

## Contemporary Issues in the Administration of Teacher's Pension Scheme and Gratuity for Sustainable Development of Education Sector in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

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This paper is centered on contemporary issues in the administration of pension scheme and gratuity among teachers for sustainable development of the education sector in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Recently, the hardship experienced by retired teachers in the collection of their monthly pension and gratuities (if ever paid at all), constitute a challenge to the sustenance of the teaching profession on one hand, and sustainable development of the education sector on the other hand. While not distracting from the unfortunately entrenched practice of under-funding that has plagued the education sector, which also takes into cognizance poor teachers' reward system, it has become inevitable to analytically highlight contending issues that contend with the administration of teacher's pension scheme and gratuity in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Using the analytical research approach, the paper provides perspectives on those variants that constitute structural causes of performance inefficiency in the administration of teachers' pension scheme and gratuity. The main theme of this paper is that, the education sector in the state is gradually degrading in professional interest as a result of the neglect faced by teachers through the reward system. The paper concludes that, unless these contemporary issues that plague the administration of teacher's pension scheme and gratuity as contained in this paper are addressed, sustainable development of the education sector will be grossly compromised. It recommends among other things that the management of teacher's reward system should integrate, as a matter of policy, an effective and efficient operational framework for the administration of teacher's pension and gratuity in the state.

**Keywords:** *Administration, Education, Gratuity, Pension scheme, Sustainable development.*

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### **Background to the Study**

No work, no retirement, no benefits. Therefore, every civil servant must one day retire with benefits such as pension and gratuity. It is observed that the hardship experienced by retired teachers in the collection of their monthly pension and gratuities (if ever paid at all), constitute a challenge to the sustenance of the teaching profession on one hand, and sustainable development of the education sector on the other (Orifowomo, 2008). While not distracting from the unfortunately entrenched practice of under – funding that has now plagued the education sector, which also takes into cognizance teachers reward system (Armstrong, 2012). Pension scheme in the view of Abromovitz, (2003) can simply be explained as a social security arrangement whereby workers draw retirement benefits for service rendered in the past which is only paid to qualified retirees for life. Contemporary issues associated with the administration of teacher's pension scheme and gratuity for sustainable development of the teaching profession in Nigeria are endemic and constitute a retrogressive trajectory or narratives in the development and sustenance of human capital for the teaching profession.

Gbitse (2006) noted that administration of pension exists in order to provide the employees with the means of surviving on retirement and having a standard of living that is reasonable and constant with what they enjoyed while in active service. On the other hand, gratuity simply means a lump sum award paid to an employee on cessation of his permanent paid employment as a reward for the sacrifice of his/her most productive age to the service of the employer (Armstrong, 1999). The Nigerian teacher is expected to retire from active service at the age of sixty to sixty five years, while length of service is thirty five years. It is also a policy of the service commission that any worker that spent about ten years in the employment is also entitled to gratuity. It is the duty of the government therefore to pay the gratuity and monthly retirement benefits (Pension) of retired teachers such that the retired teachers may not be faced with the usual bureaucratic (bottlenecks) associated with the payments of benefits of retired teachers (Ali, z2014). Pension administration in Nigeria has become one of the major contention issues of government, active employees and retirees, not only in the area of contribution but also in payment. Gbitse (2006) admitted that pension administration exists in order to provide the employees with the means of surviving on retirement and having a standard of living that is reasonable and relatively consistent with what they enjoyed while in active service. Thus, it is the totality of plans, procedures and legal processes of setting aside funds to meet the obligations of employee on retirement. This fund set aside and given to individuals who have retired is what is referred to as pension. One of the objectives of pension is to serve as a source of social security for the employees as they work without anxiety on how they will cater for their future needs when they eventually retire. It is a source of motivation to them as it helps to reduce labour turnover as the teachers feel valued and motivated to work which will bring about ethical behaviour and high productivity (Egbuta, 2001; Fapohunda, 2013, Mohammed, 2013 & Ali, 2014).

### **Problem of Investigation**

As good as these provisions of pension scheme and gratuity are evident in the policy documents, it is also that retired teachers in Bayelsa State, find it difficult, if not near impossible, to draw their pension regularly (monthly) as at when due. Besides, it is also evident from reported cases of non-payment of gratuities to teachers after committing their lifetime to the teaching profession. This situation constitutes a major concern for inquiry as the sustenance of the teaching profession is now grossly compromised thereby undermining the sustainable development of the education sector in the state. To drive this inquiry, the paper attempts to address some themes, which may bear major contemporary issues that define the administration of teachers' pension schemes and gratuity for sustainable development of the education sector in Bayelsa State as it is presently, the teaching profession is under pressure of lack of interest, low professionalism, low morale and declining rate of economic return as occasioned by long term deficits that retired teachers are made to face after disengagement from active service. Orifowomo (2008) reiterated that there is often news of pensioners slumping and dying after queuing up for several hours or days at various pension pay offices either for accreditation or payment across the country. Pensioners go through tough times and rigorous processes even at their old age before they are eventually paid their pension, gratuity and other retirement benefits. This has greatly contributed to the pains and problems retirees experience at the end of their active service, particularly among teachers. This paper presents the issues that hinged on administration of teacher's pension scheme and gratuity in a thematic approach.

### **Concept of Pension Administration**

Pension is simply the amount set aside either by an employer or an employee or both to ensure that at retirement, there is money for employees to fall back on as income. It ensures that at old age workers will not be stranded financially. It is aimed at providing workers with security by building up financial plans that are capable of providing guaranteed income to them when they retire or to their dependants when death occurs. The reason for pension scheme stems from the fact that first, an employer has a moral obligation to provide a reasonable degree of social security for workers especially those who have served for a long period. Second, the employer has to demonstrate that it has the interest of its employees at heart through pension schemes. The most popular way to determine the amount of an employee's pension is to base payment upon a percentage of the employee's earnings computed at an average over several years multiplied by the number of years the employee has served the company.

Pension is a tool used to manage employment. It can be applied in an organization to attain and retain certain levels of labour productivity. Armstrong (2010), affirms that pension helps employees to re-adjust themselves properly into the society after leaving employment. It constitutes an important tool in the hands of management for boosting employee morale which may lead to efficiency and increased productivity of employees in particular and the organization as a whole.

### **Sustainable Development of Education**

Sustainable development of education sector can mean the maintenance of quality assurance and standards for the well-being of all interest groups and stakeholders in the education sector in perpetuity. Sustainable development depends on the creation of shared values in the development of education community. Such shared value is based on the ideas that corporate the success and/ or social – well – being are interdependent as expressed in the social exchange theory of relations (Armstrong, 2003). Every society needs a healthy, educated workforce sustainable resource and adept government to compete effectively. The education perspective to this discourse is that, creating shared values acknowledges trade-off (positive reciprocity) between short-term return on educational investment and social valuation of the teaching profession. Besides, Armstrong, (2003) noted that such shared values lay credence to the opportunities for competitive advantage from building a social value proposition into corporate strategy. Creating shared values is therefore one of the fundamentals on which administration of pension and gratuity must be driven for sustainable development of the education sector.

### **Administration of Retirement Benefit Policy in Nigeria**

During retirement, a teacher usually receives certain benefits in the form of gratuity and pension. Gratuity is the total lump sum paid to a worker on exiting from the service either through withdrawal or retirement, while pension is the sum of annuity paid periodically, usually monthly to a public servant who disengages from service after attaining a specified age limit usually 60 years or 35 years of active service, (Ezeani, 2001; Ebosele, 2001). In other words, gratuity and pension are post-employment benefits. These benefits are designed to prevent a sudden sharp drop in the financial capacity and living standard of the teacher as would happen with the stoppage of his monthly salary and allowances after disengagement. The total lump sum or gratuity he is paid is meant to enable the retiree finance any post-retirement endeavour of his choice while the pension replaces the monthly salary the retiree gets while such was still in active serve (Babasola, 2000).

Therefore, the retirees having spent a substantial part of their productive life working to earn a living, can in their old age (that is, at retirement) sustain and maintain a standard of living comparable to what they are used to while in active service. It is based on this that most progressive governments enact laws to back up their policies on employment, retirement and pension in both the public and private sectors of the economy. To Casey (2011) and Taiwo (2014), pension as a form of social security against old-age poverty and other uncertainties has attracted great interest virtually everywhere in the world, both in developed, developing and under-developed countries. Pension programmes especially those that are publicly financed and administered, have become an issue of concern to economists, policy makers and the general public.

### **Classification of Pension**

Pension has been defined as a periodic income or annuity payment made at or after retirement to employee who has become eligible for benefits through age, earnings and service. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2006)* defines pension as a sum of money

paid regularly by a government to a people above a certain age and to widowed (widow) or disabled people or by former employer or financial institution or retired people *Micro Word Encarta Dictionary (2000)* has two definitions of pension.

1. Retirement pay a fixed amount of money paid regularly to somebody during retirement by the government, a former employer or insurance company.
2. Regular sum of money paid regularly as compensation for an injury sustained on a job or as a reward for service. For example, to an ex-worker. (Amujiri, 2009).

According to Ozor (2006), pension consists of benefit payment paid to an employee upon his disengagement from active service. According to him, payments are usually in monthly installments. He further stated that pension plans may be contributory or non-contributory fixed or variable benefits, group or individual; insured or trustees, private or public, and single or multi-employer. In many advanced countries of the world, income from pension to an individual may be supplemented by social security benefits, which apply to all citizens of such country whether or not they belong to the working class. However, since most citizens in such countries might have at one time or another, been workers, it would appear that social security benefits are co-terminus with the working class. It is different from gratuity. Ugwu (2006), as cited by Ayeba, James and Odoh, (2013) classified pension into four. These include:

- i. Retiring Pension: This type of pension is usually granted to a worker who are permitted to retire after completing a fixed period of qualifying service usually practiced in Nigeria between 30-35 years.
- ii. Compensatory pension: This type of pension is granted to a worker whose permanent post is abolished and government is unable to provide him with suitable alternative employment.
- iii. Superannuating pension: This type is given to worker who retires at the prescribed age limit of 60-65 respectively.
- iv. Compassionate allowance: This occurs when pension is not admissible or allowed on account of a public servants removal from services for misconduct, insolvency or incompetence or inefficiency.

### **Challenges of Pension Administration**

Nigerian Pensioners have high expectations on the new government to ensure an effective implementation of pension regulations existing in the country. These expectations arise from the need to have sustainable standard of living in retirement and their benefits paid as at when due. This paper highlights the key challenges facing the stakeholders in the pension industry and the possible solutions from an actuarial perspective. In broad terms, the challenges arising from different areas of pension administration include but not limited to the following: transitional pension management, guaranteed minimum pension, additional voluntary contributions, pension protection Fund, Investment Guidelines, Public Education and Enlightenment. The current problems that beleaguered pensioners from Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG), defined benefit (DB) scheme in Nigeria (which have always been at the fore) include, inter alia:

- a. Delayed or non-payment of pension entitlements and misappropriation of existing pension funds.
- b. Low standard of living (or high poverty incidence) among pensioners due to pension increases not in line with salary inflation nor no pension increase at all.
- c. Too frequent verification of pensioners by Pension Transitional Arrangements Directorate (PTAD) (section 42 of PRA 2014) leading to pensioners dying during verification exercises.
- d. Inadequate Enforcement of Pension Regulation– Over 10 years of existence of CPS, not all State Governments had enacted their pension Laws to establish CPS which is a sign of regulatory weakness. The actuarial valuations of the old DB schemes required by PENCOM at the point of implementation of the new CPS have not been carried out even for those State Governments that have already established their CPS.
- e. Lack of adequate funding, government parastatals and institutions have not succeeded in setting aside the recommended 25% for pension scheme from the total emolument of their employees due to insufficient funds.
- f. The filing system in most pension offices in the country is very chaotic. In most cases, files are poorly handled, sometimes misplaced, abandoned in the open, leading to loss of documents and in a very bad condition. Subsequently, relevant information on the affected retirees are lost by the pension office
- g. Incompetent and inexperienced pension staff with no relevant training is another problem facing the Administration of pension scheme in Nigeria
- h. Lack of database on pension matters. The manual system is not just cumbersome but loaded with all sorts of frauds and errors such as ghost pensioners, double payments and omission of names.
- i. The guaranteed minimum pension (GMP), which will be specified from time to time by PENCOM, is a provision for protecting all retirees who have not accumulated enough to have a decent standard of living in retirement (Section 84(1) of PRA 2014). Thus, it is an income support from the government, which can act as a safety net for pensioners. The modalities for implementing GMP are yet to be finalized by PENCOM for more than 10 years of its existence. This may be due to the computational complexities involved in determining the GM that require actuarial techniques which might not have been considered important.
- j. There is lack of valuation of an individual member's DC plan (individual projections of likely pension benefit at retirement) by PFAs with a clear objective to measure sustainable retirement income (using metrics such as replacement ratio which represents a sensible estimate of the standard of living in retirement) before allowing an individual to make his/her choice of AVC. The concept of replacement ratio provides an effective connection between the accumulation and de-accumulation phases of a DC plan member's life cycle.
- k. With the exception of tax benefit, there is also no incentive for additional savings (AVC) towards retirement, particularly where there is a GMP to be funded by the Government. Thus, there are relatively small RSA balances of some retirees pending the implementation of GMP. This results in a growing sense of

disenchantment with the token monthly pension benefit being received by pensioners under the new CPS relative to the huge gains (from investment returns and dividends) the Pension Fund Administrator (PFAs) are currently making.

### **Issues in Pension Administration**

The first issue of concern in the administration of pension and gratuity is staff training. Staff training and development are critical to pension scheme administration in educational institutions. In educational institutions, training of pension staff and human capacity development programmes are considered very critical as they are planned activities which focus on increasing and enlarging the capabilities of technical skills of staff so that they can possess the necessary competencies to handle complex situations on their job. The need for school pension board staff to improve their knowledge, skills, attitudes and orientation while on the job is central. It is even more critical now in Bayelsa State than ever before for a number of reasons. First, normal academic programmes in the tertiary system of education rarely adequately prepare students as “finished” products for their future positions and their accompanying responsibilities (Peretomode and Chukwuma, 2013). There is also the issue of knowledge explosion when training is involved.

Training has been a crucial aspect of staff development procedures. In an organization, an employee may qualify for a job (certificate/qualification), but may not possess the necessary experience and skills for task performance. In that case, the only remedy is through training. Olaniyan, and Ojo, (2008) saw training as short term educational programmes that are made available for employees to enable them learn technical knowledge and skills that are relevant for a particular job or task. It is intended to build employee vocationally for organizational task. The major emphasis is on knowledge, skills and attitude development. Staff training/development is the art of educating individuals to bring their talents, potentials and innate abilities for the service of the society.

Olaniyan and Ojo, (2008) submitted that staff development is the process of strengthening the skills, knowledge, competencies, and abilities in the individual to adapt and thrive in the fast changing world. Staff development in pension administration involves the provision of new skills, knowledge and attitudes to the staff in order to grapple with their jobs in the system. It constitutes the development of the life-wire of every organization. It is the human agents that participate in the day to day activities and functions of the organization. Staff of any organization needs to be trained for them to perform well.

Thus, staff development is a process that is intended to assist the workforce such as the school pension board staff to acquire relevant, desirable and expertise knowledge, ideas, skills and competencies that will enable them to perform effectively and efficiently in achieving the goals of pension administration (Nwabueze, 2010). The training and development make them to be of value in life of that organization, and at the same time permit them in meeting both organizational and individual needs. Staff development has

to do with equipping organizational workforce (both new and old) with all necessary skills needed for their improved satisfactory job performance. According to Emechebe (2009), since a well-developed administrator is likely to perform better than his counterpart without formal training, the need arises to design training and development programmes to ensure their high productivity at work. Thus, staff development tends to improve on the performance of administrators and the standard of educational pension scheme, This is critical to the sustenance of the education sector as those who are currently engaged would be assured of stress free disengagement.

#### **Availability and Access to Records in Administration of Pension and Gratuity**

Given that records or data on retired teachers existed, it will enhance the administration of pension scheme and gratuities. Adequate data or records on retired teachers are significantly correlate with the administration of pension scheme and gratuities. Takayama, (2009) noted that apparently, improper records keeping is said to be one of the intransigent problems in administration of pension scheme and gratuity. Perhaps because of the sensitive role it plays, inadequate records, lack of access to records keeping and lack of comprehensive data base which hinders the delivery structures for payments of entitlement on the pension scheme in the state is limiting the administration of pension and gratuities. Commenting on the old pension scheme, Toye (2006) who alludes to the fact that poor record management and documentation processes by the pension board as well as the liability of pension fund administrators to effectively carry out their duties limit capacity in providing for the expected pension allowance as and when due. Ayegba, James and Odoh, (2013) added that there was no authenticated record or data for the pensioners to file pension claims.

#### **Regulatory Framework on Pension Scheme**

Regulatory framework on pension scheme is another issue of concern and interest in the administration of pension and gratuity among retired teachers. Administration of teachers' retirement benefits has significant relationship with bureaucratic bottlenecks in governance. That is, complicated rules and policies slow down the administration of pension scheme on retired teachers. This is another issue of concern in order to ensure the sustenance of teacher's interest in the profession. Every retired teacher would want the pension and gratuity paid as at when due without cumbersome regulatory framework. This is to ensure that the system is sustained for perpetuity. Another related factor in the scheme is weak regulatory framework, inefficient, non-transparent system and inability of the regulatory and supervisory agencies to monitor pension fund schemes as confirmed by Herskovits (2007) who sees it as a pattern of general lack of regulatory autonomy of Nigerian institutions. Regulatory framework on pension scheme administration according to Adedeji, (2003) is generally very much fragmented and lacking in over-all sustainable policy, which has continued to serve as a challenge to beneficiaries. Therefore, regulatory framework can be adequately sustained for proper development of the Bayelsa State education sector, using the appropriate administrative rules for regular supervision and monitoring teachers' pension fund managers to avoid breakdown of ethics, law and moral stand.

### **Investment Portfolios on Pension Scheme and Administration**

Non-availability of investment programmes or portfolio for retired teachers is a major factor in the administration of pension and gratuities. It is obvious however, that most retirees placed greater premium not on investment model packages but on those packages that could raise and enhance retired teachers pension and gratuities in Bayelsa State. Operational investment strategy committee should as a statutory authority as stated in section (66) of the Pension Reform Act (PRA) 2004 to determine the risk profile of investment portfolio to ensure adequate internal measures and procedures; and to take care of other matters such as: investment model packages, investment programs and promoting pension funds custody for retired teachers. In a related study, Akeredolu (2002) was of the view that investment portfolio of pension fund for the Board of Trustees which are presented in order of preference that is; securities created by the Federal Government, shares and debentures, insurance companies and banks are of low awareness that these investment portfolio on pension fund can be used for investment purposes. However, Odi and Okoye (2012) further affirmed that, to achieve a sustainable development, teacher's pension scheme and gratuity administration for PFA should be adopted as risk management profile in making investment decisions with due regards to the credit rating of companies under the investment and securities Act of 1999 to enhance the capability to pay pension regularly to retired teachers.

### **Funding and Pension Administration**

The fact that money set aside for teachers' pensions and gratuities is used for other projects compromises the sustenance of pension administration. Besides, the major challenges of huge arrears of (outstanding) payments of retirement benefits among teachers in Nigeria, is as a result of poor funding and inadequate budget allocation and releases. Hassana (2008) affirms that most pension schemes in the public sector had been under funded, owing to inadequate budgetary allocations in addition to poor budget releases that seldom come far short of the total benefits which result in outstanding, unprecedented and unsustainable pension deficits. This is undermining the interest of stakeholders in the education sectors essentially when funds meant for the administration of teachers benefits are diverted for less important projects.

Meanwhile Fapohunda (2013) noted that the success of any effective pension funding in any organization depends on comprehensive accounting standard for retirement benefits and must be put in place to adequately protect pension's fund. Armstrong (2012) also reported reward guiding principles as concerned with rewarding employee according to their contributions and recognizing the value of everyone who is making an effective contribution, not just the exceptional performers.

However, as highlighted above, pension scheme and gratuity administration in Bayelsa State has been observed as underfunded and grossly mismanaged and this consequently have brought a lot of untold hardships and sufferings to pensioners especially teachers. This scenario resulted in accumulation of huge retirement benefits which are owned to retirees. The overall consequence is that many retired teachers died out of frustrations,

and lack of funds to maintain their lives, especially in their old age when they could no longer engage in any meaningful job. Besides, it is observed that incompetent personnel are often saddled with the critical task of computing pensions and gratuity lists and accounts, this no doubt, results in wrong placement of documents and misleading information, as a result of incompetent staff with lack of requisite training.

Furthermore, an appreciable number of pension scheme investment administrators have been licensed by pencom to carry out pension business. However, Nigeria is among the few countries that seem to be ignorant of the rationale, relevance and objective of the pension fund administrators (PFA), thus, undermining its essence as well as constituting serious debates and arguments among pension stakeholders in the state. Given the above, as a matter of urgency, the Bayelsa State education sector must adopt and implement the contributory pension scheme and give room to competent personnel with the task for a sustainable development to enhance adequate teachers' pension scheme and gratuity funding.

### **Conclusion**

The main theme of this paper is that the education sector in the state is gradually degrading in professional interest as a result of the neglect faced by practitioners in their reward system. The paper concludes that, given the contemporary issues that plague the administration of teachers' pension scheme and gratuity as contained in this presentation, sustainable development of the education sector is seemingly compromised except these issues are addressed in the right perspective as provided in this discourse.

### **Recommendations**

1. The government should as a matter of urgency set up a third-party committee for pension record scrutiny that will allow retired teachers to appeal when their pension records do not reflect their actual payment histories.
2. Government should develop appropriate information technology system and sustain a comprehensive accounting standard and records containing education sector pensioners in the state.
3. Training and retraining of pension staff and management in Bayelsa State should be adopted without delay by the state government.
4. The pension regulatory organ, (National Pension Administration (NPA) as a matter of urgency should provide ethical guidelines for regular information on investment strategies to improve on the quality of pension scheme administration.
5. Bayelsa State government should put in place adequate funding system by adopting the contributory pension scheme to solve the problem of non-payment or delay in the payment of pension and gratuity particularly among retired teachers.

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