Decentralised vs Centralised Human Resource Development in Nigeria: A Mixture of Experience/ Lessons from HRD Programmes in the Public and Private Sector

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Abstract: Human resource development is a systematic, organised and multidisciplinary activities of learning, educating, manpower training and development, capacity building, knowledge advancement and organisational development targeted at improving individual, team, organisational and societal performance. It is founded on the assumption that the development of the human resources of the organisation and society in general is key to unlocking the door of potentials for acceptable performance, advancement, civilisation and modernisation. The question as to whether human resource development activities should take a decentralised or centralised form is an on-going practical/empirical debate in the field. This paper interrogates the prevailing debate in the light of the two-fold positions advanced in it. One, each of the form has its advantages and disadvantages. Two, the choice as to what form of HRD programmes to adopt in an organisation is largely a function of leadership orientation and prevailing circumstances. Drawing from the Human Resource Development (HRD) processes and programmes in Nigeria and the 2018 Strategic Leadership Congress of the Deeper Life Bible Church, which took a decentralised form and held in zones and supported with strong leadership coordination, the paper presents decentralised human resources development as possessing organisational, team, individual and societal advantages. This should be explored for organisational growth and expansion.

Keywords: *Decentralisation; centralisation; human resource development; performance; Deeper Life Bible Church.*

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Introduction/Setting the Scene of the Disquisition

Decentralisation has taken roots in the Nigerian public sector with the practice dating back to the 1960s and the country boosting of a federation of a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), 36 states and 774 local governments created to bring government closer to the people. Administrative decentralisation has witnessed the central or federal government dominating the planning and decision making process that drift in most cases and not reflecting rural needs and inputs from that level. Fiscal decentralisation has equally seen the federal government allocating 24% and 20% of the country's resources respectively to the state and local government.

Religious and non-governmental organisations with established structures to experiment centralised or decentralised HRD are not left-out. For instance, the Deeper Life Christian Life Ministry with an international headquarter located in Lagos, Nigeria, organises a yearly seven days' strategic leadership development congress for key leaders of the church to drive the accomplishment of the goals of the church for the coming year. Each year's Strategic Leadership Development Congress comes with a theme. Before now, this important development of the human resource of the church consisting of state overseers, national overseers, regional overseers, group coordinators, state coordinators (children, youth and campus) and host of other spectrum of leaders (drawn from Nigeria and outside) is held centrally in Lagos. The programme has always been well attended with the number of attendees on steady increase considering its spiritual and physical benefits. But in 2018, the leadership of the church thought it wise to decentralise the strategic leadership development programme and hold it in zones within and outside the country.

As a participant in the 2018 Strategic Leadership Development Congress held in Port-Harcourt the South-South Zone, I have considered it important to assess the impact of the programme in the light of the arguments for and against centralised and decentralised human resource development. Human resource development as a practical and academic discipline is fundamentally dealing with dynamic and profound issues of individual and organisational change (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Decentralisation of human resource development are usually accompanied or associated with restructuralization, reorganisation and expansion in areas of coverage. The definitions of Human Resource Development (HRD) advanced by scholars captured the centrality of HRD in improving the

performance of workers and organisations in the face of complexities. For example, the following definitions of HRD highlight its focus, subject matter and the impact of HRD on individuals, organisations and the society:

- (i) Human resource development is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organisational community, nation, or ultimately, the whole of humanity (McLean & McLean, 2001:322). "HRD is the creative design and commingling of strategic structures, systems, technologies, and human beings in ways that promotes both individual and organisational learning, and builds and sustains organisational effectiveness" (Dilworth, 2003:241). At the heart of this definition and most human resource development programmes in the public sector and private sector are strategic issues of change management, integration and adaptation to learning processes, management and channelling of knowledge to productive use, career counselling and development, healthy and productive workplaces, insourcing and outsourcing of the training of workers, team building and cooperation, leadership transformation and development, application and integration of technologies to HRD, and sociotechnical fit and appropriateness (Dilworth, 2003).
- (ii) Human resource development is the integrated use of training and development, career development, and organisational development to improve individual and organisational effectiveness (McLagan, 1989).
- (iii) Human resource development is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and the capacities of all the people in a society. In economic terms, it could be described as the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy. In political terms, HRD prepares people for adult participation in the political activities, particularly as citizens in the democratic processes of the country. From the social and cultural point of view, the development of human resources helps people to lead fuller and richer lives, less bound by traditions and culture. In summary, the processes of HRD unlock the door to modernity, civilisation and advancement (Harbison & Myers, 1964).

- (iv) Human resource development is a process, covering training of new employees, their adaptation, professional development, re-skilling, career development and reservation, in order to improve and develop personal and team work performance, having combined organisational and personal employees' objectives and needs, and allowing employees continually develop, in that way achieving the best possible results of the organisation (Kumpikaite, 2004 cited in Kumpikaite, 2008:27).
- (v) "HRD is best seen as the strategic management of training development and of management/professional education intervention, so as to achieve the objectives of the organisation, while at the same time, ensuring the full utilisation of the knowledge in detail and skills of individual employees. It is concerned with the management of employee learning for the long-term keeping in mind the explicit corporate and business strategies" (Garavan, 1991: 17).

Although, these definitions acknowledge the subject matter and philosophy of HRD, it is important to note that defining HRD has over the years been problematic. There is no consensus of a universal definition of HRD (Dilworth, 2003; Weinberger, 1998; Kumpikaite, 2008) largely because of the multidisciplinary nature of the field, constant changes in the environment of HRD and the inability of stakeholders in the field to determine the exact boundary of HRD, etc. Despite these difficulties, scholarships of HRD capture the beneficiaries of HRD activities to include individual workers, team/groups, organisations, the state, society, community and the world in general. In other words, HRD has assumed a national and global significance that cannot be ignored in a hurry. Since the coinage of the term HRD by Nadler in 1960s and the spelling out of its tripartite components and model – training, education, and development (Nadler & Nadler, 1991; Kumpikaite, 2008), the importance of HRD has been on a steady increase. As Dilworth (2003) puts it, "the essence of HRD and how to deliver it is intensifying" (p.241).

McLagan sees the activities of HRD from a perspective different from that presented by Nadler above. From McLagan's human resource wheel, the three components of HRD are: training and development, organisational development, and career development (McGuire, 2014; Marquardt & Engel, 1993). Dilworth (2003) acknowledges the strategic nature of HRD to be more today and that its scope as expanding and expansive.

Methodology of the Disquisition

A descriptive and triangulation methodology consisting of content analysis, participatory observation, interview, documentary research was adopted in the study. The data used in the paper are largely qualitative in nature and they are analytically presented in descriptive form.

Strategic Place of Human Resource Development in Nigeria

Successful and excellent performing organisations are in most cases judged by the extent to which their goals and mission statements are actualised. The units of assessing a high performance organisation are embedded in the definition of HPO provided by Andre de Waal (2018) below:

“A high performance organisation is an organisation that achieves financial and non-financial results that are exceeding better than those of its peer group over a period of time of five years or more, by focusing in a disciplined way on that which really matters to the organisation”.

In other words, excellent and high performing organisations are characterised by the achievement of financial and non-financial goals and results. At the heart of this achievement lies a well-coordinated structure of human resource development (HRD). It is for this reason that this section of this paper is devoted to interrogating the place of HRD in driving the actualisation of the mission statement and goals of public and private organisations in the 21st century. Undoubtedly, HRD programmes if well executed contribute to the development of a global competitive workforce highly skilled and knowledgeable to drive technologies to the actualisation of organisational goals and vision.

As stated earlier, HRD is significant at multiple levels – individual worker; team/group level; organisational level; state, societal and global levels. The place of HRD can be considered from the perspective of the role of training and development in an organisational setting. As Campbell and Kuncel (2001:278) noted, “one of the most frequently encountered human capital development interventions is training” and development. Private and public organisations invest on the development of their human resources through training and development to ensure that their goals survive and prosper; enhancement in work/job proficiencies, and the realisation of significant returns in investment made in human capital (Knoke & Kalleberg, 1994; Truitt, 2011). Positive and relevant training offered to workers can enhance their commitment to organisational goals; develop

their talent and skills, which will in turn boost their performance and lead to job satisfaction; and create room for career growth and advancement.

The above points underscore the three core beliefs of Human Resource Development, as articulated by Swanson and Holton (2001:10):

- (i) Organisations and establishments (whether private or public) are human-made entities that depends on human potentials and expertise to establish and accomplish their goals.
- (ii) Human ability and expertise are developed, utilised and maximised through engaging human resource development processes and this should be done to benefit both the sponsoring organisation and the individual workers involved.
- (iii) Human resource development professionals are supporters and advocates of individual/group, work process and organisational integrity. They have access to privileged information that places a sense of responsibility and demand for ethical conduct. Compromising these information and neglecting this sense of responsibility may be detrimental to organisational wellbeing.

In both public and private organisations where human resource development platforms and systems exist, it embodies a range of activities and practices which if followed conscientiously and circumspectively, can enhance organisational productivity, work performance and organisational retention (Robertson, *et al.*, 1991); lead to human capital accumulation, which gives the affected organisation a competitive advantage (Hassan, 2007; Garavan, *et al.*, 2001; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Currie, 1998; DeGeus, 1997; & Willis, 1997); profit maximisation through quality services rendered and high quality products sold to customers.

Pointing to the importance and role of HRD to organisational survival and sustainability, DeGeus (1997) in the course of explaining why so many companies die young, observes that:

Mounting evidence suggested that corporations failed because their policies and practices are based too heavily on the thinking and the language of economics. Put another way, companies die because their managers focus exclusively on producing goods and services and forgot that the organisation is a community of human beings that is in business – any business – to stay alive. Managers concern themselves with land, labour and capital, and overlook the fact that labour means real people.

Successful organisations are those that emphasise HRD and through this, they are equipped to manage and adapt to changes. In a study of 30 companies that had existed from 100 to 700 years, DeGeus (1997)

discovered the following common characteristics among them: conservation in financing; sensitivity to the world around them; awareness of their identity; tolerance of new ideas, valuing people, not assets, loosening steering and control; organising for learning and shaping the human community. At the heart of these characteristics is the practice and activities of human resource development. For instance, the manifestation of these characteristics by organisations requires training and learning which constitute one of the essentials of HRD and Personnel Department.

The dividing line between HRD and personnel department is so thin. Public organisations in Nigeria are created with a personnel department that handles personnel matters of junior and senior staff. In contemporary usage of the term, Human Resource Development Departments in public and private organisations in Nigeria and elsewhere are operated by experts called Human Resource Development Managers who are saddled with the responsibility of

- (i) Assessing and evaluating the effects of human resources, development programmes and practices on organisational efficiency and output;
- (ii) Setting up, operating and managing the organisational learning system;
- (iii) Managing operational activities in the area of planning, organising, staffing, controlling, and coordinating the HRD department of the organisation;
- (iv) Integrating HRD into the organisation (Thaker, 2008).

The strategic nature of HRD is demonstrated by its contributions to organisational learning and development. As Griego, *et al.*, (2000) have argued, there are five basic areas that HRD must contribute: training and education; rewards and recognition, information and data flow, vision and strategy of accomplishment and individual team development. Blackman and Lee-Kelley (2005) has advised that HRD processes and practices should be carefully managed and considered, since some HRD implementation schemes (because of poor managerial approach) may actively hinder the acquisition of new knowledge and close the organisational system, thus, developing stagnation (p.628). Cultivating a culture of effective learning that show-cases the advantages (personal and organisational) of HRD within and outside the organisation may help to circumvent organisational stagnation. Such a culture when embraced by staff will help stimulate commitment to new knowledge and adaptability to changes.

Delivering the Gains of Human Resource Development: Exploring The Decentralised vs Centralised HRD Debate/Paradigm

The benefits of HRD has no doubt placed on scholars and professionals of HRD the burden of deciding how best and form the deliverables of HRD can be harnessed by individuals, teams, organisations, the state and society. This burden centres on whether HRD should be centralised or decentralised. This section is therefore an intellectual exploration into the debate surrounding decentralised HRD and centralised HRD. The exploration is driven further by arguing that it is the prevailing circumstance and organisational leadership that are the sole determinants of what form of HRD to adopt in an organisation.

As a way of enriching this disquisition, it is germane to clarify the two terms- decentralisation and centralisation. Centralisation and decentralisation are administrative and political concepts used to describe the retention of authority and power at the top or the transfer of authority/power to lower levels of government (Tessema, Soeters & Ngoma, 2009). Decentralisation implies the transfer of power/authority (political, decision making, administrative, financial) from the central government to other levels of government closer to the people for the purpose of improving the social service delivery mechanism of the government and creating/boosting a sense of public accountability (Ocheni & Agba, 2018). The drive for the improved performance of the public and private sector is on the increase. Citizens are demanding for better social service delivery and that governmental agencies be made more responsive and accountable for what they accomplish with taxpayers' money (Curristine, Lonti & Joumard, 2007). These scholars further argued that institutional drivers like decentralisation of political power and spending responsibility to sub-national governments; choice of and appropriate adoption of human resource management practices and increasing the operations of the educational and health sector may account for improved efficacy in the public sector (Curristine, Lonti & Joumard, 2007). Theoretically speaking, decentralisation is directed at improving governance in the rendition of public service/value through enhancing the efficacy of resource allocation, promoting accountability, transparency and reducing corrupt practices in government, and improving cost recovery (Azfar, *et al.*, 1999) in government domain.

Decentralisation as an institutional driver for improving the service delivery capacity of public institutions has been technically crafted into human resource development. As Kolehmainen-Aitken (2004) has argued in

the context of the health sector, decentralisation as an administrative and managerial approach has human resource management implications on the workforce of the health sector. For instance, he argues that local health managers possessing decentralised power and authority have three major human resource management concerns notwithstanding their span of responsibility: they are interested in staffing their health facilities appropriately; they desire their workers to be productive and effective; and they aspire to have a well-functioning and effective routine personnel administration system for the purpose of enhancing efficacy and minimising labour conflicts (Kolehmainen-Aitken, 2004:4).

Empirically, evidence has shown dissatisfying results of decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa countries like Tanzania where decentralisation reforms were implemented in the health sector as far back as the 1980s. According to Munga, et al. (2009), the implementation of decentralisation reforms in the Tanzania's health sector in the 1980s was intended to boost the performance of the sector by relinquishing substantial powers and resources to the districts. However, as they noted, reported challenges in recruiting health workers to rural areas stimulated the Tanzania government to partly re-instate centralised recruitment of health workers in 2006. As they discovered, decentralised human resource management in the area of recruiting health workers was characterised by complex bureaucratic procedures; severe delays and sometimes inability to get the required health workers. This implies that situational and contextual analysis may well offer explanation for the appropriateness of adopting centralised or decentralised HRD. In comparing and contrasting centralised and decentralised human resource management within the context of the Tanzania health sector, Munga, et al. (2009) discovered in their study that the recruitment of highly qualified and skilled health workers under decentralised arrangement may be expensive and difficult. However, they perceived decentralised recruitment as being more effective in enhancing the retention of the lower cadre of health staff within the rural areas. In contrast, the centralised HRD was considered to be more effective both in engaging qualified health workers and balancing their spread/distribution across districts, but ineffective in ensuring the retention of health employees (Munga, et al., 2009).

As a way of resolving the dilemma between the decentralised and centralised recruitment and distribution of health workers in remote districts of Tanzania, Munga, et al. (2009) concludes that:

A combination of centralised and decentralised recruitment represents a promising hybrid form of health sector organisation in managing human resources

by bringing the benefits of two worlds together. In order to ensure that the potential benefits of the two approaches are effectively integrated, careful balancing defining the local-central relationships in the management of human resource needs to be worked out (p.1).

In other words, interpersonal relationships is fundamental in boosting organisational performance even when a country has chosen to decentralise and centralise some of its operations. A cordial interpersonal relationship between workers at the centralised and decentralised structure will add value to the performance of the organisation. This has been largely demonstrated by Agba (2018), when he argued that organisations are purpose driven entities that require cordial and purpose driven interpersonal relationships and interactions between and among their workers to survive and perform satisfactorily.

It is important to note that the interplay between decentralisation (as a reform measure common in the civil service) and human resource management has been well documented by scholars. Within this context, decentralisation largely takes the form of administrative decentralisation which shows as Green (nd) puts it “a spectrum rather than a single state, ranging from deconcentration to delegation to devolution” (p.130).

Major characteristics of administrative decentralisation in selected countries

S/N	Countries	Form of administrative decentralisation
1.	East Asian countries	Delegation with local managers processing and enjoying some liberty to recruit and allocate staff subject to central guidelines and directives on pay levels and total employment
2.	Indonesia and Philippines	In both law and practice the central governments of these countries retained considerable control over civil service wages at the local level. Both countries are at different levels of implementing the decentralisation
3.	China and Vietnam	Both experiencing different degrees of local autonomy. Nevertheless, the central government and the communist party continue to determine how decentralisation plays out.
4.	Thailand	Delegation form of administrative decentralisation
5.	Cambodia	Deconcentration form of administrative decentralisation with a proportion of the country's workers based in the field but working on behalf of the central government.

Source: Green, Amanda E. (n.d). Managing human resources in a decentralised context

With regards to a large spectrum of African countries including Nigeria, decentralisation has become a leading political reforms undertaken by the central government of decentralising states. The African continent

has seen a good number of its countries transferring power and resources to a range of subnational government (SNG) agencies, including states, regions, provinces, municipalities, and districts (Wunsch, 2014). In terms of consequences, decentralisation has had varying impact on the lives of Africans; the making of collective choices and the effective gathering of resources fundamental in resolving issues of principal-agency; provision of collective or public goods, and the management of common property (Wunsch, 2008, 2009, 2013, cited in Wunsch, 2014).

The findings of a comparative study of Ghana and Uganda revealed that both countries have pursued a sequence of political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation. Ghana's sequence of decentralisation took the order of administrative, political and fiscal. However, the study further revealed that although, Uganda has recorded a little progress in strengthening local government institutions, both Ghana and Uganda have not adopted or followed an ideal order of decentralisation reforms that would have built the capacity of local agencies and strengthened local government institutions against unbridled and unguided central government interference. Currently, in both Ghana and Uganda, the central government is taking over much of what was initially decentralised (Awortwi, 2011). In the case of Nigeria, where a federal system of political order prevails, the local government which can be viewed as form of decentralisation has seen state governments in the 36 states of the federation hijacking the finances of local government councils via the State/Local Government Joint Account. It was not until recently in 2019 when legally the federal government by way of a Bill signed to law a legal support that empowers and grant financial autonomy to local governments in the country. Before now, local governments' finances from the Federation Account where an extension of state government coffers where governors deep state their hands without looking back.

Given the dilemmas surrounding decentralisation in human resource development and management, Green (nd:131) has argued that an effective and functional system of decentralised civil service management as distinct from a centralised directed model has the following major features:

- (i) Local government responsibilities and functions are clearly stated so that workers know what is expected of them and managers can adopt the local civil service to reflect what should be done and avoid inefficacy;
- (ii) Local government has the autonomy to allocate workers across functions as required and needed;

- (iii) Local government possesses the resources and operational environment to attract and retain qualified individuals, and to build a team of workers with diverse set of abilities and skills;
- (iv) Local government possess the flexibility in managing financial resources
- (v) Local government or institutions can hold workers accountable for their performance.

Although, as Green (nd) observed, it may be difficult for countries to meet up with some or all of the above characteristics, these features are fundamental and not impossible to meet. Primarily, as the features above suggested, that a functional decentralised human resource development and management is one that is operationalised and contextualised to meet the needs of the people at the rural level. In countries like Vietnam, administrative decentralisation is contextualised through incorporating traditional and innovative approaches in the processes. The country has even intellectualised decentralisation reforms through the introduction of a master programme on public administration reform which strongly prescribed the realignment and reorganisation of the management of human and financial resources to meet local needs (Green, n.d, p.141; Government of Vietnam, 2001:2). Not minding these efforts couple with extensive donor support for decentralisation reforms in Vietnam, the process has been largely shaped by political competition and struggle over control of public/state resources (Painter, 2003). In other words, prevailing political ideologies and forces do contribute in shaping personnel management practices and style in the public sector.

Decentralised vs centralised HRD

Decentralisation has become a predominant feature of HRD in public and private organisations probably because of the gains associated with it. Noticeably, decentralisation and outsourcing (in the reforms sweeping through most countries in the world) have gained significant effect in civil service training, hovering the impact of setting up centralised training bodies and agencies (Vyas & Luk, 2010; Vyas & Zhu, 2017). Decentralised training in public and private organisations reflect a paradigm shift of reorganising the capacity of affected institutions to be more responsive, productive and effective in their operational performance. In some instances, reforms and attempts to build capacity and improve performance of governmental institutions have witnessed the outsourcing of some of the

activities of government. Outsourcing which has pitched private and public institutions (offering similar services) against one another despite the granting of specific provision responsibility and authority to relevant private organisations subject to public control and accountability (Vyas & Zhu, 2017; Galanaki, Bourantas & Papalexandris, 2008; Riccucci & Naff, 2008).

Human resource development could either be centralised or decentralised. In centralised HRD, state resources through budgetary provision are allocated to a single coordinator or a training institution at the central level saddled with the responsibility of training public servants (Lucking, 2003; Vyas & Zhu, 2017). In this case, the development of the human resources of both public and private organisations is centrally carried out for the purpose of proper and effective coordination. Such a practice of developing human resources is limited by the number of staff that can be taken in a training programme partly because of cost, time, and location factor. Where the number of staff to be trained is large running in thousands, decentralised training scheme may be adopted in order to accommodate all that are to be trained.

Training of staff could be done to update the working knowledge of staff and build their capacity to render service effectively and improve their performance. According to Galanaki, Bourantas & Papalexandris (2008:2332), employee training is key to the success of most establishments basically because of the developmental function of building core competencies and strategic focus. Because of the strategic function of worker's training on corporate goals, companies like Motorola have taken a leap of ambition by investing heavily on training its workforce, timing the establishment of Motorola University. As Wiggernhorn (1990) puts it, Motorola University has become an education and a training institution. For a private organisation, training should be tailored towards improving the profitability of the organisation through quality products and marketability of services. For a public organisation, the aim is usually the rendition of better public service to improve the quality of life of the people. Thus, Dibia, cited in Ma (2004) believes that HRD and "public administration training in Nigeria should be designed and implemented with relevance to the sustainable development mission of the nation ..." (p.147).

Recognising the importance of training and development of public servants in driving forward the accomplishment of the developmental goals of the state, the federal government of Nigeria released in 1969 a white paper titled "Statement of the Federal Government Policy on Staff Development on the Federal Public Service". The white paper which was a product of the report of the commissioned study by the Institute of

Administration, University of Ife, on the training needs of the civil service has the following elemental provisions (Okotoni & Erero, 2005:3).

- (i) Setting up of the department of training officers charged with the task of assessing and evaluating staff development needs and preparing planning and implementing programmes to address the identified needs;
- (ii) The restructuring and reorganisation of the Federal Ministry of Establishments to give greater attention/priority to training;
- (iii) The setting up of a standing committee on staff development;
- (iv) Encouragement of every big ministry/department of government to establish a training unit in accordance with its size and function; and
- (v) The establishment of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON).

Since this white paper, the country have witnessed the decentralisation of Human Resource Development by way of the establishment of public and private universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, monotechnics and other specialised training and staff development institutions. Human resource in public and private concerns depending on availability of funds are now trained within and outside the country. Ultimately, this is to boost the performance of government operations and improve the image of the government nationally and internationally. On annual basis, federal, state and local governments make budgetary provision for human resource development across government establishments in the country. To enhance the funding ability of public tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria, the federal government has gone ahead to establish Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

A critical assessment of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) operations shows among things that it has provided training and development supports to academic and non-academic staff in Nigerian public universities. Such manpower development through TETFund financial support covers areas like conference and workshop sponsorship within and outside the country; sponsorship of academic staff in postgraduate programmes (Masters and Ph.Ds) within the country and foreign universities; manuscripts and journals grants for publication; and research grants to conduct research on topical issues with national and international relevance. In all these interventions, the human resource development takes a decentralised pattern from where the grants and

intervention funds flows from the TETFund to the various beneficiaries through their affiliated universities.

According to McGuire (2014), such training and development programmes (for instance, as provided to academic and non-academic staff through TETFund staff development intervention) is both beneficial to individual workers, their work departments/units and the organisation as a whole. Training and development programmes are associated with enhanced performance and productivity; extrinsic and intrinsic rewards enjoyed by staff because of skill development and improved performance (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999); better management of the performance of workers and the organisation; career advancement and success; and societal, national and global prosperity. Within this beneficial context, Gibbs (2006) was in order when he defined HRD as a process involving observation, planning, action, and review to manage the cognitive abilities, capacities and behavioural attitudes required to enable and boost performance of individuals, teams and organisations (p.2). Gibbs (2006) further defines HRD as a component of people management dealing with the process of facilitating, guiding, and coordinating work-related learning and development to guarantee the performance of individuals, teams (groups) and organisations as desired (p.3). For individuals, teams, organisations and the society to harvest the expected benefits of HRD process and activities, it must be tailored to meet workers' needs, organisational missions/goals and receive top management approval/support and participation. Top management support is fundamental in giving policy and financial backups to decentralised HRD.

Decentralised human resource development in the Deeper Life Bible Church: Lessons flowing from the 2018 strategic leadership congress

A number of interesting lessons were drawn from the 2018 Strategic Leadership Congress. These lessons are products of personal observation, discussion held with some participants of the programme, reflection and experiences. It is important to note that the 2018 strategic leadership congress was held in zones as a way of decentralising the development of human resources of the church. At the end of the programme, which lasted for seven days, the following lessons are drawn:

- (i) **Larger participation:** Because the programme was held in zones deemed closer to the participants in the programme, it may have led to a greater participation. With this, more hands were trained and developed within seven days to help drive the accomplishment of the goals of the church for the year. The programme was further

- decentralised through mini-strategic leadership congress held in various centres of participatory state. The mini-congress gave opportunity to workers who could not attend the major congress to get trained and developed by listening to the messages and seminars earlier treated.
- (ii) **Better learning and training environment:** The decentralised HRD created a friendlier environment for learning and training of workers. This is because, participants were used to the environment in their zones, thus, could easily adapt to environmental changes at that time of the year (January) when the Strategic Leadership Congress was organised.
 - (iii) **Reduction in participatory cost:** it is our conviction that the decentralised HRD led to a reduction in participatory cost. Participants had less to spend on transport fare since the programme was held within their zones. Shorter distance were covered which implies less cost and time spent on road.
 - (iv) **High quality of training programme and discipline:** The training programme was of a high standard-and the discipline expected lifestyle of participants in the congress was demonstrated. This is a credit to the authority of the church in the zones.
 - (v) **Motivation and greater impact of HRD:** Participants because of the above advantages were stimulated, motivated and the programme impacted greatly on them through spiritual blessings and knowledge gained. Participants therefore left at the end of the programme with great determination to expand God's kingdom through the knowledge gained.
 - (vi) **Easy management and control of participants:** As stated earlier, participants demonstrated a life of discipline and that made it possible to manage the traffic and ease to communicate instructions and goals. This was made possible through a sound electrical unit.
 - (vii) Like the case when the programme was held centrally, the decentralised HRD which the 2018 Strategic Leadership Congress tool afforded participants and the participatory state churches within the zones to purchase training materials like congress programme books, messages in CDs and MP3, spiritual and inspiration books, and other literature for personal and corporate development. These materials when properly utilized can equip participants to be more productive in expanding God's kingdom and purpose on earth.
 - (viii) **Social and Economic Impact through Job Creation:** Though the congress is seasonal, the decentralized HRD held in zones created

- jobs (generated income) for people who came around the venue to market their goods and services. Hotels and other commercial outlets for accommodations had customers thereby creating additional income for the owners.
- (ix) **Building of capacity and relationships:** Obviously, the decentralised HRD led to the building of capacity and abilities of church workers and the building of relationships which has mutual benefits.
- (x) **Joy, healing and deliverance:** Since the programme was tailored spiritually and physically to address many areas of the participants, testimonies became attendants' experience.

Concluding remarks

In view of the many advantages associated with decentralised HRD and centralised HRD, the paper concludes that both approaches should be systematically adopted depending on the prevailing situation. With this, the weaknesses of both approaches can be complemented. In adopting the decentralised HRD, the goals and objective should be clearly defined, the programme of activities be adequately funded and the finest of hands/competent hands be used. The programme should be repeatedly evaluated and corrections were necessary be taken.

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