

Impact of National Home School Feeding Programme on Enrolment and Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils

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Abstract

Federal government of Nigeria in 2016 launched the National Home Grown School Feeding Policy (NHGSFP) in public primary schools in Nigeria with the aim of ensuring one solid quality meal a day for children in order to increase enrolment, reduce dropout rate and ensure quality learning outcome. The extent this programme has impacted school enrolment and pupils academic performance in Primary schools in Nnewi North LGA becomes the worry of this study. The findings of the study among others will give evaluative tips to the initiators and implementers of the programme on the extent HSFP has impacted enrolment and academic performance of the pupils as targeted for possible corrections. Descriptive survey design was used for the study and guided by 3 research questions. Random sampling technique was used to select 80 head teachers and teachers of primary 1-3 classes from the 47 primary schools in the LGA under study as respondents. The instrument used for collection of data was a 27 structured questionnaire and an oral interview with cooks randomly selected. The researchers found out that in primary schools under study home school feeding program boosted the enrolment of the schools through increase in school population, daily attendance to school, and increase in punctuality, and continuous stay in the school among others. The findings also showed that the HSFP has great impact on the academic performance of the pupils through, high scores in class tests, term exams, class assignments, taking part in class discussions, among others. Some challenges such as lack of supervision of the activities of the cooks due to exclusion of head teachers and teachers from the implementation of the program, not providing food rich in quality and quantity to the pupils due to insufficient fund for teeming population, delay in release of fund to the cooks, and other problems are some of the challenges facing the new program. The researchers therefore concluded that for this program to be sustained to achieve the expected purpose of education for all come 2020 through increasing pupils school enrolment and improving on quality of education at the primary schools, all the stakeholders in education must as a matter of urgency put into action the recommendations suggested in this research to address the challenges and move the programme forward.

Keywords: school, grown, primary, performance, feeding

INTRODUCTION

Health and education go hand in hand and both are two solid tools for human development. Tomlinson (2007) added that health and education are two cornerstones of human capital and form the basis of an individual's economic productivity. In other words both are valuable tools in ensuring a healthy economy for a healthy nation. Poor health and nutrition among the pupils have a negative effect on their academic achievement and the future of such a nation's economy will be jeopardized. As a result of hardship in the country, many of the primary school children go to school hungry. According to Nesser (2012) 60 million children go to school hungry daily in developing countries of the world. A child who moves to school hungry cannot learn and the condition of such a child will be problematic.

UNESCO (2011) discovered that about 66 million school children are under nourished and an additional 67 million children are out of school. This suggests that ensuring quality health care delivery and quality education for children is a necessity not a luxury for

these will guarantee quality economy for the nations. Oso (2011) viewed that securing adequate quantity and quality of food for the school meals is vital to ensuring education for all goal (EFA) because in developing countries, the school meal is not the only – meal of the day for many school children. This is because school feeding programme seems to have been an effective safety net that can prevent those affected by economic hardship from adopting negative coping strategies. To ensure that Nigerian children have sound health and quality education through overcoming the problems of hunger, the Federal government of Nigeria in 2016 launched the national home grown school feeding policy in public primary schools in Nigeria. The aim was to ensure one solid quality meal a day for the children to increase enrolment, retention and reduce dropout rate. This programme has been adopted in many countries of the world to fight short

term hunger by ensuring at least one daily nutritious meal to support access to education. Nigeria happened to be one of twelve (12) pilot countries invited to implement the programme. So far, Nigeria, Coted'ivoire, Ghana, Kenya and Mali commenced the implementation of the school feeding programme. As a result, the Federal Government came up with the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004, which provided the legislative backing for the execution of the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme. Towards the realization of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education programme and the central role of nutrition, the Federal Ministry of Education launched the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme in 2005. The overall goal of the School Feeding Programme in Nigeria is to reduce hunger and malnutrition among school children and enhance the achievement of Universal Basic Education.

School feeding programme in Brazil according to Otusuki (2007) is part of the frame work of school security policy aimed to reduce the number of malnourished children and the need to provide healthy good quality food for children. In Kenya the school programme has been in place since 1980s, primarily to increase the enrolment and retention of rural children and girls, and to contribute to realization of Universal primary education (Langinger, 2011).

The origin of the program could be traced back to the millennium development goal (MDGs) initiative which aimed at education for all children (EFA). Birdsall, Levine, & Ibrahim, (2006) opine that HSFP in its multi-faceted role can be linked to several of the MDGs namely; eradication of extreme poverty, hunger, achieving Universal basic education, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, developing a global partnership for development, hence, the use of SFPs in the developing countries is a significant intervention to be considered (One of the means to ensure the implementation of education for all policy was introduction of home school feeding policy (HSFP).About 12 countries were used b by united nations as pilot study for the new program, of which Nigeria is one of them. The programme was finally launched in Nigeria in 2016.

HSFP was to cover children in primary 1-3 in public primary schools and funded by federal Government while the state will fund the feeding of children from primary 4 to 6 (Ministry of education, 2014).That of the state government feeding has not taken off but that of federal government has started . The program was targeted at delivering government led, cost effective school feeding programme using food that is locally grown by smallholder farmers. This means that the food for feeding the children should be gotten

from the local environment. It will help to boost the local farmer's production and equally provide employment opportunities to the communities. Espejo, Burbano & Galliano (2009) indicated that school feeding in its vibrant forms is a well recognized programme that alleviates hunger while supporting education, health and community development.

It was programmed that providing quality school meal once a day will helps to ensure that children eat at least a balanced meal which will nourish their bodies. In a chat the researches had with some of the head mistresses, they explained that many parents brought out their children from private schools to send them to public primary schools to partake in the daily meal. The feeding according to an eye witness has been a point of motivation to pupils to come to school daily, partake in daily school activities .This has directly or indirectly helped to increase school enrolment and ensure positive academic performance for the pupils.

The objectives of the school feeding vary from country to country, depending on the context .The general objectives are to: meet the immediate food needs of children, alleviate short term hunger and improve learning capacity, increase access to education, retention and completion, reduce gender and social inequalities, improve health and nutrition status, increase employment opportunities (Espejo, et al, 2009). The national objectives of the home school feeding programme which will serve as the bench mark for this study are that home school grown feed were establish in Nigeria to :

- To increase school enrolment, retention, completion and reduce dropout rate in primary school.

The progrmme was designed to help improve the enrolment of primary school pupils, ensure retention, reduce dropout rate and ensure total completion in the school. others which may not be considered now are :

- Improve nutrition and health of primary school children. The idea was to provide one meal per day to all primary school pupils with the classes of 1-3 in Nigeria with the objectives of improving their health status.
- To stimulate local agricultural production and boost income for the local farmers through using food that is locally grown by small holder farmers.
- To create jobs for community members and increase their finance by improving access to school feeding market and community benefit from new catering, processing and food handling jobs. This will bring a multiplier effect that will spur economic activities

As earlier stated, one of the objectives of home school feeding is to increase school enrolment for the achievement of millennium development goal of education for all. The feeding serves as bait that attracts children to school. In many countries of the world such as Brazil, Philippine, Cambodia, Mali, Ecuador, Indonesia, Ghana, Ecuador and others, where school feeding programs are implemented, data reveals that the programme has increased enrolment and attendance rate over the years (Akanbi, 2013). Ahmed (2004), made reference to a research carried out in Bangladesh by International food policy research institute on the effect of school feeding programme, found that the programme raised school enrolment rates by 14.2%, reduced the probability of dropping out of school by 7.5% and increased school attendance by 13 days a months. As observed by Oyefade, (2014), the decision to enroll a child in school and, thereafter, for the child to attend regularly is influenced by many factors. These include the perceived value of education, the availability of employment opportunities, the direct and indirect cost of schooling and the availability and quality of school facilities. Food incentives offered to pupils such as school meals compensate parents for direct educational costs. He observed further that implementation of SFP is associated with increase in enrolment, particularly.

As earlier indicated, health and education go hand in hand. When children feed well, the brain will function well and enable them achieve academically. Alabi (2003) indicated that many studies on nutrition have shown that under nutrition in children stunts their growth and affect their mental development which affects their academic performance. The home school program will help to provide the child with at least one balanced meal a day that will help to make the brain develop better for positive learning outcome. Juke, Drake, & Bundy (2008) opine that literature has shown that the development and learning potential of the beneficiaries depend on the quality and nutrient components of food. Home school feeding that provides one balanced meal a day for the child will make the child attend the school daily, take part in the study, perform well in exam, partake in other class activities that will help him do well academically. Since children are sent to school to acquire knowledge, gather skills and experiences that will enable them take care of themselves and contribute to their society in future, there is need for quality health and nutrition delivery.

As Uduku, (2011) noted that irregular school attendance of malnourished and unhealthy children is one of the key factors for poor academic performance. In addition, school feeding programme would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation. The coordinators of

the programs are the Ministries of education, health, justice, agriculture and budget and planning and the enabling structure of the programme was that the federal government should formulate policy, standard setting, resource mobilization and oversight. The state government was to carry out overall structure of public administration in the state. While the community and the school should carry out the policy implementation. This frame work has not really been put in place as supposed because from the interview the researchers carried out with some of the head teachers, it was discovered that the school heads and the teachers are not part of the implementation of the program in Anambra State.

They were excluded from the planning. All the cooks have direct dealings with the program executors at the top and this makes monitoring of the feeding program difficult by the head teachers of primary schools. This needs to be given serious attention because any problem on the implementation level will affect the whole vision of increasing the school enrolment and ensuring quality learning outcome for the pupils. This is the point of attraction of the researchers that carried out this research to see if really the much feeding that has been carried out for about three years has impacted the enrolment rate and academic performance of the pupils as expected. The findings of the study among others will give evaluative tips to the initiators and implementers of the programme on the extent HSFP has impacted enrolment and academic performance of the pupils as targeted for possible corrections.

Statement of the Problem

To ensure Nigerian children have improved school enrolment, sound health and quality education through overcoming the problems of hunger, the Federal government of Nigeria in 2016 launched the National Home Grown School Feeding Policy (NHGSFP) in public primary schools in Nigeria. The aim was to ensure one solid quality meal a day for children (classes 1 to 3) in order to increase enrolment, reduce dropout rate and ensure quality learning outcome. To test the efficacy of HGSFP on school enrolment and academic performance of the pupils, this study which examined the impact of HGSFP on primary school pupils enrolment and academic performance in primary schools in Nnewi North L.G.A. of Anambra state was carried out. This study will be very significant to the implementers of this policy in determining the extent of the home grown school feeding program in impacting on enrolment and academic performance of primary school pupils for possible adjustment.

Research Questions:

1. How has the HSFP impacted enrolment in primary schools in Nnewi North LGA?

2. How has the HSFP impacted the academic performance of primary school pupils in Nnewi North LGA?
3. What are the challenges of home school feeding programme in Nnewi North LGA

METHODOLOGY

This study which examined the impact of home school feeding program (HSFP) on the enrolment and academic performance of pupils in primary schools in Nnewi North LGA of Anambra state adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study constituted all the 47 public primary schools with 206 teachers and head teachers (ASUBEB, 2015). Out of this, 206 teachers and head teachers random sampling technique was used to select 80 head teachers and teachers of primary 1-3 classes only from the 47 primary schools in the LGA under study as respondents. The reason for the choice of the classes is that the programme under study covers only the pupils within those classes. The instrument for data collection was a 27 item questionnaire adapted

by the researchers titled questionnaire on the impact of school feeding policy on enrollment (ISFPE). The instrument was validated by three lecturers from department of early childhood and primary education and education foundations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka respectively. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the items of the questionnaires. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.77 which shows that the questionnaire is reliable for what it was set out to achieve. The questionnaire was distributed to teachers in their various schools and collected same day. The distribution of the questionnaire took the researchers a day. The schools were zoned into three and each researcher was assigned to one zone. The return of questionnaire was 100%. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A mean of 2.50 and above indicated acceptance while a mean below 2.50 indicated rejection. Three research questions guided the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Teachers mean responses on the impact of school feeding programme on pupils’ school enrolment

Items	mean	SD	decision
1. Increase in class population	3.41	0.52	Accepted
2. Regular school attendance	3.31	0.48	Accepted
3. Increase in punctuality	3.48	0.47	Accepted
4. Low dropout rate	3.58	0.41	Accepted
5. Constant retention in school	3.33	0.49	Accepted
6. Low rate of changing school	3.43	0.54	Accepted

The result presented in table 1 indicated that all the teachers and head teachers involved accepted that HSFP has helped to increase enrolment and retention in schools. The HSFP has helped to increase the pupils’ population in schools, make the pupils to attend school regularly, increased punctuality to

school, reduce dropout rate, ensured continuous stay in school and contributed to low rate of children change of school. The mean score on every item is above 2.50 which is the bench mark mean which indicated acceptance.

Teachers mean ratings on the impact of HSFP on academic performance of pupils

Items	Mean	SD	Decision
HSFP has impacted the academic performance of Pupils in primary school in the following ways:			
1. Understanding the lessons better.	2.43	1.04	Accepted
2. Improvements in end of term exams	2.65	1.06	Accepted
3. Improvement in CA tests	2.77	1.07	Accepted
4. Improvement in class assignments	2.97	1.05	Accepted
5. Active participations in class lessons	3.03	1.04	Accepted
6. Carrying out home works	3.0	0.96	Accepted
7. Involvement in academic competitions with other school s	3.04	0.95	Accepted
8. Improved performance in reading texts.	3.11	0.89	Accepted
9. Showing interest in coming to school	3.88	0.64	Accepted

Data presented in table 2 above shows that teachers and head teachers accepted that all the items listed are the ways HSFP impacted the academic performance of the pupils. In other words home school feeding programme make the children to understand their lessons better, improve their performance at the end

of the term exams, improved in their CA scores, improved in their performances in class assignments ,be active discussants in their class lessons among other ways outlined .

Table 3: Teachers mean responses on the challenges of HSFP

Items	means	SD	Decision
The challenges of the new programs are			
1. Non involvement of school heads/ staff in the planning	3.14	1.07	Accepted
2. Delay in release of money to the cook	3.40	1.05	Accepted.
3. Lack of facilities to meet up the increase in enrolment	4.12	1.89	Accepted
4. Lack of appropriate data for pupils population	3.45	1.43	Accepted.
5. Absence of dining hall for sharing the food	2.56	0.58	Accepted
6. Insufficient fund released	3.41	1.07	Accepted .
7. Non involvement of children in nursery level	3.23	1.36	Accepted
8. Inappropriate selection of the cooks.	2.52	0.60	Accepted
9. Lack of training for the cooks on hygiene /menu planning	3.56	1.48	Accepted
10. No definition of responsibility among the partners	2.51	0.24	Accepted
11. Poor quality and quantity of food served.	3.42	1.46	Accepted
12. The payment of the cooks is directly controlled from HGSFP notwithstanding their performances.	3.45	1.05	Accepted

Data presented on table 3 shows that the teachers and the head teachers accepted all the 11 items listed as the challenges of HGSFP in primary schools. This could be seen in their mean responses which are above the bench mark mean of 2.50. Their mean rating ranges from 2.52 to 3.46. In other words non involvement of the head teachers and their staff, delay in release of fund to the cooks, lack of facilities to meet up the increase in enrolment, lack of appropriate data for the pupils population payment of the cooks is directly controlled from HGSFP notwithstanding their performance, among others are some of the challenges.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings on table one which dealt on the impact of HGSFP on the school enrolment shows that head teachers and the teachers accepted the fact that home school feeding programmes helped to increase school enrolment and retention of pupils in the schools. The discussions the researchers had with the cooks was a great support to the ratings of the teachers and the head teachers .The cooks accepted that the number of pupils they were feeding when they started is not the same today . The number has increased a lot. This shows that the HGSFP made more children to join the schools. The finding is in tandem with the earlier findings of research carried out at Bangladesh by International food policy research institute on the effect of school feeding programme on enrolment which found that the programme raised school enrolment rates by 14.2%, reduced the probability of dropping out of school by 7.5% and increased school attendance (Ahmed 2004).

The findings on table2 which dealt on the impact of HGSFP on the academic performance of pupils’ shows those teachers and head teachers accepted that HGSFP impacted pupils academic performance. The meal shared daily in the school makes the children to come to school every day thereby partaking in the teaching and learning. Children that come to school every day definitely perform better than children that come to school when they like. Such children take part fully in the teaching and learning and they no doubt perform better in the tests, assessments, home works, and more especially participate in the class discussions well. This finding collaborates the earlier findings of Otsuki (2011), who opine that securing adequate quantity and quality of food for the school meals is vital to achieving education for all, because in many developing countries, the school meal is the main-if not the only – meal of the day for many school children. This is because school feeding programme has been an effective safety net that can prevent those affected by economic meltdown from adopting negative coping strategies. The finding is also isin tandem with the views of Uduku, (2011) who noted that irregular school attendance of malnourished and unhealthy children is one of the key factors for poor academic performance. In addition, school feeding programme would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation. More so, learning potentials of the beneficiaries depend on the quality and nutrient components of food. Home school feeding that provides one balanced meal a day for the child will make the child attend school daily, take part in

the study and this will improve the performance of the child.

The data presented in table 3 above on the general challenges of the programme shows that teachers and head teachers accepted that all the items listed are the challenges that faced the new programme. Such challenges as lack of updated data of pupils' population that resulted to insufficient food shared to pupils. The discussions the researchers had with the cooks revealed that food provided for that smaller number of pupils in 2016 is still being shared to this large group. The number of children has increased and that according to the cooks, made the money given to them not to be enough for cooking. This affected the quality and quantity of food served to the pupils.

During the discussions with the head teachers, they lamented that the head teachers and teachers are excluded from the program. The only role they play is to see that the cooks have brought food not empty cooler. The money for the cooking is released directly to the pockets of the cooks, no one knows how much was released for the food, and the cooks also do the meal planning. Looking at the educational backgrounds of many of the cooks, they said one wonders the type of meal they will plan. Other issues raised are related to lack of supervision of where they cook the meals. No staff or committee was appointed to handle the supervision. The cooks too presented some of their problems to include lateness in the release of fund for the cooking. On the day of this interview, it was two weeks to closure of school for the term, the first meal for that term was being served that day. They added that the fund released to them no longer cover the expenses for the increased population of the pupils. She added that the initial amount given to them from 2016 is still being released and this has affected the quantity and quality of food served to the pupils, this defeats the purpose of the HGSFP, which is to the pupils one quality meal a day. They added that the children in the nursery level were not added in the feeding, and when others in primary 1-3 are eating they came along crying. In the bid to include them the quantity of food becomes too small. The head teachers explained that they have written several letters to the government on that issue and nothing has been done.

CONCLUSION

This study which dealt on the impact of home grown school feeding program on the enrolment and academic performance of pupils in primary schools, is apt. The researchers therefore concluded that for this program to be sustained to achieve the expected purpose of education for all come 2020 through increasing pupils school enrolment and improving on quality of education at the primary schools, all the stakeholders in education must as a matter of

urgency put into action the recommendations suggested below to address the challenges and move the programme forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. There is need to review the initial plan of the programme in line with the high increase in the population of the pupils. This will help to improve the quality and quantity of food given to the pupils.
2. The head teachers and PTA chairmen should be included in the committee that will oversee the implementation of the programme.
3. Fund meant for the food should be released to the committee that will be set up to oversee the programme. This will make the meal to be served monitored.
4. Bottle neck should be released from the issue of releasing fund for the programme. This will prevent the idea of bringing the first meal for the term in the
5. Workshops should be organized for the cooks on cleanliness and planning of meal for the children.
6. More learning facilities should be provided in the schools to meet up with the teeming population generated by home school feeding.
7. Nongovernmental organizations could be invited to help fund the program.
8. Money should not be released into the hands of the cooks but to the monitoring committee to be set of which the school head teachers should be members

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