are undergoing significant disruptions. These developments have led to a shift from a public administration based on rigid rules and procedures to one that is flexible, innovative, evidence-based and based on digital governance (Van Wart et al., 2020). Therefore, governments are expected to effectively address emerging challenges, remain accountable, transparent, and efficient in providing services.

However, in this evolving landscape, leadership is a major factor in performance of the governance. Traditional, top-down, bureaucratic approaches to governance, dependent upon a reliance on routine processes and regulatory compliance, are proving increasingly to be inadequate to the demands of more complex issues. In today's world, successful public leaders must also be agile and able to adjust to changing circumstances, deal with uncertainty, cope with crises, and use information technology to enhance policy processes and public services

(Day, 2000; Van Wart et al., 2020). Leadership agility has thus become a key skill for the twenty first century effective governance.

Executive Education is emerging as an important vehicle for the cultivation of such leadership skills. While traditionally linked to managerial development, executive education is now also contributing to the development of strategic thinking, organisational learning, ethical leadership, crisis management, digital literacy and innovation of policies in public institutions (Conger & Xin, 2000; Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019). Executive education is a component of a larger state capacity development, governance improvement, and service delivery reform process in many developing countries (Grindle, 2010; Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2017). Executive education is expected to improve the performance of public institutions and improve governance outcomes by providing public officials with today's leadership skills.

Nigeria is a big country that warrants study of the relationship between executive education and governance performance. While some reforms have been implemented in the public sector, the country still faces issues like bureaucratic inefficiency, poor coordination among various agencies and departments, corruption, lack of policy implementation, and digital transformation disparities among Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) (Olowu, 2019; World Bank, 2024). Such pressures have a negative impact on the ability of public institutions to function effectively and public trust in government. Thus, attention is growing on the need to find ways to increase the capacity of governance and enhance institutional responsiveness.

Two analytical lenses that are valuable for this context are adaptive governance, institutional resilience and state capacity. State capacity is defined as the capacity of public institutions to be able to produce, execute and enforce policies effectively (Fukuyama, 2013). Adaptive governance has a focus on flexibility, participation, and learning in the context of addressing complex policy problems (Folke et al., 2005). Institutional resilience is about how well governance systems can withstand shocks, respond to shifts in conditions and continue to serve key public functions when disruptions occur (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2021). These ideas illustrate the role of leadership and organisational capacity in effective governance outcomes.

While a body of research suggests that executive education improves leadership skills, there is little insight into the effects of leadership improvements on overall institutional performance. Existing literature concentrates solely on the outcomes of leadership development without considering the conditions in the organisation and its structure which will require newly acquired skills to be able to be put into practice. This is especially pronounced in the developing world where institutional shortcomings limit governance performance.

To overcome this, the study explores the nature of the relationship between executive education and the attributes of leadership agility, and its effect on adaptive governance, institutional resilience and state capacity within the public

sector of Nigeria. It frames executive education as a leadership development program as well as a governance reform tool, which can be used for governance transformation. The study also presents the idea of the Capacity–Structure Paradox, which posits that when organisational structures, accountability systems, and institutional procedures are weak, better governance outcomes are not necessarily linked to improvements in leadership capacity.

The study has four objectives; the first being to explore the use of executive education as a leadership development tool, the second to ascertain its impact on adaptive governance and institutional resilience, the third to look at its effects on state capacity and governance effectiveness in the context of digital governance in Nigeria, and the fourth to identify structural barriers that limit the impact of leadership development on governance outcomes. Related research questions include the role of executive education in building leadership capacity, in adapting governance, in building resilience, and in enhancing state effectiveness, and the challenges that impede executive education from achieving its impact.

The study has three levels of importance. It is theoretically grounded in Human Capital Theory and Adaptive Governance Theory and builds on the Capacity–Structure Paradox as a lens on leadership development–governance outcomes. It empirically presents evidence of the relationship between executive education, leadership agility, adaptive governance, institutional resilience and state capacity in Nigeria. On the practical level, it provides policy guidance for linking executive education to the wider institutional reform process, accountability mechanisms, institutional development and digitalization efforts. The study is based on the federal public sector in Nigeria, and uses a documentary approach, utilising government policies, institutional reports, courses for Executive Education and the publications of international development organisations. In general, it aims to help shape the discussion on reform of the public sector and the effectiveness of public sector governance in Nigeria and other developing countries grappling with similar institutional issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Contemporary public administration has incorporated into leadership development a central pillar of executive education. It is no longer just a training tool, but also seen as a strategic tool to enhance leadership skills, organisational learning and institutional performance. This transition is in response to the demands of governance in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) contexts in which public leaders are dealing with around-the-clock technological change, policy uncertainty and rising public expectations (Van Wart et al., 2020). Through executive education, public officials are trained in strategic thinking, systems thinking, ethical leadership, crisis management, and digital literacy, among other skills, to enable them to govern effectively.

Modern research on executive learning shows that learning executive is a process, not a one-off intervention. It not only enhances the learning of individuals but also of organisations,

the development of policy and the adaptation of institutions (Conger & Xin, 2000; Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019). Executive education builds leadership agility, helping public leaders to operate in uncertainty, enhance decision making and to support governance reform. But the impact of executive education relies heavily, however, on the institutional context in which newly acquired skills are used. Organisational structures, mechanisms of accountability, learning systems and digital infrastructures are among the factors that influence the effectiveness of leadership development for better governance outcomes.

Comparative evidence shows that executive education has various functions in different governance settings. In developed nations it is usually part of a formal leadership development program that aims to facilitate innovation and evidence-based policy-making, as well as digital transformation. Executive education is widely adopted in developing countries to build administrative capacity, enhance public service performance and facilitate governance reform (Grindle, 2010; Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017). Leadership development programmes often have a significant effect on individual skills but their institutional impact is mixed as the programme is shaped by organisational culture, political backing, resources and administrative capacity.

Across Africa, executive education has been playing a significant role in efforts to reform public sector institutions to improve their accountability, strengthen institutional structures and support digital transformation. However, empirical research shows that individual leadership competencies enhancement does not always lead to enduring organizational changes. Leadership development programmes can be less effective in the longer term due to weak accountability mechanisms, limited autonomy in administration, weak organisational learning systems, and limited resources. All these issues have repeatedly been a challenge in Nigeria. Executive education and professional development programmes are offered to public officials by institutions like Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM). The advantages of these measures are often limited by the rigidity of the administrative systems, the lack of coordination between the different agencies, the absence of evaluation of training achievements, and the lack of uniformity in the digitalized transformation in public systems.

The literature also underscores the significance of state capacity, adaptive governance and institutional resilience in the area of governance performance. State capacity is the capacity of public institutions to formulate, implement and enforce policies effectively (Fukuyama, 2013). It is broader than the presence of formal institutions, and also covers capable leadership, effective administrative processes, inter-agency coordination and organisation learning. Some of the symptoms of weak state capacity include ineffective policy implementation, weak government agencies, and ineptitude in the public sector. Governments' capacity to leverage digital technologies, data systems, and electronic service delivery platforms is a growing part of the state capacity in the digital

age. Executive education thus has a significant value in helping public leaders become better equipped to govern institutions and in the process of digitalization.

Adaptive governance is another useful lens through which to examine the effectiveness of governance. It involves institutional structures that support flexibility, cooperation, ongoing learning and co-production of decisions in the face of changing policy contexts (Folke et al., 2005). Adaptive governance will allow institutions to respond to new information by changing policies and strategies, instead of just following fixed bureaucratic processes. Institutional resilience is also associated with this notion, highlighting the capacity of public institutions to be resilient to shocks, adapt to the changing environment and continue to serve their vital functions during times of disruption (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2021). Adaptive governance focuses on learning and adapting, institutional resilience focuses on continuity and recovery. These ideas, along with state capacity, offer an integrated framework to consider leadership capability as a factor affecting governance performance.

Though a great deal of research has been conducted on leadership development and governance, there are still gaps in the literature. Previous research clearly shows that executive education is effective in improving leadership knowledge, managerial skills and strategic decision making. But, there is not much evidence that clarifies how such gains in the individual can be correlated to institutional outcomes. Moreover, while leadership agility becomes more acknowledged as an essential governance capacity, there have been limited studies of its impact on bridging executive learning and adaptive governance, institutional resilience and state capacity. There is also a relative lack of research on the organizational and structural setting that shapes the capacity to realize long-term governance outcomes from leadership development efforts, especially in countries that face structural challenges and slow progress on digital transformation, such as in developing nations.

The study adopts a tri-theoretical approach to fill these lacunae. According to the Human Capital Theory, education and training represent investments in people that increase their knowledge, skills, productivity and ability to make decisions (Becker, 1964). The theory outlines how strategic thinking, problem solving skills, ethical judgment, and change-management skills are fostered in public administration through executive education. The theory, however, stressed mostly on individual capabilities and very little on the organisational conditions required to transfer leadership development into the institutional performance.

In addition, Adaptive Governance Theory helps to understand how public institutions deal with uncertainty and complexity by learning, being flexible, collaborating, and adapting institutions (Folke et al., 2005). The theory emphasizes the role of leadership agility in facilitating the governance systems to respond effectively to the changing social, political, and technological environments. However, this does not account

for all the reasons why leadership development can sometimes not deliver sustained improvement in governance performance.

To address this, the study draws on an Institutional Mediation Perspective to focus on the influence of formal rules, administrative processes, accountability systems and organisational culture on governance outcomes (North, 1990; Fukuyama, 2013). This view takes into account that leadership is only part of effective governance; the ability to acquire leadership capability is determined by the institutional environment.

On the basis of these theories, this study proposes the main theoretical contribution: the **Capacity–Structure Paradox**.

The paradox argues that improvements in leadership capability gained through executive education do not automatically produce corresponding improvements in governance performance. While executive education strengthens strategic thinking, adaptive capacity, and decision-making, governance outcomes depend on whether institutions possess adequate administrative processes, accountability systems, organisational learning mechanisms, and digital governance infrastructure to absorb and utilise these capabilities effectively. Governance performance is therefore shaped by the interaction between leadership capability and institutional capacity rather than by leadership development alone.

The study's conceptual framework reflects this argument. It proposes that executive education enhances leadership agility, which strengthens adaptive governance and institutional resilience, leading to improved state capacity and governance performance. However, this relationship is moderated by factors such as bureaucratic flexibility, administrative autonomy, political interference, digital infrastructure readiness, accountability mechanisms, and organisational learning capacity. The framework therefore demonstrates that governance transformation depends not only on capable leaders but also on the institutional structures that enable leadership capability to be translated into effective and sustainable governance outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a **qualitative documentary research design** to examine the relationship between executive education, leadership agility, adaptive governance, institutional resilience, and state capacity in Nigeria's public sector. Documentary research involves the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of existing documents to explain social and organisational phenomena (Bowen, 2009). The approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to analyse how executive education is represented within policy frameworks and governance reforms and how it contributes to institutional performance. The research was guided by an **interpretivist perspective**, which assumes that governance practices and institutional outcomes are shaped by organisational norms, administrative processes, and the meanings attached to policies and reforms.

The study was situated within Nigeria's federal public sector, particularly in the context of ongoing efforts to strengthen governance, improve service delivery, and promote digital transformation. It focused on documentary evidence relating to Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, and national public sector reform initiatives. The unit of analysis consisted of policy documents, institutional reports, executive education curricula, governance reform publications, and reports from national and international organisations. These documents were examined to understand how executive education is conceptualised, how leadership agility is promoted, and how governance performance is assessed within Nigeria's public administration.

The study relied exclusively on **secondary documentary data** obtained from credible and publicly accessible sources. A total of **42 purposively selected documents** formed the dataset for analysis. These documents included government policy papers, executive education materials, institutional reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and publications produced by international organisations such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Development Bank (AfDB), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The use of diverse documentary sources enabled the researcher to examine executive education and governance from multiple perspectives and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed **data triangulation** by comparing evidence across four categories of documents: government policy documents, institutional reports, academic literature, and international development reports. Government documents provided information on public sector reform objectives and governance priorities, institutional reports described the implementation of executive education programmes, academic literature supplied theoretical and empirical insights, while international reports offered comparative assessments of governance performance. Comparing these sources helped identify recurring patterns, explain inconsistencies, and strengthen the reliability of the conclusions.

The study utilised **purposive sampling**, a technique commonly employed in qualitative research to select information-rich sources relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). Documents were included if they addressed executive education, leadership development, governance reform, adaptive governance, institutional resilience, or state capacity; focused on Nigeria or comparable developing countries; and were published by credible institutions or peer-reviewed journals. Documents lacking academic or institutional credibility, containing unsupported opinions, or duplicating existing information without additional analytical value were excluded. To ensure quality, each document was assessed based on source credibility, methodological transparency, relevance to the research objectives, contribution to

understanding governance performance, and publication date, with emphasis placed on materials published between 2010 and 2024.

Data collection followed a systematic process. Relevant documents were identified through academic databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, as well as official government websites, institutional repositories, and websites of international organisations.

Keywords including *executive education, leadership development, leadership agility, adaptive governance, institutional resilience, state capacity, public sector reform, digital governance*, and *Nigeria* guided the search process.

Documents were screened, reviewed according to inclusion and exclusion criteria, and organised into thematic categories. The process continued until 42 relevant documents had been selected.

The documentary evidence was analysed using **reflexive thematic analysis**, a method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for identifying and interpreting recurring patterns within qualitative data. The analysis began with repeated reading of the selected documents to gain familiarity with the content. Initial codes were then generated around concepts such as executive education, leadership capability, adaptive governance, institutional resilience, state capacity, digital governance, and institutional constraints. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader analytical categories, including leadership development, institutional barriers, governance adaptation, resilience, and governance performance.

Through a process of refinement and interpretation, four major themes emerged: **executive education and leadership capability; institutional barriers to governance performance; adaptive governance and organisational learning; and institutional resilience and state capacity**. These themes formed the basis for the presentation and discussion of findings in the subsequent chapter.

To ensure methodological rigour, the study adopted the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of documentary sources; transferability was supported by detailed descriptions of the research context and procedures; dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of the research process; and confirmability was strengthened by maintaining clear links between evidence, coding, analytical themes, and the theoretical framework.

Ethically, the study relied exclusively on publicly available documents and therefore involved no human participants or confidential information. Nevertheless, all sources were properly acknowledged and cited. While documentary research provides rich insights into governance processes, the study recognises limitations associated with reliance on secondary data and the inability of publicly available documents to fully capture informal administrative practices and political dynamics. To minimise these limitations, the

study employed rigorous document selection, triangulation, and systematic thematic analysis. Overall, the methodology provided a robust framework for investigating how executive education influences leadership agility, adaptive governance, institutional resilience, and state capacity in Nigeria's public sector.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The results of the qualitative documentary research of the linkages between executive education, leadership agility, adaptive governance, institutional resilience and state capacity in the public sector in Nigeria are presented and analyzed in Chapter Four. Forty-two documents were selected for analysis on a purposive basis and included public sector reform policies, executive education curricula, institutional performance reports, governance assessments, and peer-reviewed academic publications, which span the years from 2010-2024. Using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), four major themes emerged: executive education and leadership capability formation, institutional constraints and implementation barriers, adaptive governance and institutional variation, and institutional resilience dynamics. The results indicate that in addition to its role in leadership development, the institutional environment plays a key role in determining the governance effects that the executive education has.

The first key finding has to do with the function of executive education for leadership development. The trend of training leaders for skill and competence over the traditional administrative approach is evident in the documentary evidence submitted by institutions like the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM). Executive education programmes are increasingly focused on strategic thinking, systems thinking, policy analysis, strategic foresight, ethical leadership, innovation, crisis management and adaptive decision-making. These skills aim to build public officials' ability to operate in complex governance situations and to enhance institutional performance. The results align with previous studies that see executive education as an investment in leadership development, organisational learning and good governance practice, and not just a form of acquiring technical skills (Conger & Xin, 2000; Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019).

Digital governance competencies are one of the key components of the development of leadership capabilities uncovered in the study. Overall, digital literacy proved to be a central element in executive education and public sector reform programmes in the documentary universe. Leadership development programmes are more focused on data-driven decision making, e-governance systems, digital transformation, process automation and ICT-enabled service delivery. The policy documents suggest that public sector leaders be equipped with skills and capabilities to deal with the difficulties posed by technological transitions and to manage digital governance. Such results are consistent with the global trends that acknowledge that digital readiness is a key element of successful public sector leadership in today's governance environments (Van Wart et al., 2020).

Although these are positive gains, the study identified that there was an ongoing disconnect between the effectiveness of leadership capacity building and the effectiveness of governance. Executive education is always successful in enhancing leadership capabilities but there is documentation of a lack of or mixed results in terms of improving organisational results. Governance reviews and public sector reform reports show that implementation and execution of policies are complacent, inter-agency coordination is weak, accountability is lacking, and there are many challenges in many Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The results show that being a capable leader is a precursor but not sufficient for governance change. Organisational systems in which leaders work are as important to institutional performance as are the leaders themselves. This means that many leadership development programs do not lead to significant governance outcomes due to the lack of the ability to apply skills in practice within the institutions themselves (Fukuyama, 2013).

Nevertheless, there are some examples of successful capability activation in the documentary evidence. The use of leadership competencies for governance outcomes does not require different institutional structures. Different institutional structures are not necessary for leadership competencies to translate to governance outcomes; for institutes such as the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are good examples. These agencies have embarked on digital transformation projects, automated service delivery mechanisms, and administrative changes that have enhanced efficiency, transparency, and service delivery. Based on their experiences, the main conclusions they reach are that, when complemented by administrative autonomy, organisational flexibility, leadership commitment, and sufficient technological infrastructure, executive education can play a substantial role in enhancing governance effectiveness. The cases show that the transition in governance is possible when the institutional environment enables leadership capacities are applied.

The second key theme is centred on institutional constraints and implementation barriers. Through the documents, the rigidity of the bureaucracy turned out to be one of the most crucial challenges to governance efficiency. Cumbersome procedures, decision making structures and the lengthy approval process often slow down the pace of policy implementation and diminish administrative response. Likewise, weak accountability structures were found to be key inhibitors in achieving organisational performance. There are few effective systems for measuring performance, implementing results-based management, and holding people responsible for results in many institutions. Political pressure was also cited on a number of occasions as a factor that affects administrative autonomy and hampers the effectiveness of leadership efforts. Likewise, substandard digital infrastructure and unequal technological capacity remains a barrier to the implementation of governance reforms and the enhancement of service delivery. From these findings, it is evident that

governance problems are not just managerial or temporal in nature in the public sector of Nigeria, but are structural (North, 1990; Fukuyama, 2013).

A further analysis of the data also found that many public institutions have low absorptive capacity in the organisation. While leadership training programmes build the skills of the individuals, organisations may not have knowledge management systems, post-training evaluation systems, mechanisms of organisational learning and innovation supporting systems in place to transform individual skills into organizational capabilities. As a result, leadership skills often remain as personal resources instead of being part of the organisation. This reinforces the argument that governance outcomes are structurally mediated, as opposed to purely dependent on leadership capability.

The third theme is on adaptive governance and institutional variation. The results show the trend towards adaptive governance in some public sector institutions. Adaptive governance is seen in the growing number of digital service delivery platforms, inter-agency coordination mechanisms, stakeholder engagement systems, feedback processes, and data-driven decision-making practices. Institutional innovation and digital transformation, like the agencies of FIRS and CAC, can improve governance and administrative flexibility. The developments are in line with the principles of Adaptive Governance Theory, which focuses on learning, collaboration, flexibility and sensitivity to tackle complex policy issues (Folke et al., 2005).

However, adaptive governance is still not evenly distributed in the public sector in Nigeria. The “digital readiness” of the institutions, its leadership culture and commitment, its culture of reform and its administrative autonomy, are related to adaptability. By contrast, highly bureaucratic and resource-poor and politically infused organisations continue to find innovation and institutional change to be so elusive. This variation indicates that there is more to adaptive governance than leadership capacity. Instead, adaptive governance hinges on institutional ecosystems that enable experimentation, learning, and organisational flexibility.

The fourth theme relates to institutional resilience. Based on a documentary evidence, the primary ways in which executive education can foster resilience are leadership learning, strategic foresight, crisis preparedness, scenario planning and collaborative problem-solving. Leadership development programmes are becoming more common in public sector, developing leaders with the skills to foresee disturbances, effectively manage crises, and ensure services continuity. The capabilities improve the capacity of public institutions to deal with uncertainty and with evolving governance contexts (Ansell, Sørensen & Torfing, 2021).

However, resilience was determined to be a conditional and system level outcome, not a direct result of leadership capability. Coordinated mechanisms, administrative flexibility, digital infrastructure, organisational learning systems, and resources have a significant impact on resilience outcomes. The study revealed that the fiscal constraints, poor knowledge

management processes, political instability, administrative disintegration, and technological limitations are significant challenges for building resilience. Therefore, institutional resilience goes beyond executive education and is related to more structural or organisational factors.

Overall, four important empirical patterns emerged from the analysis. First, the leadership enhancement by executive education always focuses on strategic, digital and adaptive competencies. Second, effective governance is not necessarily a product of capable leadership. Third, institutional structures are relevant to the extent to which acquired capabilities are activated or constrained. Fourth, Institutional Resilience and the performance of Institutions of Government is a product of interaction between leadership capability and organisational systems. These results corroborate the main theoretical result of the study, the Capacity–Structure Paradox. The paradox is that while the potential for governance may be enhanced by development through executive education, the structures of the institutions do determine whether this potential will be realised. Governance performance is then a result of the combination of human capital and institutional architecture, not just leadership capability (Becker, 1964; Fukuyama, 2013).

Finally, the results show that Executive education holds an important role in enhancing the capacity of leaders in the Public sector of Nigeria. However, the quality of leadership development is important but insufficient for governance transformation, as the institutional environment that allows public organisations to put into practice and maintain the skills acquired is also crucial. This underlines the central argument of the study, which was that effective governance is a function of abilities and a function of structure.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter synthesises the major findings of the study and presents its conclusions, policy implications, recommendations, contributions to knowledge, and directions for future research. The study examined how executive education influences leadership agility and governance performance in Nigeria's public sector, with particular attention to adaptive governance, institutional resilience, and state capacity.

The findings reveal that executive education plays an important role in developing leadership capabilities within Nigeria's public administration. Executive training programmes increasingly focus on strategic thinking, digital literacy, policy analysis, crisis management, systems thinking, and adaptive leadership. These competencies enhance the ability of public officials to respond to complex governance challenges and support institutional effectiveness (Conger & Xin, 2000; Van Wart et al., 2020). The study therefore confirms that executive education remains an important mechanism for strengthening leadership capacity in the public sector.

However, the study also found that leadership capability does not automatically translate into improved governance performance. Institutional factors such as bureaucratic rigidity, weak accountability systems, political interference, limited administrative autonomy, and inadequate digital infrastructure often prevent public officials from applying newly acquired skills effectively. As a result, improvements in individual leadership competence frequently fail to produce corresponding improvements in organisational performance and service delivery (Fukuyama, 2013).

Another major finding is that adaptive governance practices are emerging within Nigeria's public sector but remain unevenly distributed. Agencies such as the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) have demonstrated greater adaptability through digital transformation, innovation, and improved administrative processes. In contrast, many Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) continue to operate within highly bureaucratic systems that limit flexibility and innovation. This suggests that institutional context plays a critical role in determining governance outcomes (Folke et al., 2005).

The study further found that institutional resilience depends on both leadership capability and organisational conditions. Executive education contributes to resilience by improving crisis preparedness, strategic foresight, organisational learning, and adaptive decision-making. Nevertheless, resilience is influenced by factors such as coordination mechanisms, digital readiness, resource availability, and administrative flexibility. Consequently, leadership development alone is insufficient to ensure institutional resilience during periods of disruption (Ansell, Sørensen & Torfing, 2021).

Based on these findings, the study concludes that governance improvement requires a dual approach that combines executive education with institutional reform. Leadership development enhances governance potential, but institutional structures determine whether that potential is realised. Effective governance therefore depends on the interaction between leadership capability and organisational capacity.

The findings have important policy implications. Executive education should be integrated into broader public sector reform strategies rather than treated as a standalone training activity. Governments should strengthen accountability systems, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, improve administrative flexibility, and expand digital governance infrastructure. Organisational learning and knowledge management systems should also be institutionalised to ensure that leadership competencies become embedded within public institutions.

Accordingly, the study recommends streamlining bureaucratic procedures, strengthening results-based accountability frameworks, increasing administrative autonomy, reducing political interference, and expanding ICT infrastructure across public institutions. It also recommends the establishment of knowledge-sharing mechanisms, inter-agency learning platforms, and updated executive education curricula that incorporate digital governance, artificial intelligence, crisis management, and organisational resilience.

The study makes several contributions to knowledge. Empirically, it provides evidence that executive education improves leadership capability but does not necessarily guarantee better governance outcomes. Theoretically, it integrates Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), Adaptive Governance Theory (Folke et al., 2005), and Institutional Mediation perspectives (North, 1990; Fukuyama, 2013) into a unified framework. Most importantly, it introduces the **Capacity–Structure Paradox**, which explains why leadership capability acquired through executive education often fails to produce sustained governance improvements when institutional structures remain weak.

Finally, future research should employ quantitative and comparative approaches to examine the relationship between executive education and governance performance across different sectors and countries. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in assessing whether leadership capabilities acquired through executive education result in sustained institutional transformation over time.

REFERENCES

- Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M. (2017). *Building state capability: Evidence, analysis, action*. Oxford University Press.
- Ansell, C., Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic as a game changer for public administration and leadership? The need for robust governance responses to turbulent problems. *Public Management Review*, 23(7), 949–960. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1820272>
- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Conger, J. A., & Xin, K. (2000). Executive education in the 21st century. *Journal of Management Education*, 24(1), 73–101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105256290002400106>
- Day, D. V. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(4), 581–613. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(00\)00061-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(00)00061-8)
- Folke, C., Hahn, T., Olsson, P., & Norberg, J. (2005). Adaptive governance of social–ecological systems. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 30, 441–473. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.energy.30.050504.144511>
- Fukuyama, F. (2013). What is governance? *Governance*, 26(3), 347–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12035>
- Grindle, M. S. (2010). *Good governance: The inflation of an idea*. Harvard Kennedy School.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Moldoveanu, M. C., & Narayandas, D. (2019). *The future of executive education*. Oxford University Press.
- North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Olowu, D. (2019). Public administration and public sector reforms in Africa. In E. Shizha & N. A. Makuvaza (Eds.), *African perspectives on governance and public administration* (pp. 45–62). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Van Wart, M., Roman, A., Wang, X., & Liu, C. (2020). Integrating ICT adoption issues into public administration education and leadership development. *Teaching Public Administration*, 38(2), 120–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0144739420904471>

Institutional and Policy Documents

- Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON). (2026). *Training calendar: Developing competencies for a responsive, digital and results-driven public service*. ASCON.
- African Development Bank (AfDB). (2021). *Governance report on public sector performance in Africa*. AfDB.
- Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). (2022). *Reform and digitalisation report*. CAC.
- Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS). (2023). *Annual report 2023*. FIRS.
- Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM). (2026). *Learning and development programme*. NIM.
- Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF). (2022). *Federal public service reform evaluation report*. OHCSF.
- Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF). (2025). *Federal civil service digitalisation strategy 2025–2030*. OHCSF.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2022). *Governance assessment report: Nigeria*. UNDP.
- World Bank. (2023). *Nigeria governance review: Public sector performance and institutional reforms*. World Bank.
- World Bank. (2024). *Nigeria development update: Governance, service delivery and institutional performance*. World Bank.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). *Government at a glance 2023*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>