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### **DWINDLING ROLE OF PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS IN NIGERIA: A CALL FOR HELP**

#### **RE-ENGINEERING PARENTAL ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Michael O. Jules  
(M.Ed., In V.)  
Department of Vocational and Technology Education  
Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University  
Wilberforce Island  
Bayelsa State

e-mail: [miklestheory@gmail.com](mailto:miklestheory@gmail.com)  
[michaeljules42@yahoo.com](mailto:michaeljules42@yahoo.com)  
[www.admissionsandutme.com](http://www.admissionsandutme.com)  
[www.mjeresources.com](http://www.mjeresources.com)  
[+234 806 060 9054](tel:+2348060609054)

#### **Abstract**

*In a typical school environment, there are numerous factors which influence the decisions of the school. These factors are often internal and external. The internal factors may include the activities of students and staff, managerial techniques, financial/revenue undulations, etc., while the external factors may be the government, community, civil organizations, NGOs, religion, parents, etc. However, this paper focuses on the parent as an external school influencer. Before now, parents visited schools to inquire of their children's performances, to ascertain fees and levies, check on the general wellbeing of the school and to ensure that their children are highly disciplined in case they misbehaved. Unfortunately, the case is never the same again. Parents, both educated and uneducated have all fallen victims of busy schedules to the extent that they only get engaged in the home work of the child(ren). There is hardly any tangible communication between the parent and the teacher especially in the public schools domain. This long tenure or overstay of the discord in some homes have even led to total abandonment of the child's academic activities – including home work. This is the effect of an unchecked bad attitude. Currently, there is need to re-engineer the role of parents in the school system because their lack of involvement has given the school the impetus to carry out their policies successfully without objection. The parents suffers in some of these policies especially in tuition fees hike.*

Keywords: PTA – Parent-Teacher Associations, role, contemporary.

## **Introduction**

Parents, sponsors, guardians, etc., are the sole burden carriers of students' outcome. Hence, like an investment, parents must check the progress of their students in the school system. The above assertion has made the school together with parents to over the years to formulate an association named the PTA – the Parent-Teacher Association.

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is a voluntary unification of parents of students in a particular school and their teachers to discuss on issues bordering on the welfare of the school, teachers and students in particular. According to Obunadike (2015), Parent Teachers Association is a voluntary and welfare association of parents and guardians, as well as teachers of a particular school. In some countries this association of parents and teachers is called by other names. Irrespective of whatever name it is known in different countries, the objectives of Parents/Teachers Association are essentially the same. Okeke (2004) was however, of the view that the major objective of a PTA is the promotion of such understanding and co-operation between the teachers and parents, as would make it possible for each party to contribute towards the creation of a conducive atmosphere that will facilitate the process of learning and teaching in schools.

Despite the enviable influence parents have over the school system through the PTA, it is sad to note that parents have not fully utilized this influence in modern times. Parents are seldom seen within and around the school system as involuntary supervisors who check

on the performances of their individual wards and to verify the internal consistency of the school to determine its fitness whether or not the school is still fit for their child to learn as they once felt. Parents have become too busy to checkmate the school activities. This had led the school to implement all its policies successfully with little or no interference from the parents' community. Even more sadly, the parents have not identified this lacuna and the need to bridge the gap. They still maintain their normal busy schedule – business as usual to their very own detriment.

In the words of Obunadike (2015), the position of Parents-Teachers Association in our present educational system can only be fully appreciated when viewed from a historical perspective. Before the Nigerian civil war in 1967, there was no Parent-Teachers Association in our schools, at least not as they presently exist. The Parent-Teachers Association where it existed at all, was a very informal organization without any structure, constitution nor officers. In fact, it existed and operated as occasional informal invitation of some parents by school authorities, to the schools annual event such as Sport Day, Prize Giving Day, Speech Day, or school's feast or Foundation Day. Before the civil war, most of the schools were owned and managed by different Christian missionary bodies as well as private individuals. Then, almost all the schools both primary and secondary as well as teacher training institutions were owned by the missionaries and some philanthropic individuals who were responsible for the appointment, discipline, promotion as well as

termination of teachers. The school proprietors received grants-in-aid from the government to help them in the running of schools. Another source of revenue available to school proprietors were fees of different types which were charged to the pupils. With the money realized from all these sources, they paid the teachers, equipped the schools and defrayed other sundry expenses incurred in the day to day running of the schools Okeke (2004).

Therefore, due to the level of discipline in the school system then, there was little or no need to invite parents to school except on important issues. Schools were faring well, hence, there was no need for parents' persistent contributions. Students were well disciplined, hence, there was no need to invite parent over for their children's disciplinary issues. The point here is that from a historical perspective, parents were invited to school frequently and not as regular as it later became in later years. However, soon enough, life came to a stage where shortage of funds, students' indiscipline behaviours amongst others drew the attention of parents and required a concerted effort of parents and teachers to surmount the problems. This period was the peak of Parent-Teacher Association activities in schools. However, as events unfold, economic life became even more difficult and parents have to double their struggle to tackle ends meet. It was at this current period that parental involvement in academic activities became very low.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This paper was inspired by tuition fees hike in the Niger Delta University in April 2018. In the 2016/2017 academic year, the Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria management increased its tuition fees, an act that caused uproar from many quarters of the state and beyond. Many were however of the view that since the school was a state school, the fees would have reflected a public school tuition fees. While many students are still battling to pay the high tuition fees for that session (even those who may have paid have not recouped properly from the experience of paying high tuition fees), the management have decided to raise the tuition fees in the 2017/2018 academic session again. An act, of course, from our data, would make many students to voluntarily forfeit their admission because some may not meet up with the payment.

The major problem now is that while students, students' unions, government officials, religious institutions, alumni, non-academic staff, communities and community leaders amongst others were clamoring to maintain the status quo ante or at least a reduction in the tuition fees, no parents' body was heard making any move. At best, they clamored at the individual level, but as an association where their voice would have been heard and thunderous, nothing was felt. The author was of the thought that do parents even acknowledge the role of Parent-Teacher Association at all? Because it is surprising how parents quickly forgot about the influence of the PTA. Jocularly, the author have pondered, could these current crops of

parent be those students then who never supported the idea of their parents coming to school, just to let their misdemeanor in school slip away? This thought was the template, the background, the setting and yardstick that propelled the author to carry out this study.

### **Re-engineering the Position of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in View of Current Challenges**

Owing to current challenges bedeviling students' learning environment, it is high time that parents rise up to the task of parenthood. Not being limited to activities around the home alone but extending to the school system. Extending to the school system, not only in the area of paying school fees, but being available to supervise the learning environment whether or not it suits their current definition of a learning environment and that if their child could still continue in such a setting.

Within the Niger Delta University where this study is focused, it was found that there is no parents' association to check the hike in school fees hence, it would be difficult for management to communicate to parents before such hike – if management ever had such intentions. Moreover, parents over the years have not engaged management in any instance as a body to register their presence with school management. Such presence would have made management to be careful when deliberating on school fees hike as parents are watching like watchdogs. Parents should have done the following or at least, understand that they have such powers:

1. Assist in raising funds for the school which would make incessant tuition fees hike unnecessary.
2. Donate classroom blocks, dining halls, provision of laboratory, game and equipment. They also help to provide chairs and tables and walling of schools (Elui 2007, Eke 1980).
3. Settling of disputes between students and teacher,
4. Pressure the government to pay more attention to the school especially at the university level. It is because the different actors have not remained true to their responsibilities that the government had treated the schools with so much disdain. Hence, the alumni and parents must synergize to pressure the government to restore schools to their glorious state.
5. Dialogue with school management on issues bordering on the effective management of the school.
6. Negotiate with the school management on tuition fees hike to revert or reduce it to the lowest rate possible.
7. Take its independent action against the school in any event the school management refused to conclude plans reasonably with it. One of such action is to refuse to pay the school fees for their wards until the fees is reduced. In doing so, they take the supposed reprisal action from the hands of their wards who may go and protest or riot and destroy properties which may cause payment of damage by the parents. Wisdom, they say, is profitable to direct. Hence, it is wiser for the parents to handle the issues

- themselves. This will make students study peacefully even when the cold war is ongoing.
8. Parents must understand the needs of the school before embarking on any industrial decision. They must not be selfish to be the only ones to be satisfied. They must also put the welfare of the school at heart and let things be should management's explanation of certain issues sound reasonable.
  9. Assist in instilling discipline in the school system. Parents should understand that the level of discipline in the school system is as a result of the value possessed by their wards from the home. Hence, to make the school a disciplined environment, parents must breed cultured children who are non-violent, non-cultist, ruly, obedient and religious. This is a needed condition to attain a peaceful learning environment.
  10. Parents should also be aware that they have the ability to pressure the school management to maintain standards in its teaching and learning environment.

### **Empirical Evidence**

Kingi, (2013) studied the role of Parents-Teachers Association in the management of public secondary school, Gatundu North, Kenya. The study was set out to investigate the role of Parents' Teachers Association (PTA) in management of public secondary schools in Gatundu North, Kiambu County. To accomplish this task, survey method was used in conducting the study. A total of 13 schools out of 26 were selected comprising of 9 mixed secondary schools, 2 boys schools,

and 2 girls secondary schools. Stratified random sampling technique and purposive sampling were employed to identify study sample. A questionnaire and interview guides were used for data collection. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed in data analysis. The study revealed the following challenges facing PTA in management of public secondary school: shortage of staff personnel; inadequate school finances; misappropriations of funds, insufficient physical facilities; poor performance in national examinations; lack of support from the local community; and interference in the running of school by the local communities. Based on the findings of the study, it was however, recommended that appointments of PTA should be from among people of integrity and competence with a minimum requirement of university education. The PTA should moderate administrative processes in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The ministry of education in Kenya should formulate relevant policies to enable school PTA to be more useful in management. PTA and educational administrators should make concerted effort to initiate and sustain new projects, rehabilitate dilapidated infrastructures and initiate professional development through staff training.

Obunadike (2015) studied the role and responsibilities of the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) and community in the Nigerian educational system. The study examined the role and responsibilities of the P.T.A. and community in the Nigerian Educational system. Three research questions

are used for the study. A questionnaire of two parts with 18 items was used for data collection. Mean was equally used for data analysis. The findings indicated that PTA helps a lot in fund raising for setting up of structures, installation of discipline in schools, students welfare, resources management, etc. The study also revealed that effective communication helps a great deal in school success. It was however, recommended among others, that the government should provide for the organization as to disabuse their minds that government only thinks of the organization only when they need money.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the problems identified in this study, the author hereby recommend that he will create a page on Facebook titled: NDU Parent Teacher Association. This is to ensure that all parents get timely information on the happenings in the school system and to access them on time to make quick decisions on possible future issues of disagreement between management and students.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

The researcher believes that from whence we decide not to lend our voices to issues that matters, the wrong becomes the accepted norm since it was not contended. Hence, parents must strive to support the school and also to strongly oppose policies made by the school that are somewhat anti-students in

nature. Unless parents rise up to their responsibilities, school management will continue to get away with all its' anti-students' policies.

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## About the Author



Born Michael Aki on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1987 to the family of Julius Ahwusi Aki of Ona Quarters in Agbarha-Otor Kingdom, Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Michael is the first Son and the eighth child of 9 children. He attended Ogelle Primary School, Ughelli (1994-1999), Otovwodo Grammar School, Ughelli (2000-2004), Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State (2009-2013). He Obtained B.Ed (Accounting) in the Niger Delta University and currently engaged in a Masters (M.Ed. Mgt/Mkg) programme in the Niger Delta University.

Currently, he is the *Lead Researcher* at MJE Resources (an academic research institute), Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.

He is also the head of admins of its affiliates/subsidiaries at NDU Admissions and UTME (Facebook), MJE Resources (Facebook), MJE Resources.ng (Facebook), and [www.admissionsandutme.com](http://www.admissionsandutme.com) where he doubles as a career counsellor for students transiting into the university.

Now known as Michael Oghenenyoreme Jules, the author have a penchant for learning and education in general. His major objective for writing this paper was based on the fact that parents have done very little in supervising their wards' academic activities in schools. He believes that parents of students in the Niger Delta University have not done all they could to remedy the incessant hikes in tuition fees in the Niger delta University, hence, the need for this paper.

### Contacts:

Michael O. Jules,

*Lead Researcher,  
MJE Resources.*

*Head of Admins.,  
NDU Admissions and UTME,*

*Career Counsellor,  
NDU Admissions and UTME,  
[miklestheory@gmail.com](mailto:miklestheory@gmail.com)  
[michaeljules42@yahoo.com](mailto:michaeljules42@yahoo.com)  
[admissionsandutme@gmail.com](mailto:admissionsandutme@gmail.com)  
[www.admissionsandutme.com](http://www.admissionsandutme.com)  
08060699054  
08050706635*