

An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Home Grown School Feeding Programme in Primary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

It is estimated that about 7.3 million children are out of school in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria, aware of the importance of education, healthy living among school children and how it affects their academic performance, launched the Home-Grown School Feeding programme with the aim of supporting children from poor homes. The school feeding programme was to provide one meal per school day to all primary school pupils in Nigeria with the objective of improving the health of school age children, increase their enrolment, retention and completion rate in the primary school. This study therefore seeks to investigate the effectiveness of the Home Grown School feeding programme in primary schools in Cross River State. It specifically investigated Source of food provided for the feeding of the pupils, the frequency of feeding of the pupils, whether the school feeding programme in the state has any impact on the enrolment of pupils in primary schools in the state, effect of the programme on the academic performance of pupils in the state and the problems hindering the effective implementation of the programme To achieve this purpose, of the study, five research questions were formulated to guide the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study, One hundred and five head teachers and teachers were sampled for the study using stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. A four point Likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used in the analysis of data which was presented in tables for easy communication. The result of analysis revealed that the food used in the feeding of the pupils in Cross River State was not sourced from the local market, the feeding patterns of the pupils did not agree with the objectives of the programme, the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the enrolment of pupils in primary schools, the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the academic performance of pupils positively, respondents identified lack of effective supervision of the programme, late release of funds, inappropriate selection of cooks and no clear definition of responsibilities among the partners as some of the associated with the implementation of the programme. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that There should be increased funding and prompt release of funds for the programme to avoid the situation where pupils are left for a long time without being fed due to lack of funds.

INTRODUCTION

The school feeding programme is one of the critical interventions that have been introduced in many developed and developing countries of the world to address the issue of poverty, stimulate school enrolment and enhance pupils' academic performance. In developing countries, almost 60 million children go to school hungry every day and about 40 percent of them are from Africa. (Akanbi, 2013). Providing school meals is therefore vital in nourishing children. Parents are motivated to send their children to school instead of keeping them at home to work or care for siblings. According to 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. He further stated that food incentives offered to students such as school meals compensate parents for direct educational cost and that implementation of school feeding programme is associated with increase in enrolment, particularly for girls. In Nigeria, the home grown school feeding programme was first introduced by the federal government in 2004 beginning with 12 pilot states selected from the six geopolitical zones and the federal capital territory. The Federal Ministry of Education was the designated implementing agency for the programme. This programme was stopped by ten states and the federal capital territory shortly after commencement leaving only Osun and Kano states in the programme. The key challenges that led to the discontinuation of the programme as identified by the Nigerian Home Grown School Feeding Strategic Plan 2016-2020 were failure of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to disburse funds to the pilot states as well as non-remittance of counterpart funds from participating states, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, inadequate sensitization and advocacy of relevant stakeholders, resulting in low community involvement and participation, lack of supporting infrastructure such as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene(WASH) facilities, institutional structure at federal level was not made fully operational, inadequate policy and legal framework at the state and federal level and federal funding also ceased in 2008. In May, 2014, the Federal Government of Nigeria convened a high level National Advocacy Meeting with support from Imperial College London's Partnership for Child Development (PCD), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the World Bank Group and the Vitol Foundation to develop a roadmap for implementing the Home Grown School Feeding Programme across Nigeria. The subsequent recommendations of the meeting have reinforced the need for urgent action to establish the programme across all the 36 states of the federation. The Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme was subsequently launched in Nigeria by the vice president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the 13th of June, 2016 to officially flag off the effective take off of the programme in the 36 states of Nigeria. The programme was targeted to achieve the following;

1. Increasing school enrolment and completion.
2. Improving child nutrition and health.
3. Strengthening local agricultural economies by providing a school feeding market in which Farmers can sell their products.
4. Create employment opportunities with jobs in catering, processing, farming, etc.

This research therefore seeks to carry out an on the spot assessment of what is actually done in the field with a view to find out if it is in line with Federal Government's intentions of the programme and if not suggest ways of modifying its implementation for better results.

Statement of the problem

It is estimated that about 7.3 million children are out of school in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria, aware of the importance of education, healthy living among school children and how it affects their academic performance, launched the Home-Grown School Feeding programme with the aim of supporting children from poor homes. The school feeding programme was to provide one meal per school day to all primary school pupils in Nigeria with the objective of improving the health of school age children, increase their enrolment, retention and completion rate in the primary school. It was meant to provide an important new opportunity to assist poor families and feed hungry children. It provided incentive for poor families to send their children to school and keep them there. The programme aimed to provide pupils with adequate meal during the school day. The government have made its commitment to this programme by its timely release of funds to sponsor the programme. However, it is observed that in spite of all the efforts by Government to ensure the success of this programme it is still far from achieving the main objectives of the programme. For instance, the nutritional status of most of the children in our public primary schools is nothing to write home about. The quality of meals provided for children where it is provided at all does not reflect what Government is investing on it monthly. This research therefore is intended to examine the

effectiveness of the programme in terms of achieving the objectives for which the Federal Government introduced it and its impact on the beneficiaries of the programme in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Home Grown School feeding programme in primary schools in Cross River State. This study specifically intends to investigate

- i). Source of food provided for the feeding of the pupils.
- ii) The extent to which the feeding patterns agree with the objectives of the programme.
- iii). whether the school feeding programme in the state has any impact on the enrolment of pupils in primary schools in the state.
- iv). The impact of the programme on the academic performance of pupils in the state.
- v). The problems associated with the implementation of the school feeding programme.

Research questions

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study.

- i). From which source does the food provided for the feeding of the pupils obtained?
- ii). To what extent do the feeding patterns agree with the objectives of the programme?
- iii). How has the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the enrolment of pupils?
- iv). How has the school feeding programme in the state influenced the academic performance of pupils?
- v). What are the problems associated the implementation of the school feeding programme?.

Significance of the study

This study when completed will be useful to the Federal Ministry of Education which is the supervisory body of the programme. It will help the ministry to determine whether the programme is actually succeeding or failing and then strategize on how to make it work if it is not working. The study will also be useful to teachers since they were supposed to be the direct implementers of the programme. The study will help them realize their areas of strength and weakness and where necessary, strengthen those areas of weakness. Parents will also benefit from this study. It will help them to encourage their children to go to school since they will be sure of a meal for the child at school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The World Health Organization (2000), has noted that many children in less developed countries suffer from poor health and nutritional problems that impact negatively on their access to and participation in education. The United Nations estimates that one third of preschool age children in less developed countries, that is a total of 180 million children under age 5, experience growth stunting relative to international norms (United Nations, 2000), while hundreds of millions more suffer from tropical disease including malaria and intestinal parasites. According to Neeser (2012), 60 million children go to school hungry every day. In developing countries, children that don't eat don't learn. He added that health and education are the two corner stones of human capital and form the basis of an individual's economic productivity. Both are valuable instruments in ensuring a healthy economy and creating a literate society. Otsuki (2011), is of the opinion that securing adequate quantity and quality of food for 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. Good quality school food guarantees school attendance and good educational outcomes. Espejo, Burbano and Galliano (2009) say that school feeding, in its variant forms is a well-recognized programme that alleviates hunger while supporting education, health and community development. Yunusa (2012), noted that students in school feeding programmes have the potential for improving their performance because it enabled them attend school regularly and studied more effectively. He found that in a study carried out in Jamaica, children in Grade 2 scored higher in Arithmetic when they started being fed at school. However, the impact of school feeding programme on the academic performance of pupils has been embraced with mixed feelings. It was observed that although school feeding programmes motivate parents to enroll their children in school, its impact on academic performance is mixed and depends on various factors within the context in which the programme is set. In agreement with this, Uduku (2011) is of the opinion that school feeding programmes would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation. In their study on the effect of school feeding programme on enrolment and performance of public elementary school pupils in Osun State, Nigeria, Taylor and Ogbogu (2016) found that 87% of the pupils were fed daily through the school feeding programme, which was funded through cost sharing between the state and local government. It was also found that the school feeding programme in Osun state has resulted in an increase in pupils' enrolment by (78.4%), retention by (44.8%), regularity by (58.6%), and punctuality by (69%) in school attendance. It has also enhanced the pupils' performance in curricular and extracurricular activities by (55.2%). The major challenges were found to be insufficient funding (62.2%), insufficient classrooms and furniture to cope with increase in enrolment (60.86%), heavy work load for teachers (60.86%) and lack of effective monitoring and evaluation system (60.86%). The study concluded that the school feeding programme in osun state has increased the enrolment and improved the performance of elementary school pupils in the state. In another study by Karisa and Orodho (2014) on Assessment of Home Grown School Feeding Programme Theory in Kinango Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya, the findings showed that home grown feeding programme was not directly beneficial to the local community as was envisaged since majority of people supplying school food did not reside within the local community but instead operated from the urban areas. The few local farmers who participated in the programme were further constrained with low yield as a result of not using modern agricultural production techniques and stringent procurement procedures. Hence food security among pupils was not guaranteed due to erratic disbursement of the funds meant for programme. According to the result of findings by Onah and Onah(2021), twelve respondents comprising of Head teachers and classroom teachers interviewed across beneficiary schools in Enugu state were of the view that the meals were of poor quality, not given as at when due and in some cases substituted for cheaper ones. Similarly, Times (2018) reports that in Jigawa state, the quality of the meals had been compromised and that vendors had stopped serving meat, fish and fruits.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research design adopted for this study was ex-post facto research design. This design was adopted because data on the home grown school feeding programme was collected after the feeding of the pupils must have been done and the researchers have no control of the events under investigation.

Research area

The research was conducted in the entire Cross River State. The state is made up of three educational zones namely, Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja educational zones, reflecting the three senatorial districts of the state. The research cut across the three zones.

Sampling technique and sample

The study adopted both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of the three educational zones in the state. This technique is appropriate because it gave the researchers the opportunity to draw their sample across the three educational zones in the state. Simple random sampling technique was then used in the sampling of the schools, head teachers and the teachers used for the study. The sample size for the study comprised of five (5) primary schools from each of the three educational zones giving a total of fifteen (15) primary schools. From each of the schools, six (6) teachers were selected giving a total of ninety (90) teachers in addition to all the fifteen head teachers used for the study. This gave a total sample size of one hundred and five (105) respondents.

Instrumentation

A four point likert scale questioner was used in the collection of data from both head teachers and teachers from the sampled schools.

Data collection and analysis

Data was collected by the core research team members assisted by ten (10) trained research assistants strictly following the work flow. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data which was presented in tables for easy communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of data analysis are presented in tables according to the research questions.

Research question 1

From which source does the food provided for the feeding of the pupils obtained?

To provide answer to this research question, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used. Here, a benchmark mean of 2.5 was fixed for acceptance or rejection of a statement. The result is presented in table 1.

TABLE 1. Mean and standard deviation of the responses by head teachers and teachers on the source of food provided for the feeding of pupils in primary schools in Cross River State.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
Most often pupils are fed with indomie.	71	25	5	4	3.55	0.76	Accept
The head teacher provides the food that is used in feeding the pupils.	62	21	16	6	3.32	0.94	Accept
At times pupils are fed with biscuits	24	38	22	21	2.62	1.05	Accept
The food provided for the pupils is sourced from the local market.	20	13	31	41	2.11	1.13	Reject
The people who supply the food are always strangers from outside the community.	34	30	21	20	2.74	1.11	Accept
Grand Mean					2.87		

Result of analysis as presented in table 1 indicate that the mean response on whether pupils were fed with indomie was 3.55 which was above the bench mark of 2.5, meaning that most of the respondents agreed that pupils were fed with indomie. Respondents also agreed that head teachers provide food that was used in feeding the pupils, with a mean response of 3.32 which is above the bench mark of 2.5. Respondents further agreed that at times pupils were fed with biscuits, their mean response was 2.62. Their mean response on whether the food provided for the pupils was sourced from the local market was 2.11 which was below the bench mark of 2.5. By this mean response, the implication is that most of the respondents did not agree to the statement that the pupils' food was sourced from the local market. The mean response on whether the people who supply the food were always strangers from outside the community was 2.74 which was also accepted. From the responses above it is indicated that the food used in the feeding of the pupils in Cross River State was not sourced from the local market and the vendors were also not from the local community. Rather, indomie and biscuits were mostly used in the feeding of the pupils.

Research question 2

To what extent does the feeding patterns of the pupils agree with the objectives of the programme?

To provide answer to this research question, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used. Here, a benchmark mean of 2.5 was fixed for acceptance or rejection of a statement. The result is presented in table 2.

TABLE 2. Mean and standard deviation of responses by head teachers and teachers on whether the feeding patterns of the pupils agree with the objectives of the programme

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
The food supplied by the vendors is quite adequate.	22	25	23	35	2.32	1.15	Reject
Food varieties are changed regularly for the pupils.	58	17	26	4	3.23	0.95	Accept
Feeding patterns of the pupils is in line with the objectives of the programme.	9	29	6	61	1.87	1.09	Reject
The pupils are fed daily.	27	19	4	55	2.17	1.31	Reject
The quality of food supplied by the vendors is good.	18	23	13	51	2.07	1.18	Reject
Grand Mean					2.33		

Result of analysis as presented in table 2 indicate that the mean responses on items 1,3, 4 and 5 which are 2.32, 1.87, 2.17 and 2.07 respectively, are below the benchmark mean value of 2.5 and the statements are rejected. While the mean response on items 2 which is 3.23 is above the benchmark and was Accepted,. However, the grand mean of 2.33 was also below the benchmark. Since four out of the five statements were rejected and the grand mean was below the 2.5 benchmark, it is concluded that the feeding patterns of the pupils did not agree with the objectives of the programme

Research question 3

How has the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the enrolment of pupils in schools?

To provide answer to this research question, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used. Here, a benchmark mean of 2.5 was fixed for acceptance or rejection of a statement. The result is presented in table 3.

TABLE 3. Mean and standard deviation of responses by head teachers and teachers on whether the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the enrolment of pupils in schools

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
With the introduction of school feeding programm in schools, enrolment of pupils has increased	26	42	25	12	2.78	0.95	Accept
Pupils class attendance has incread	19	36	27	23	2.5	1.03	Accept
There is low rate of change of school	42	43	5	16	3.07	1.01	Accept
The pupils who have been coming still remain the same.	12	35	19	39	2.19	1.07	Reject
Pupils who want to leave the school still do so.	14	33	11	47	2.13	1.14	Reject
Grand Mean					2.53		

Result of analysis as presented in table 3 indicate that the mean responses on items 1, 2, and 3 which are 2.78, 2.50 and 3.07 respectively, are higher than the benchmark mean value of 2.5 and the statements are accepted. While the mean responses on items 4 and 5 which were 2.19 and 2.13 were below the benchmark and were rejected. However, the grand mean of 2.53 was also higher than the benchmark. Since three out of the five statements were accepted and the grand mean was above the 2.5 benchmark, it is concluded that the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the enrolment of pupils in schools. In primary schools.

Research question 4

.How has the school feeding programme in the state influenced the academic performance of pupils?

To provide answer to this research question, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used. Here, a benchmark mean of 2.5 was fixed for acceptance or rejection of a statement. The result is presented in table 4.

TABLE 4. Mean and standard deviation of responses by head teachers and teachers on whether the school feeding programme in the state influenced the academic performance of pupils

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
Feeding of pupils in the classroom has increased thelevel of pupils participation in class activities.	74	24	6	3	3.61	0.70	Accept
Caused pupils to be involved in doing their homework.	55	17	16	17	3.05	1.16	Accept
Caused pupils to sleep in class.	12	30	25	38	2.15	1.04	Reject
Made more pupils to pass their exams.	49	12	28	16	2.89	1.16	Accept
Makes pupils lazy and uninterested in classroomactivities.	9	29	21	46	2.01	1.03	Reject
Grand Mean					2.74		

Result of analysis as presented in table 4 indicate that the mean responses on items 1, 2, and 4 which are 3.61, 3.05 and 2.89 respectively, are higher than the benchmark mean value of 2.5 and the statements are accepted. While the mean responses on items 3 and 5 which were 2.15 and 2.01were below the benchmark

and were rejected. However, the grand mean of 2.74 was also higher than the benchmark. Since three out of the five statements were accepted and the grand mean was above the 2.5 benchmark, it is concluded that the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the academic performance of pupils positively.

Research question 5.

What are the problems associated the implementation of the school feeding programme?.

To provide answer to this research question, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used. Here, a benchmark mean of 2.5 was fixed for acceptance or rejection of a statement. The result is presented in table 5.

TABLE 5. Mean and standard deviation of responses by head teachers and teachers on the problems associated the implementation of the school feeding programme.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remarks
Lack of effective supervision.	49	33	21	2	3.23	0.84	Accept
Late release of funds.	60	15	27	3	3.26	0.94	Accept
Noninvolvement of head teachers and teachers in the implementation of the programme.	25	32	2	46	2.34	1.26	Reject
Inappropriate selection of cooks.	54	23	6	22	3.04	1.19	Accept
No clear definition of responsibilities among the partners.	36	30	15	24	2.74	1.16	Accept
Grand Mean					2.92		

Result of analysis as presented in table 5 indicate that the mean responses on items 1, 2, 4 and 5 which are 3.23, 3.26, 3.04 and 2.74 respectively, are higher than the benchmark mean value of 2.5 and the statements are accepted. While the mean response on item 3 which was 2.34 was below the benchmark and was rejected. However, the grand mean of 2.92 was also higher than the benchmark. Since four out of the five statements were accepted and the grand mean was above the 2.5 benchmark, it therefore implies that respondents have identified lack of effective supervision of the programme, late release of funds, inappropriate selection of cooks and no clear definition of responsibilities among the partners as some of the associated with the implementation of the programme.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of findings in this study indicates that the food used in the feeding of the pupils in Cross River State was not sourced from the local market and the vendors were also not from the local community. Rather, indomie and biscuits were mostly used in the feeding of the pupils. This result is in line with the findings of Karisa and Orodho (2014) who on Assessment of Home Grown School Feeding Programme Theory in Kinango Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya, found out that home grown feeding programme was not directly beneficial to the local community as was envisaged since majority of people supplying school food did not reside within the local community but instead operated from the urban areas. The few local farmers who participated in the programme were further constrained with low yield as a result of not using modern agricultural production techniques and stringent procurement procedures. Hence food security among pupils was not guaranteed due to erratic disbursement of the funds meant for programme. In the area of agreement with the objectives of the programme, the result revealed that the feeding patterns of the pupils did not agree with the objectives of the programme. Here the objective of the programme on the feeding patterns was that the pupils be fed at least once in a day, but the result showed that the pupils were not fed daily and the quality of food supplied was poor. This result is in agreement with the findings of Onah and

Onah(2021), which revealed that twelve respondents comprising of Head teachers and classroom teachers interviewed across beneficiary schools in Enugu state were of the view that the meals were of poor quality, not given as at when due and in some cases substituted for cheaper ones. Similarly, Times (2018) reports that in Jigawa state, the quality of the meals had been compromised and that vendors had stopped serving meat, fish and fruits. The findings of the study on the impact of the programme on enrolment revealed that the mean responses on items 1, 2, and 3 which are 2.78, 2.50 and 3.07 respectively, are higher than the benchmark mean value of 2.5 and the statements are accepted. While the mean responses on items 4 and 5 which were 2.19 and 2.13 were below the benchmark and were rejected. However, the grand mean of 2.53 was also higher than the benchmark. Since three out of the five statements were accepted and the grand mean was above the 2.5 benchmark, it is concluded that the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the enrolment of pupils in schools. In primary schools. This result is in line with the findings of Taylor and Ogbogu (2016) whose results showed that 87% of the pupils were fed daily through the school feeding programme, which was funded through cost sharing between the state and local government. It was also found that the school feeding programme in Osun state has resulted in an increase in pupils' enrolment by (78.4%), retention by (44.8%), regularity by (58.6%), and punctuality by (69%) in school attendance. It has also enhanced the pupils' performance in curricular and extracurricular activities by (55.2%). Result of findings on the impact of the school feeding programme on the academic performance of pupils showed that the mean responses on items 1, 2, and 4 which are 3.61, 3.05 and 2.89 respectively, are higher than the benchmark mean value of 2.5 and the statements are accepted. While the mean responses on items 3 and 5 which were 2.15 and 2.01 were below the benchmark and were rejected. However, the grand mean of 2.74 was also higher than the benchmark. Since three out of the five statements were accepted and the grand mean was above the 2.5 benchmark, it is concluded that the school feeding programme in the state impacted on the academic performance of pupils positively. This result is in agreement with Yunusa (2012), who noted that students in school feeding programmes have the potential for improving their performance because it enabled them attend school regularly and studied more effectively. He found that in a study carried out in Jamaica, children in Grade 2 scored higher in Arithmetic when they started being fed at school. However, the impact of school feeding programme on the academic performance of pupils has been embraced with mixed feelings. It was observed that although school feeding programmes motivate parents to enroll their children in school, its impact on academic performance is mixed and depends on various factors within the context in which the programme is set. In agreement with this, Uduku (2011) is of the opinion that school feeding programmes would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation. The result of findings on the problems associated with the implementation of the programme revealed that respondents have identified lack of effective supervision of the programme, late release of funds, inappropriate selection of cooks and no clear definition of responsibilities among the partners as some of the associated with the implementation of the programme.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the school feeding programme in Cross River State did not satisfy the objective of empowering the local community financially the food used in the feeding of the pupils in Cross River State was not sourced from the local market and the vendors were also not from the local community. Rather, indomie and biscuits were mostly used in the feeding of the pupils. The feeding pattern of the pupils was not in line with the objective of feeding the pupils with at least a meal in a day. However, the programme recorded successes in the area of influence on increased enrolment and the impact on academic performance of pupils. The major challenge of the programme was funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made with the aim of helping to make the home grown school

feeding programme in Cross River State more effective.

1. Government should ensure that all the food vendors employed for the feeding programme are selected from the local communities and made to source their food from the local markets as this will boost the economy of the people.
2. There should be increased funding and prompt release of funds for the programme to avoid the situation where pupils are left for a long time without being fed due to lack of funds.
3. Government should set up a monitoring and evaluation team for each of the educational zones who will monitor the activities of the different stake holders and evaluate the progress of the programme and report to Government periodically.

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