

# PARENTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (PTA) IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: AVAILABLE TOOL FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION.

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## **Abstract**

*The idea of PTA in Nigerian schools is to bring parents and school staff to work in close harmony as would enable each contribute positively towards the transformation of educational system, This paper therefore examined the benefits of forming and introducing PTA in Nigerian educational system. Examined also are the problems of PTA in the schools including the ways forward. In process the paper revealed that despite the fact that PTA helps a lot in the administration of schools yet it does not receive required attention that will facilitate its functioning. It also advocated the need for adequate management for better performance. To this effect the paper made some suggestions as ways to tackle PTA problems in Nigeria for educational transformation.*

Parents all over the world are naturally the real custodians of the children. Thus, they are the closest people to these children and as such they are in the best position to influence their lives. This is perhaps the reason why they are endowed agents for fostering a wholesome and all round development of these children before, during and after their school age. In the family they play prominent and indispensable roles in the development of these children's physical, social, mental, emotional and moral well being. However, these children, because of the quest for knowledge are sent to school to acquire knowledge, information and skills under the tutelage of teachers and other staff in the school community (Iloh, 2004). On the basis of this fact, parents are expected to work in close relationships with the school staff especially the teachers who stand as foster parents in the absence of parents at school. Others to be involved in the education of the children are the communities, government, organizations and companies. This fact is recognized by the federal government of Nigeria when it stated in its decree no 3 of 1999 that the parents, community and local governments should be part of educational financing of Nigerian child jointly. The intention of the government in this direction is to promote a good understanding and co-operation between the school and these people as would make it possible for each and every one of them to contribute

towards the creation of conducive atmosphere in the school. The situation if created will aim at transforming education in Nigeria.

Thus, to transform is to give a different form, to change the character of, to alter the nature of and to convert (Read, 2010). For Procter (1995), it is to change completely the appearance or character of something or someone so that they become improved. For Obi (2015) transformation is the act of changing for the better. Applying this in the area of education, transformation means complete change in the ways educational activities are being handled that will lead to an improved appearance or usefulness. By implication, there should be conversion, innovation, revolution, alteration as well as renovation in the educational system. In this sense, educational transformation is all about the positive and purposeful changes of people's character and process in the education sector. The educational transformation focuses on how to change the culture, process and individuals that determined what goes on in the system.

Thus, it is in the bid to achieve transformation in the education system that has resulted in the idea of bringing parents and school staff to work in close harmony which leads to the establishment of P.T.A. According to Iloh (2004) PTA was formed in 1955, with the coming of the free primary education. Today PTA has become part of Nigeria present school system. However, the degree at which it will be useful to schools depends to a large extent on how far schools administrations see, treat and use it. This fact is recognized when it is stated in the handbook on school administration that "PTA" can be a useful arm of the school administration depending on how well it co-operates with the principal and staff in its vital role which should be to act as a link between the school and the home in solving problems of personality, finance and general conduct of the pupils (Obunadike, 2010).

### **An Over-View of P.T.A As a Concept**

PTA is a voluntary and welfare association of parents, guidance and the teachers of a particular school. It is a formal establishment in the education system. Modebelu (2014) saw it as very adequate and appropriate forum for effective communication and decision making for school community effectiveness. It is an appropriate forum for disseminating official policies, for explaining needs, problems and expectations of either party and for taking decisions about how to solve problems and satisfy identified needs (Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu, 1992). PTA is made up of parents and guardians whose children are currently in the school, parents and guardians whose children are no longer in the school but they still interested in the school, heads of the schools, teachers and other members of staff of the schools. P.T.A elects their chairman and other executive members while the position of secretary remains the right of the school heads.

Historically, before the Nigerian civil war in 1967, there was no PTA in our schools, at least not as they presently exist (Obunadike, 2010). PTA where it existed at all, he said was a very informal organization without any structure, constitution nor officers. Infact, for him, it existed and operated as occasional informal invitation of some parents by school authorities to the school; annual events such as Sports day, Prize giving day, Speech day or School's feast or Foundation day. Today, PTA has become an integral part of Nigerian present education system and as such it backed up by law mandating every parent and guardian to be official member in the schools where a child is a registered pupil/student. In view of this PTA is now a useful part of our school administration expected to promote unity understanding and co-operation among parents and school staff. The promotion of such understanding and co-operation between the teachers and parents makes it possible for each to contribute towards the creation of a conducive atmosphere that will facilitate the process of learning and teaching in schools.

In line with this, the aim of PTA is to enhance the collective participation of parents and teachers in the education of the children (Garry, 2007). For Onderi and Makori (2013) PTA provides a link through which parents and the rest of community assume a partnership responsibility and in that way participate in the education of their wards.

While Elui (2007) on his own observed that the aim of P.T.A is to enable parents know what is going on in the school and also give their opinion on certain issues concerning children. On the other hand Iwuauganwu (2006) opined that through P.T.A teachers are also made to accept the fact that parents have not only a duty, but also a right to take active part in discussing and taking decision on all the facts or aspects of the education of their children. To give credence to the above premises Obunadike (2010) upheld that the effect of a good organized and effective parents teachers association is to make both parents and teachers alike to:

- (a) want to understand more about the children that are being educated so as to be in a better position to help them more effectively;
- (b) appreciate the necessity for constant dialogue and communication between parents and teachers and hence the need to create a system or channel through which it will take place;
- (c) realize that the two parties are equally important in the education process of the children and that the educational objectives we have for these children will not be achieved without both parties playing active role.

### **The Place of P.T.A in the Nigerian Schools**

The importance of PTA in the Nigerian schools should not been over-emphasized, hence the federal government of Nigeria FGN (2004) stated in its decree,

No 3 of 1999 that communities have been empowered to help in the management and administration of schools. In view of this PTA now is made to be part of school-community and as such it can be involved in the welfare of schools in the following capacities:

- **School Administration:**

School administration involves the execution and implementation of school goals, policies and programs. It concerns with the various activities that are carried out in the schools for the achievement of educational goals and objectives hence should be joint effort. Thus PTA being a part of school and also that of community can be involved in school administration. In this regard PTA functions in the general school programme as volunteer workers and as the members of advisory council. It sponsors school activities, develops school programmes, helps in classroom decisions and promotes school events as well as assists school to receive support from the community, etc.

- **School Management:**

This involves the formulation of strategies, plans, policies as well as programmes that help in the achievement of educational goals and objectives. In this direction, P.T.A played vital roles that conceded with the diminished ability of the ministry of education to carter for the high cost of free education in the country. To this effect it is involved in staff recruitment, volunteer coordination of educational issues, decision making, school reform initiatives, etc. Similarly Elui (2004) confirmed that PTA can solve the problem of inadequate teaching staff by recruiting and paying part time teachers including financing the cost of extra lessons for children preparing for external examination. In 2007, she supported this by stating that through PTA, parents and teachers interact and take decisions on the management and welfare of the children, teachers and the school.

PTA helps to minimize the high handedness of some teachers and school administrators by co-supervising in the school management. It is a good forum for dissemination of information such as official policies for explaining needs, problems and expectations of the schools, reports of the performances of the children etc. It also influences the posting of teachers to their schools and removing of principals they do not like from their schools.

- **School Community Relationship:**

Modebelu (2014) articulated the following as the contributions of the PTA in the schools:

1. It serves as a forum in which parents and teachers exchange useful ideas for the improvement of the learning ability of the children.
2. It strengthens the authority of the school in the event, of disciplinary problems.

3. It provides good opportunities for schools to enlist the cooperation of parents in the organization of majority of school events functions or activities (eg. foundations day, prize-giving day, young farmers clubs etc.
4. Existence of PTA makes for easier school relationship with various religious organizations within such a community.
5. There also exists close relation between the school and socializing agencies such as the mass-media.

- **Fundraising Events:**

PTA helps a lot in the fund-raising events such as award ceremony, celebrations of academic and athletic achievements, inter house sports, seasonal festivals and cultural festivals. Others are the academic events such as competitions in mathematics, sciences, history, languages, performing arts, etc. The raised money is usually used to finance capital projects of the school such as construction of new administrative or classroom block, fencing of the school, provision of staff quarters, staff rooms, laboratories, etc. This is in agreement with Elui (2007) who opined that PTA finances cost of extra lessons for external examination.

- **Maintenance Of School Discipline:**

In this regard, PTA assists the school staff in melting disciplinary action on the students for insubordination. Iloh (2004) has supported this fact when he stated that often times parents come to the school to discuss issues of misbehavior of their children at home with the teachers. The studies from many researchers revealed that PTA is highly involved in the maintenance of school discipline. For example that of Onubogu (1985) and Nwachukwu (1987) suggested to the school heads to use the P.T.A to enforce discipline from the home front. Recognizing the role PTA can play in the discipline of children. Ikediugwu (2008) stated that the parents should as much as possible interact with teachers to curb indiscipline both in the home and the school. For her, PTA therefore is a forum for such interaction.

- **Provision of Educational Infrastructure:**

In this regard, Obunadike (2010) observed that the potentials of PTA in our educational system are limitless provided it is well guided. Admitted, for her, the PTA has contributed immensely to the improvement of various school system in Onitsha Local Government especially in the provision of infrastructure. In their study Elui (2007) and Eke (1980) agreed that PTA also helps to provide chairs and tables and walling of schools.

### **Problems of P.T.A in Nigerian Schools**

Under this section, attempt is made to highlight some of the problems involved in the school as a result of relationship between the parents and the school staff. Thus it is evident that problems do emanate in this direction as observed by studies. These problems include the following:

- **Lack of understanding between parents and school staff**

The contribution of Iloh (2004) has lended credence to this premise. He observed that parents no longer show sufficient interest in the progress of their children at school, so they do not see the need for good relationship between them and the teachers. For him, some parents no longer deem it necessary to visit teachers for discussions concerning their children or ward. When parents visit school, they do so to come and criticize the teachers and the school instead of using one voice to bring-up the children. On the other hand the teachers are not willing to see and treat parents as their partners in the management and welfare of the children, and the progress of the school.

- **Fraud Especially As Regards Money**

In this regard many complaints are coming from many parents. These complaints according to Obunadike (2010) range from excessive levies, misuse or misappropriation of funds by the school authorities as well as undue manipulation of the PTA by the school administrators to further their own personal ends.

- **Literacy issues on the part of parents**

Thus a considerable proportion of the parents are illiterates. These illiterate parents need to be properly oriented on the purpose of PTA as well as the roles they are expected to play for the good and welfare of their children in the schools.

- **Poor Management of PTA in the Schools**

PTA is not allowed to operate freely and independently in the schools where they operate. This view was corroborated by Obunadike (2010) when she asked the following question, “is the PTA allowed to operate freely and independently without undue interference and meddling with school authorities and officials of the state commission, as well as the ministry of education”. By implication, he meant that this is one of the major problems that hinders PTA from functioning well in the schools.

- **Lack Of Co-Operation On The Part Of School Authority**

PTA no doubt requires full co-operation from the school authority as a viable organ of the school. With this co-operation PTA will be capable of effecting the type of changes or innovations that will bring progress in the school.

Unfortunately in some schools PTA is just seen as the organ that is to run to for help when ever the school authority needs money. This is perhaps the reason why Obunadike (2010) asked this question, ‘do the school authorities treat or see PTA as a body that should never be led into or involved in the “intricacies” and ‘musteries’ of education about which the member know little or nothing’. He later warned that the extent to which the PTA can realize the objectives for which it is established depends very much on how far those who are supposed to make use of the organization are prepared to employ it. For him the potentials of PTA in our educational system are limitless provided it is well guided.

### **Towards Effective Management of P.T.A**

Notwithstanding the problems currently facing the establishment of PTA as a tool for change and innovation in our educational system, a lot of benefits are expected to come from it if effectively managed. This paper highlights the effective ways to manage PTA as:

School administration should be ready to give every necessary encouragement that will elicit spontaneous Co-operation from the parents. To achieve this frequent communication with adequate information is vital. Furthermore school should organize activities, programmes and meetings during which parents will participate in the decision concerning the needs of the school.

Due recognition should be given to the PTA by the schools, school administration, state commission and ministry of education should see and treat PTA as a viable organ of school that should be called upon when the needs arise.

Government should be more responsive to the problems of PTA for better performance. This is in agreement with national P.T.A (1988) that it is responsible for alleviating most problems that the school management might encounter in ensuring that children are properly set for learning, including extracurricular activities like inter-house sports.

The head teacher should see that the parents are encouraged to put more efforts in their activities, through proper accountability and strengthening of the PTA records (Iloh, 2004). This is achieved through good administration and supervision activities in the schools.

Co-ordial relationship with love and rapport between the parents and school staff is an asset to school. This is because through that parents will go extra miles in proving for the good of the school in many areas.

Similarly, Obunadike (2010) recommended *intu allia* as effective ways for effective management of PTA:

Government should provide funds for the organization as to disabuse their mind that government only thinks of the organization when there is need to raise money to carry out some specific projects in the schools.

The organization should appoint men of proven probity to handle the money contributed by the members of the association in order to avoid misappropriation of such funds.

Formal channel of communication can be opened between the school and parents so that whenever each party has a problem, it will be easy to tackle. For the author, effective communication helps a great deal in the school success.

Parents as individuals should be listened to, each time they bring up a complain and the school side of the mater should be presented clearly to them.

### **Conclusion**

There is widely held belief that PTA is an indispensable and prominent organ of school administration. Its potentials in the educational system are limitless and thus should be given adequate attention it requires to function well in the schools. This paper therefore called on the educators, scholars, government and non governmental bodies to always look into the complaints of parents each time they bring complaints as well as making sure that the school side of the matter is presented clearly to these parents.

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