

## **Bridging Social Capital for fostering P.T.A in Managing Secondary Schools in Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies**

**Nelson, Mary**

[Mary4nelson@yahoo.com](mailto:Mary4nelson@yahoo.com),

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6034-2012>

### **Abstract**

The aim of establishing 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 the educational system particularly at the secondary school level of education in Nigeria. Nevertheless, to work in ‘this’ close harmony, there is a need for schools to recognize existing relationships and channel appropriately, its key characteristics in fostering PTA. This paper however highlighted strengthening school administration, school management, school-community relationship amongst others, as the benefits of adopting bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria. Additionally, the challenges associated with bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria were highlighted including principals adopting the norms, trust, and ties of bridging social capital via good administration and supervision of PTA activities and ensuring proper accountability and strengthening of PTA records hence, encouraging parents to put more efforts in their PTA activities amongst others, is one of the strategies suggesting the ways forward.

**Keywords:** social, capital, P.T.A, strategies, challenges, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Naturally, parents are the actual guardians of their children. This is because the first contact of children to the world, is through them hence, they automatically become the closest people to these children and can easily influence them by their upbringing including before, during and after their school age. Generally, parents promote and support the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of their children from infancy to adulthood. Nevertheless, knowledge acquisition is a part of the upbringing of children and takes mainly, the form both informal and formal education. This implies that respectively, children at tender ages are educated both outside of a structured curriculum and within a curriculum in a regular classroom. Furthermore, in acquiring education informally, it is an established fact that children learn at home via the leadership examples of their parents, relatives and their likes while formally, knowledge, information and skills are acquired from the four walls of a classroom via a school under the leadership of school administrators, teachers and all other staff of the school.

Albeit, for the purpose of this paper, the focus is on the formal type of knowledge. This is because the variables of this study are anchored on secondary schools where children acquire knowledge formally. On this basis, it is noteworthy that in schools, parents are expected to work closely with all school staff particularly the teachers who can be described

as ‘foster parents’, standing in the stance of parents while spending more hours with the children in school. Apart from the teachers however, others who are directly and indirectly involved in the education of the children are the communities, government, organizations and companies (Iloh, 2004). Supporting this assertion, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) stated that parents, community and local governments should jointly be part of the educational financing of children. Reviewing the above, it can be deduced that the intention of the government of Nigeria is to promote co-operation and understanding between the school, parents, community and local governments thereby aiding their collective and individual contribution to the total experience of a child via classroom learning.

Ortsa and Apase (2019) as well as Elui opined that schools, parents, community, non-governmental organizations, local, state and federal government indeed contribute to the transformation of a child by amongst others, creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is a known fact that these ‘entities’ are collectively referred to as educational stakeholders. Notwithstanding, in the bid to transform the educational system vis-à-vis the influence of educational stakeholders particularly parents and school staff, Parents Teachers Association popularly known as (P.T.A) was established. P.T.A, according to Iloh (2004) was formed in 1955, the same year the government of Nigeria introduced free primary education. It is an association that participates strongly in the educational management of secondary schools. In this vein, Ogbonnaya (2010) postulated that through P.T.A meetings, parents learn about classroom programmes which have been planned for or are being managed. Similarly, Obunadike (2010) stated that P.T.A can be a useful ‘arm’ of the school administration depending on how well it co-operates with principals and staff in its vital role which should be acting as a link between the school and the home in solving problems of personality, finance and general conduct of the students.

### **An overview of the Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) in Nigeria**

The concept of P.T.A in the Nigerian educational system though a recent innovation, is a formal establishment in the educational system. The Nigerian government in 1970 as acknowledged by literatures, encouraged parents and teachers to take over the school hence, the establishment of the National Parents Teachers Association of Nigeria (NAPTAN) abbreviated to Parents Teachers Association (PTA), coming into full swing in 1992. According to Mopdebelu as cited in Unachukwu and Ugorji (2014), PTA is a very adequate and appropriate forum for effective communication and decision making needed for school community effectiveness. Supporting this assertion however, Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu, (1992) described PTA as an appropriate forum for disseminating official school policies, explaining needs, problems and expectations of both the school, community and the PTA, and taking decisions on how to solve problems thereby satisfying all identified needs. Nevertheless, first-hand observation has revealed that the structure of PTA as a forum, is such that its membership includes parents and guardians whose children are currently in the school, parents and guardians whose children are no longer in the school but still have interest in the school, heads of the schools, as well as teachers and other members of staff of the schools.

Additionally, the leadership structure of PTA in secondary schools is in a hierarchical order of the chairman, secretary and other executive members such as the provost. However, the position of the chairman and other executive members are by election while the position of the secretary is the right of the principal or school head as the case maybe (Obi, 2016). Reviewing the foregoing, the current organization and structure of PTA has become an integral part of the present education system of Nigeria. It is noteworthy however that PTA in schools are backed up by law mandating every parent and guardian to become officially PTA members in the schools where their children or wards are fully registered pupils or students. This therefore makes PTA, a useful part of school administration expected to promote unity, understanding and co-operation among parents and school staff. Notwithstanding, in corroboration, Obi (2016) stated that the promotion of understanding and co-operation between the teachers and parents of schools vis-à-vis PTA, makes it possible for each to contribute towards the creation of a conducive atmosphere aimed at facilitating the process of learning and teaching in schools.

### **Importance of PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria**

The foregoing of PTA in secondary schools reveals that unarguably, there are roles PTA play in managing schools. Albeit, Igbudu (2013) recognized enabling parents, teachers and school administrators cooperate intelligently in mutual understanding as one of the roles of PTA. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the roles and functions of PTA in secondary schools is synonymous to its importance. In this vein, different authors as cited in Obi (2006) acknowledged the following as the importance of PTA in schools: enhancing the collective participation of parents and teachers in the education of their children (Garry 2007); providing a link through which parents and the rest of community assume a partnership responsibility thereby participating in the education of their wards (Onderi & Makori, 2013); enabling parents know what is going on in the school and also giving their opinion on certain issues concerning children (Elui, 2007); 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 decisions on all the facts or aspects of the education of their children (Iwuauganwu, 2006).

Nevertheless, supporting the above identified importance of PTA, Obunadike (2010) identified the following as the importance of PTA in secondary schools:

- i. Encouraging teachers and parents in understanding more about the children that are being educated so as to be in a better position to help them more effectively;
- ii. Appreciating the necessity for constant dialogue and communication between parents and teachers thereby creating a system or channel through which this communication could take place;
- iii. Enabling teachers and parents realize that both are equally important in the education process of students hence, they play their active roles in achieving these educational objectives.

Similarly, Ezeocha (2010) recognized the following as a general importance of PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria:

- i. Promoting mutual understanding and co-operation between the schools and home;
- ii. Providing infrastructural and other basic school requirements;
- iii. Checking the activities of teachers and other staff through provision of advisory services;
- iv. Acting as link to the government especially the government functionaries among the parents;
- v. Providing funds and recruitment of teachers;
- vi. Assisting the government in the area of instructional and other things needed by the school.

The recognized and outlined importance of PTA in managing secondary schools notwithstanding, it is paramount to note that this importance are not without relationship. This implies that in the administration of PTA, educational stakeholders particularly parents, teachers, school administrators and communities from structure to functioning, undeniably, meet while being involved. This ‘human’ networking or relationship however infers the existence of ‘social capital’. On the other hand, its hierarchical leadership style and relationship format of parents-teachers, parents-teachers-community, parents-teachers-students and their likes, infer a vertical relationship in networking which is termed ‘bridging social capital’. Bridging social capital is a type of social capital describing ties between individuals which cross social divides or between social groups. According to Schuller, Baron and Field (2000), bridging social capital is the building of connections between heterogeneous groups which are likely to be more fragile but more likely also to foster social inclusion. Simply, bridging social capital describes connections that link people across a cleavage thereby encouraging associations that ‘bridge’ between or channel individuals, communities, groups and organizations. Reviewing the foregoing, it is crystal that the PTA networking and importance already identified is evidence of bridging social capital in schools hence, can foster the performance of PTA in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Bridging social capital for fostering P.T.A in managing secondary schools in Nigeria**

Literatures and first-hand observation have revealed that PTA play roles in the administration of Nigerian schools. Nonetheless, these roles mostly administrative are included in the management of secondary schools. Supporting this assertion, the Federal Government of Nigeria as cited in Obi (2016) stated that communities have been empowered to help in the management and administration of schools. It is noteworthy however that in playing management roles, PTA adopts the networking of bridging social capital whereby all members irrespective of different status and educational background, collectively, ensure that resources in schools are adequately managed; relationships with government and communities where necessary are enhanced; there are links with non-governmental agencies for some needed support and the likes. In view of thes, bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria describes how networking and relationships in PTA can be interconnected to the activities and functions of secondary school management. It further implies the ways PTA as part of school community can be involved in

the welfare of schools hence, bridging social capital can foster PTA in managing secondary school education thus:

- i. **School Administration:** Umbrellas execution and implementation of school goals, policies and programmes. It is concerned with the various activities carried out in schools for the achievement of educational goals and objectives hence enforces joint efforts. Bridging social capital existing in PTA, fosters the association's involvement in school administration by serving as volunteer workers and members of a school's advisory council, sponsoring school activities, developing school programmes, helping in classroom decisions and promoting school events and also assists schools to receive support from the community when needed.
- ii. **School Management:** This involves the formulation of strategies, plans, policies as well as programmes that help in the achievement of educational goals and objectives. Bridging social capital fosters PTA by helping PTA play vital roles involving staff recruitment, volunteer coordination of educational issues, decision making, and school reform initiatives, amongst others. Corroborating, Elui (2007) postulated that PTA can solve the problem of inadequate teaching staff by recruiting and paying part time teachers. Furthermore, bridging social capital in fostering PTA enables the association possibly finance the cost of extra lessons for students preparing for external examination if needed. Also substantiating, Elui (2007), stated that through PTA, parents and teachers interact and take decisions on the management and welfare of students, teachers and the school; PTA helps to minimize the high handedness of some teachers and school administrators by co-supervising in the school management. Bridging social capital in fostering PTA, enables PTA serve as a good forum for dissemination of information such as official policies needed to explain needs, problems and expectations of schools, reports on the academic and behavioural performances of students. In addition, in managing secondary schools, PTA can influence the posting of teachers to schools as well as the removal of principals they do not like from schools.
- iii. **School Community Relationship:** Bridging social capital in fostering PTA encourages school community relationship in managing secondary school education via these contributions as articulated by Mopdebelu (2014):
  1. Serving as a forum in which parents and teachers exchange useful ideas for the improvement of the learning ability of students.
  2. Strengthening the authority of the school when disciplinary actions are required.
  3. Providing good opportunities for schools to enlist the cooperation of parents in the organization of majority of school events such as prize-giving day, young farmers clubs, cultural day, Independence Day celebration, amongst others.
  4. Encouraging school relationship and co-existence with various religious organizations within a community.
  5. Improving existing relationship between schools and socializing agencies such as the mass-media.
- a. **Fundraising:** Bridging social capital in encouraging PTA networking, fosters PTA by helping hand fully in school's fund-raising via events such as award ceremonies, celebrations of academic events such as competitions in mathematics, sciences, history,

languages, performing arts and also in athletic achievements, inter house sports, seasonal festivals and cultural festivals. The raised money from observation and experience, is usually used to finance capital projects of the school such as construction of new administrative or classroom block, perimeter fencing of the school, provision of staff quarters in boarding schools, staff rooms and laboratories.

- b. **Maintenance of School Discipline:** Bridging social capital encourages disciplinary actions from top to bottom when necessary. In this regard, bridging social capital fosters PTA in assisting school staff melt needed disciplinary actions particularly on the students for insubordination. Iloh (2004) supported this assertion by postulating that often times than not, parents go to schools to discuss with teachers, issues of misbehavior of their children at home. Furthermore, Ikediugwu (2008) in upholding the above perception, encouraged parents to as much as possible, interact with teachers to curb indiscipline both in the home and the school. Nonetheless, this role of bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary school education, serves as a forum for interaction between parents and teachers.
- c. **Provision of Educational Infrastructure:** Infrastructural facilities refer to the physical and spatial enablers of teaching and learning. According to Ogwu (2010), infrastructural facilities are the material things that facilitate teaching and learning processes in the school. They include classrooms, libraries laboratories, water supply, workshop, transport and communication system, playing field, school farms and garden as the case maybe. Notwithstanding, Udoh (2011) posits that the state of infrastructural facilities in Nigerian schools is deplorable hence, bridging social capital in fostering PTA ensures that PTA assist government in providing infrastructural facilities such as buildings, science laboratories, toilet facilities and water to schools thereby aiding managing of teaching and learning in schools.

The above highlighted ways bridging social capital fosters PTA in managing secondary school education notwithstanding, it is noteworthy however that there are challenges encountered in embracing bridging social capital for fostering PTA secondary school management in Nigeria.

### **Challenges of Bridging Social Capital for Fostering PTA in Managing Secondary Schools in Nigeria.**

Hitherto, research has proven that with every innovation, plan or programme geared towards growth, there are possible challenges which can pose as shortcomings. These challenges as postulated by some literatures are barriers or problems preventing the execution of proposed plans or programmes of any kind in an organization with schools not an exception. Challenges can further be likened to an ‘invisible’ fence, an enclosure or a barrier. According to Agbonlahor (2020), challenges are obstacles to realizing a goal. Nonetheless, some challenges encountered in embracing bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria as recognized by different studies and literatures include:

### **Lack of Understanding Between Parents and School Staff**

This challenge is fostered by lack of acceptance of existing bridging social capital both by parents and some school staff. Nevertheless, corroborating this assertion, Iloh (2004) asserted that when bridging social capital is neglected in schools, 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 thus, even as PTA members, fail to play their roles including visiting teachers for discussions concerning their children or wards. Furthermore, this author (Iloh) noted that in most cases, some parents decline PTA membership deterring the progress the school can make via the PTA.

### **Parents' Literacy Issues**

The existence of bridging social capital in secondary schools notwithstanding, undoubtedly, some parents are illiterates and as members of the PTA, might not understand what is expected of them as parents thus such parents need to be considerably and properly oriented on the purpose of PTA networking as well as the roles they are expected to play for the good and welfare of their children in the schools. This is a challenge especially where such parents neither understand nor cooperate with the PTA yet are members.

### **Poor Management of Bridging Social Capital for PTA in Schools**

This challenge is prominent in schools where existing bridging social capital (relationships) is not adequately managed thus, PTA is not 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. The PTA in schools where this challenge is paramount would suffer poor communication and relationship with other educational stakeholders thereby hindering the benefits accrued to embracing fully, bridging social capital in such schools; the existence of PTA in such schools notwithstanding.

### **Money Relating Issues**

Money relating issues definitely involves relationship with humans who take the form of parents, teachers, school authorities and their likes. This challenge however covers fraud where neglecting bridging social capital in fostering PTA for managing schools, parents through their students are levied quite often than necessary. In some cases, money raised for projects are used unaccountably or for undisclosed projects in the school. In this regard, many parents begin to complain. Similarly, Obunadike (2010) posited that this challenge ranges from school's head conniving with some PTA executive members to extort parents, 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.

### **Lack of Cooperation on the part of School Authority for Thriving Bridging Social Capital in Secondary Schools**

The existence of bridging social capital in schools notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that for its effective impacts on PTA, there should be full cooperation from the school authority. This cooperation undoubtedly would reflect on the activities of the PTA thereby making the

association a viable organ of the school. Nevertheless, often than not, from first-hand observation, most school authorities for personal reasons and possible gains, do not give bridging social capital the platform it needs to thrive thus deters the possible positive impacts of PTA in their schools. Furthermore, this lack of cooperation via bridging social capital from school authority could lead to PTA's incapability of effecting the type of changes or innovations that could bring progress in the school.

### **Conclusion**

Parents Teachers Association (PTA) play an integral role in how schools' function. However, it is noteworthy to re-emphasize that the association comprises parents and schools' staff who are humans yet operate within a social institution (school). The implication of this perception is that relationship and networking is paramount in PTA and schools where they operate hence, the existence of bridging social capital. Nonetheless, having recognized the role bridging social capital play in networking of parents and school staff vis-à-vis fostering PTA in secondary schools, there are undoubtedly, possible challenges that could arise from bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria therefore, the need to suggest possible strategies to address these challenges.

### **Suggestions**

For the purpose of this paper, the suggestions take the form of strategies which are steps or applications guiding bridging social capital aimed at either controlling or preventing its (bridging social capital) challenges in fostering PTA for managing secondary schools in Nigeria. They are policies, tactics or approaches entailing step to step guide to achieving an aim. In this regard however, suggestions are strategies providing answers to possible challenges represented by the how to bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria. They include:

1. Secondary school principals should wholeheartedly embrace the existence of bridging social capital in schools especially in relating with parents thus, give attention to every necessary activity that will elicit spontaneous cooperation from parents. Nonetheless, to achieve this, principals should have frequent communication with parents and staff. In the same vein, principals as PTA secretary should further organize activities, programmes and PTA meetings in which parents participate in all decision-making processes thereby possibly countering the challenge of lack of understanding between parents and school staff.
2. Ministry of education, state commission and principals should give due necessary recognition to the PTA thereby treating PTA as a viable organ of school that should be called upon when the needs arise. This suggestion could tackle the challenge of lack of cooperation on the part of school authorities including state commission and ministry of education in thriving for bridging social capital in secondary schools
3. Government and principals in encouraging bridging social capital in schools, should be more responsive to the PTA challenge of poor management of bridging social capital in schools for better performance of PTA.



4. Principals should adopt the norms, trust and ties of bridging social capital via good administration and supervision of PTA activities, encourage parents to put more efforts in their PTA activities, through proper accountability and strengthening of PTA records. This suggestion could tackle the challenge of money relating issues.
5. Bridging social capital advocates for cordial relationship or networking in love and rapport between the parents and school staff via PTA. This however can be an asset to a school where practiced. This is because parents of schools where such is practiced can go extra miles in proving for the good of the school in many areas hence, PTA executives, parents and school staff should advocate for cordial relationships or networking. This strategy however can control the highlighted challenge of lack of cooperation and understanding between parents and school staff.
6. Bridging social capital encourages collective efforts as in the case of mutual contributions for a need in the school. These contributions from PTA in secondary schools notwithstanding, government should provide funds or funding alternatives needed for projects in schools. This could disabuse the minds of some parents that school authorities only think of the PTA organization when there is a monetary need to carry out some specific projects in the schools. This suggestion could tackle the challenge of money related issues and other trust issues in the organization.
7. Bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools encourages trust among PTA members as such, PTA in secondary schools should as an organization, appoint parents and school staff of proven probity to handle appropriately, money contributed by members of the association in order to avoid misappropriation of such funds.
8. One of the crucial characteristics of bridging social capital in schools, is communication therefore, in fostering PTA in secondary schools, formal channel of communication between the school and parents should be opened so that whenever each party has a problem, it would be easy to tackle. This suggestion could conveniently tackle all the challenges associated with bridging social capital for fostering PTA in managing secondary schools in Nigeria.
9. Bridging social capital advocates for feedback from parties who relate therefore, in fostering PTA vis-à-vis bridging social capital, complaints of parents however 'irrelevant' should be given audience, and at the same time, schools, present their side of the matter clearly to parents.
10. The vertical relationship in bridging social capital supports that in fostering PTA, provision of enough infrastructural facilities should be the duty of both the government and school principals with PTA supplementing where necessary. Nonetheless, in providing adequate and quality instructional materials in secondary schools, government and PTA should intensify efforts equally.

## References

- Agbonlahor, A. A. (2020). Challenges of innovative practices education in Nigerian schools: Towards a repositioning for impact. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 6, (1), 208-214.
- Elui, E. P. (2007). Home school and neighborhood partnership in the education of the Nigerian child. *Journal of Childhood and Primary Education*, 3 (1), 111-120.
- Ezeocha, P. A. (2010). *School management and supervision*. Owen International Universities Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2014). *National policy on education*. NERDC Press.
- Igbudu M.C. (2012). The role of PTA in the provision and management of instructional materials in UBE programme. *Akamkpa Journal of Education*, 1, (2) 42 - 50.
- Ikedingwu, N. (2008). *School disciplinal: A guide for administrators*. Garaldick Image Publishers.
- Iloh, C. A. (2004). *Practicum in classroom management and organization*. West and Solomon Publishing Coy. LTD.
- Mopdebelu. M. N. (2014). *The school and the community educational management: A skill building approach*. Rex Charles & Patrick Limited.
- Obi, N. C. (2016). Parents Teachers Association in Nigerian Schools: Available tool for educational transformation. *Academic Discourse: An International Journal*, 9 (1), (52 - 60).
- Obunadike, J. C. (2010). *The role and responsibilities of the PTA and community in the Nigerian Educational System*. West and Solomon Publishing Coy. LTD.
- Ogbonnaya, N. J. (2010). *Introduction to practicum in classroom management and social organization*. Nigeria: Igoli-Ogoja-Onah Press.
- Ogwu, E. A. (2010). *Educational technology basic concept and issue*. University Trust Publishers.
- Ortsa, G. M. & Apase, A. J. (2019). Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) and the management of secondary schools in North Central zone of Nigeria. *Benue State University Journal of Educational Management*, 1, (1), 188-193.
- Udoh, S. U (2011). *Education administration in Nigeria*. Ventures Publication
- Unachukwu, G. O & Okorji, P. N. (2014). *The school and the community. educational management: A skill building approach*. Rex Charles & Patrick.
- Ukeje, B. O., Akabogu, G. C., & Ndu, A. N. (1992). *Educational administration*. Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Schuller, T. Baron, S. & Field, J. (2000). *Social capital: A review and critic*. Oxford Univac Press.