

PARENTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (PTA) PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COLLEGES IN NIGERIA: FOCUS ON SOUTH EAST

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Abstract

The study investigated Parents Teachers Association (PTA) participation in sustaining Federal government Colleges in Nigeria with Focus on the South East. Four research questions guided the study which adopted a survey design. The population of the study consists of 89 major stakeholders in Unity Schools. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Level of participation of PTA in Unity Schools Sustenance (LPPUSS).” The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability using cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analysed using mean ratings. Results showed that the level of PTA participation in sustaining Federal Government Colleges is high. Recommendations were made among which, was that government – PTA partnership in the development of education should continue.

Federal Government colleges came into existence after the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970 as part of the Federal Military Government Policy for promoting unity across the country. The colleges were founded on the premise of providing secondary school education of a high standard to students from all states of the federation. These colleges were collectively termed ‘Unity’ schools and adopted the motto ‘pro-unitate’. The motto ‘pro-unitate’ according to Federal Government Girls College, Benin (2011:1) epitomized the aims and objectives of establishing the unity schools which include:

- (a) to allow Nigerian students to receive quality education irrespective of state, tribe and culture;

- (b) by working and playing together in their formative years, students would form lasting friendship with other students from across the country; and
- (c) to enable all students learn to be tolerant and appreciate differences in the cultural background of fellow students:

Federal Government of Nigeria therefore, established the unity schools as a model to forge the much desired understanding, patriotism and national unity among the feuding tribes through education. Ijaiya and Jakayinfa (2009) stated that schools were at that period rightly thought to be the fastest means of promoting understanding, appreciation, tolerance and respect for each other's culture, and children in their formative years, given the opportunity to live together, are better placed to forge the needed national unity.

The colleges were boarding schools, mostly mixed at inception, while a few were single-sex only (female), but eventually, each state got additional female type. The unity schools are now 104 in number while in the South East of Nigeria which is the focus of this study, they are 12 in number out of which 5 is for girls only. At inception, admission of students to the colleges was designed to be truly national with admission quota guidelines enforced to ensure that no state is left out due to lower scores without relegating merit as only the best from each state was considered for admission (Nwankwo, Sam and Olugbile, 2007).

Apart from academic excellence, the schools lived up to the vision that established them through their national spread and alumni activities. The schools have produced excellent students who have and are still contributing to national development...When the history of manpower development in Nigeria is written, the Unity Schools will feature prominently because they came in at the expedient time when the country was just developing indigenous manpower to replace the colonial masters (Ijaiya and Jakayinfa, 2009:2).

This cheering development however, began to decline in the last decade for lack of consistency in the management of the affairs of the schools. The usual strict admission policy was no longer adhered to and there were allegations of corruption among the managers of the system to the extent that the general decay in the public schools also afflicted these schools. Bosah (2013) observed that the rot had become so deep that presently the unity schools are mostly shadows of their past in terms of infrastructural facilities, discipline, social activities and academic performance. Similarly, Federal Ministry of Education (2006) noted that the unity schools in spite of their proud history are no longer fulfilling the purpose for which they were founded; a situation attributed to over concentration of the problems of the system into the hands of

the federal government that lack the constitutional responsibility to take care of secondary schools.

The situation according to FME (2006) is worrisome as over 80% of the ministry's budget and over 85% of its staff resources are being spent on the management of unity schools. The schools by all indications appear over populated that available facilities are overstretched. The public is shocked and dismay at the level of decay of the unity schools that before now were the pride of the nation. This is therefore, a marked departure from the performances of these schools in the 1970s and 1980s, and certainly needs to be addressed.

Several stakeholders cried out against this ugly situation inimical to the development of the nation. One of such stakeholders is the Parents Teachers Association (PTA). The PTA is an amalgamation of parent of students and all the teachers of a given school. They usually come together to create a common forum where and when parents of students and their teachers interact and brainstorm on issues of common interest. Parents-Teachers-Association is grossly burdened with the learning and teaching activities of the institutions, the co-ordination and management of the institutional growth and developments, this it does both morally and financially (Ibezimako, 2014).

The conception of the Parents-Teachers-Association (PTA) simply as a donor agency for schools is not sufficient to describe its real functions. The PTA can be an active partner in various other role dimensions in schools. Edeze (2007:12) enumerated them to include:

- (a) Helping to check cases of truancy, indiscipline and moral laxity among school children and even teachers;
- (b) Contributing ideas and morally and financially towards the planning and execution of viable school projects;
- (c) Initiating, collecting and utilizing approved levies for the development of schools;
- (d) Encouraging and ensuring that parents provide their children with approved school uniforms, books, writing materials, and similar requirements, and further ensuring their proper maintenance at all times;
- (e) Donate prizes and trophies to be competed for by students in various areas of endeavour, among others.

Ezeuwa and Orogwu (2010) collaborated the view stated above by maintaining that apart from financial contributions, the PTA can help in sustaining the school by providing instructional resources such as human and material resources. The PTA often initiates its own project in the school. Oguntoye in Ezeuwa and Orogwu (2010) argued

that there were schools where PTA employs both academic and non-academic staff and shoulders the responsibilities of paying the emolument of such staff in order to sustain the academic and aesthetic growth of the school. The association in some instances, builds classroom blocks, provides equipment and vehicles to promoted good teaching-learning process.

It is against this backdrop therefore that this study intends to ascertain the level of parents-Teachers-Association (PTA) participation in sustaining federal government colleges in Nigeria with focus on those schools in the South East.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided the study. They are:

- (i) What is the level of PTA participation in academic development of Unity Secondary Schools?
- (ii) What is the level of PTA participation in infrastructural development of Unity Secondary Schools?
- (iii) What is the level of PTA participation in ensuring discipline among staff and students of Unity Secondary Schools?
- (iv) What is the level of PTA participation in social activities of Unity Secondary Schools?

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to determine the level of PTA participation in sustaining Unity Secondary Schools. The total population for the study was 89 respondent consisting of 12 principals, 12 PTA chairmen, 12 PTA members, 12 Vice Principals (academic) 12 vice principals (special duty) 12 head boys or girls, 12 vice principals (Administration) and 5 federal inspectors of Education representing the 5 states in the South East. Each of the 12 Unity Schools in the area is therefore represented by the principal, three vice principals, PTA chairman, PTA member and the head boy or girl. The entire population of 89 was used for the study as no sample was drawn.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire entitled “Level of Participation of PTA in Unity Schools Sustenance (LPPUSS)’. A four point scale was used to rate the responses and the following values were assigned to the responses: very high, 4 points, high, 3 points, low, 2 points and very low, 1 point. The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Administration and planning and an expert in measurement and evaluation all from the faculty of education, Ebonyi State University. Reliability of instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded the value of 0.82.

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The research questions were answered using mean and grand mean. The decision rule was that any mean from 2.50 and above was regarded as ‘high’ while any mean less than 2.50 was regarded as ‘low’.

Table 1: Level of Participation in Academic Development

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1.	PTA complements the formal education of their children and wards under informal conditions.	2.35	Low
2.	PTA assists the schools to maintain effective instruction and learning through periodic meetings with principal and teachers.	2.55	High
3.	PTA ensures that parents provide their children with approved uniforms, books, writing materials ad similar requirements	2.66	High
4.	PTA acts as resource group to government via the school in policy formulation and execution processes.	2.59	High
5.	PTA gives government feedback through the school from time to time on the popularity or otherwise of its education policy.	2.63	High
6.	PTA recruits and pays its own staff to help in the areas where there no adequate or sufficient ministry of education staff.	2.66	High
7.	PTA organizes competitive examinations such as reading or essay writing to encourage hardwork in students.	2.57	High
8.	PTA sponsors students to inter school academic competitions.	2.53	High
9.	PTA donates library materials such as books to the schools.	2.52	High
10.	PTA equips laboratory and provides ICT materials to the schools.	2.51	High
Grand Total		25.57	
Mean Total		2.58	

Data on table 1 show the level of participation of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in academic development of the unity schools studied. The results indicate that out of the 10 statements made; only number one received negative response. Others show high participation of the PTA in the academic development of the Unity Schools. This can also be seen from the grand total of 25.57 from which the grand mean of 2.58 is worked out. Since the acceptance level for high participation is 2.50, the grand mean of 2.58 indicate that PTA participates in the academic development of the Unity Schools.

Table 2: Level of Participation in Infrastructural Development

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1.	PTA initiates, collects and utilizes approved levies for infrastructural needs of the schools.	2.52	High
2.	The Association solicits philanthropists' support for, and sponsorship of specific school projects.	2.51	High
3.	The Association mobilizes community efforts towards development projects in the schools	2.49	Low
	PTA canvases for government attention to the infrastructural needs of the school.	2.57	High
5.	PTA helps in alleviating the transportation problems of the school through provision of buses.	2.54	High
6.	PTA has built hostel accommodation in the school.	2.69	High
7.	PTA has constructed classrooms blocks in the school	2.67	High
8.	The Association electrified the school	2.47	Low
9.	PTA provided water to the school	2.54	High
10.	PTA constructed security post for the school	2.47	Low
Grand Total		25.47	
Mean Total		2.55	

Table 2 data show the level of PTA participation in infrastructural development of the Unity Schools. The results indicate that out of 10 statements, 3 received negative response for failing to score up to 2.50 decision point. The remaining 8 indicates that PTA participates in the infrastructural development of the schools. The grand total of 25.47 from which the grand mean of 2.55 is worked out which meets acceptance level of 2.50 also indicates that PTA contributes to the infrastructural development of the unity schools.

Table 3: level of participation in enhancing Discipline

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1.	PTA helps to check cases of truancy and moral laxity among students and even teachers.	2.47	Low
2.	The Association helps to check cases of indecent dressing among students and teachers	2.54	High
3.	PTA assists in maintaining orderliness in the school.	2.56	High
4.	The Association assists in specifying an approved code of conduct that guides students' behaviour in the school.	2.57	High
5.	PTA supports appropriate disciplinary measures against those that contravene school rules and regulations.	2.70	High
Grand Total		12.84	
Mean Total		2.57	

Data on table 3 show the level of PTA participation in ensuring discipline in the Unity Schools. The results indicate that only statement 1 conveys negative response while the rest 4 convey positive responses given the decision mark of 2.50. This can also be seen from the grand total of 12.84 from which the grand mean of 2.57 is

calculated. Since the acceptance level for ‘high’ is 2.50, the grand mean of 2.57 indicates that the PTA participates in enhancing discipline in the Unity Schools.

Table 4: Level of Participation in Social Activities

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1.	PTA donates prizes and trophies to be competed for by students in the school.	2.55	High
2.	The Association plays vital roles during inter-house sporting activities in the school	2.57	High
3.	PTA supports the school to effectively organize speech and prize giving day.	2.55	High
4.	PTA sponsors students for inter school sports and music programmes.	2.53	High
5.	The Association sponsors singing and dancing competitions among students.	2.48	Low
	Grand Total	12.68	
	Mean Total	2.54	

Data on table 4 show the level of PTA participation in the promotion of social activities in the schools. The results indicate that only number 5 out of 5 statements received negative response as score is less the benchmark of 2.50. This also shows in the grand total of 12.68 out of which the grand men of 2.54 is worked out. Since the acceptance level for ‘high’ is 2.50, the grand mean of 2.54 indicate that the PTA participates in the promotion of social activities in the unity Secondary Schools

Discussion

This first finding of the study reveals that the level of PTA participation in the academic development of Unity Secondary Schools is high. This finding does not seem to be out of place given the level of awareness about the importance of education by Nigerian parents. Okecha (2002) affirmed that parents depend upon the educational achievement of their children for the perpetuation of family social and economic status and consequently invest heavily, sometimes at great sacrifices, in the education of their children. John-Ifejika (2013) admitted that PTA has been contributing immensely towards academic development of unity schools.

The second finding is equally an attestation that the PTA has appreciably contributed to the infrastructural development of the Unity Schools. The reason does not seem farfetched going by Ezeuwa (2010) recommendation that since infrastructure constitutes the nerve centre of any school administration, Parents Teachers Associations should make it a priority to provide their children’s Schools with the needed ones.

The third finding of the study is that staff and students discipline is one of the managerial strategies of the Unity Schools. Discipline according to Federal Government of Nigeria (1989) is concerned with the observance of established code of conduct,

which upon infringement attracts punishment. Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development (1993) stated that discipline is concerned with the maintenance of order and harmonious functioning of an organization and has always remained a veritable instrument for management of schools. The PTA must have realized that there cannot be effective school management without sufficient application of disciplinary measures hence its high level of participation in enhancing discipline in the schools.

Similarly, the fourth finding is that the level of PTA participation in the social activities of the Unity Schools is high. Ezeuwa (2005) described school social activities as part of the school curriculum that grooms students to effectively socialize and have meaningful interaction with other members of the society. Edeze (2007) maintained that the PTA donates prizes and trophies to be competed for by students and equally encourages other social activities such as prize and speech giving day, inter-house sports among others in the schools.

Conclusion

The findings of the study in general terms show that PTA participation in sustaining Unity Schools in the South East Nigeria is high. Varieties of opinions derived from the population of the study were in the consensus that PTA is supporting the schools in the aspects of academic progress, infrastructural development, discipline and social activities. The revelations of the study were collaborated by the works cited.

Recommendations

Based on the revelations of the study, the following recommendations are made to further strengthen the system and ensure that the benefits of establishing the Unity Schools are harvested.

1. Though PTA is already partnering with the government to sustain the programs of Unity Schools in Nigeria, both the government and the PTA should ensure steady harmonious partnership for purpose of continuity.
2. Other Unity Schools in Nigeria yet to adopt the positive positions of the PTA of the Unity Schools in the South East should emulate the desirable efforts in the interest of the students and the society.
3. Similar study should be carried out in other geo-political zones of the country by scholars to ascertain the level of PTA participation in sustaining the Unity Schools in the zones.
4. The PTA of Nigerian Unity Schools should from time to time be exposed to seminars and workshops that will enhance its operations.

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