

SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN MUNYA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA: AN EVALUATION

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Abstract

The study assessed the School Feeding Programme among public primary school pupils in Munya Local Government Area in Niger State, Nigeria. The main objective of the study is to determine the effect of the programme on school enrolment, academic performance and the challenges faced in the course of implementing the programme. Abraham Maslow's Theory of needs was adopted. The study adopted the survey research design and obtained its data from primary source using structured questionnaire administered on one hundred (100) respondents in 10 randomly selected public primary schools in Munya Local Government Area in Niger State. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. It was also discovered that the school feeding programme in Niger State has resulted in an increase in pupils' enrolment 75(75%), encouragement of punctuality 87 (87%), as well as increase in academic performance 75(75%) activities. The study also discovered that the implementation of the programme is bedeviled by challenges such as insufficient fund 65(65%), overcrowded classrooms 65(65%) and small quantity of food served 66(66%). The study concluded that the state government should double its efforts to address the problems identified by the study in the programme implementation, this will sustain pupils' enrolment and increase academic performance thereby leading to nation-building. This can be done through sustainable funding to be solicited from all stakeholders, corporate bodies and multi-national companies. The study further suggests that proper monitoring groups should be set up in each ward so as to supervise the Vendors in the course of preparing and administration of the school feeding meals.

Keywords: Feeding, Primary, Programme, Public, School.

Introduction

About Sixty Million children go to school hungry daily in developing countries of the world. A child who moves to school hungry cannot learn and the health condition of such a child will be problematic (Nesser, 2012). According to UNESCO (2011) about 66 million school children are under-nourished and an additional 67 million children are out of school. Norris (2021) asserted that different countries introduced 'Food for Education' in form of 'School Feeding Programme' and 'Food for schooling Programme' to achieve quality education and to redistribute food to poor families. While both programmes might have advantages, this essay argues that a 'School Feeding Programme', that practises 'On site Feeding' can achieve Sustainable Development Goal, i.e. quality equitable life-long learning for all learners. Conversely, a 'Food for School Programme' can increase enrolment of both boys and girls, however, school feeding programmes constitute critical interventions that have been introduced in many developed and third world

countries to address the issue of poverty, increase school enrolment and enhance pupils' performance. In developing countries, almost 60 million children go to school hungry every day and about 40 percent of them are from Africa. 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 (Akanbi, 2013). The introduction of the school feeding is traced to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative and several conferences held thereafter by African leaders which aimed to tackle issues, such as peace, security, good economic, political and corporate governance and to make the continent an attractive destination for foreign investment. Some of these developments include the 'New Partnership for African Development' which according to the blueprint is a pledge by African leaders, based on common vision and a firm and shared conviction, to eradicate poverty and to place their countries on the path of sustainable growth and development and, at the same time, to participate actively in the world economy and politics. Also, the 'Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme' and the 'Millennium Hunger Task Force' amongst others were initiatives which were designed to link school feeding to agricultural development through purchase and use of locally produced food (Bundy et al cited in Taylor & Ogbogui, 2016). 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. Since the country happened to be one of twelve (12) pilot countries invited to implement the programme. So far, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya and Mali commenced the implementation of the school feeding programme. As a result, the Federal Government of Nigeria came up with the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004, which provided the enabling 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. To the extent that poor health and nutrition among children has a negative impact on their education, programs or policies that increase children's health status will also improve their education outcomes. Given the importance of education for economic development (World Bank, 2001), this link could be a key mechanism to improve the quality of life for people in less developed countries such as Kenya (Orodho, 2014).

2. Literature Review

The national objectives of the home school feeding programme which will serve as the benchmark for this study are that home school grown feed were established in Nigeria to: To increase school enrolment, retention, completion and reduce dropout rate in primary school. The programme 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 of food to children through schools.

According to Neeser (2012), 60 million children go to school hungry every day in developing countries; children that don't eat don't learn. Tomlinson (2007) add that health and education are the two cornerstones 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. Burbano and Galliano, (2009) opined that school feeding, in its variant forms, is a well-recognized programme that alleviates hunger while supporting education, health and community development. Neeser, (2012) says healthy children learn better. School health and nutrition (SHN) interventions have been shown to improve not only children's health and nutrition, but also their

learning potential and life choices both in the short-and long-term. The school feeding programme in Brazil, according to Otsuki and Arce (2007), is part of the framework of food security policy and aims to reduce the number of malnourished children and the need to provide healthy, good quality food for children as a means to improve the population's eating habits—nearly 40percent of the population is overweight and 5 percent is obese. Tomlinson (2007) in his study of the feeding programmes in Malawi and Zambia says that there is an association between low-achieving children and less regular breakfast meals. Deficiencies in micronutrient have been associated with poor performance on various achievement tests. School feeding is positively correlated with infant mortality rates -a one percent decrease in infant mortality levels for every extra year of schooling for a mother –to -be. School feeding, according to Espejo, et al (2009) has been an effective safety net that can prevent those affected by economic shocks (increased food prices or during protracted crises) from adopting negative coping strategies.

School feeding is currently being used in this way in many countries, including Haiti, Liberia, Pakistan and Senegal. In many low-income countries, school feeding programmes have also been a critical part of the response to the global economic crisis, (Neeser, 2012). The objectives of school feeding vary depending on the context. General objectives are to: meet the immediate food needs of children; alleviate short-term hunger and improve learning capacity; increase access to education (i.e. enrolment, attendance, retention and completion); reduce gender and social inequalities; improve health and nutrition status; increase development opportunities, (Espejo, et al, 2009). However, citing The World Bank, Tomlinson (2007) argues that there is little evidence that school feeding programmes have a positive impact on nutrition neither for participating children nor on the root causes of malnutrition and hunger. Kiamba (2013) comments that in 2003, NEPAD, in collaboration with WFP and the Millennium Hunger Task Force launched the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme initiative. The concept is based on harnessing structured demand from school food provision (a win-win for farmers and school children).

Tomlinson (2007) advocates for the use of SFP not for educational benefits per se but as developmental tool saying it would focus on improving the livelihoods of particular groups that are vulnerable to food insecurity, and not simply (for example) improving school enrolment. The author goes on to argument that, if increased enrolment is the aim, then using government funds to reduce or waive school fees would be a more cost-effective way of ensuring this than an SFP. In a study conducted by Bosah, Ifeoma& Patience (2017) 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 regularly definitely perform better than truant children Such children take part fully in the teaching and learning and no doubt perform better in the tests, assessments, home works, and more especially participate in the class discussions well. In order to improve the nutritional status of school children, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Programme in September, 2005 under the coordination of the Federal Ministry of Education. The programme aimed to provide pupils with adequate meal during the school day (FME,2007). The scheme, officially known as Home Grown School Feeding Programme insisted on buying the foodstuffs from the local farmers. It therefore reduced the rate of malnutrition while it also provided the local farmers the opportunity to sell their produce to participating schools.

The Administration of the School Feeding Programme in Niger State, Nigeria

The menu for the school feeding programme is based on national guidelines but adjusted to accommodate local peculiarities. The school meal served is assorted and nutritious and the programme is coordinated by a chief executive officer in a secretariat in the Niger State deputy governor's office as well as the commissioner for education. For the effective and efficient programme implementation, food vendors were appointed, trained and equipped with uniforms and working materials. In addition, a monitoring and evaluation committee was constituted and headed by the director of the inspectorate services in the ministry of education. Also, the local inspectors of education and zonal inspectors of education are members of the steering committees

who supervise the programme. The state Ministry of Education, the State Universal Basic Education Board and Ministry of Health collect data on general child health. The Local Government Education Authorities which are field offices of the State Universal Basic Education Board, Head teachers, Teachers, Teachers' Associations, are also involved in the administration of the programme. The programme is linked to agriculture with the aim of boosting food production and sales as well as providing employment for the people in the neighborhood of local areas that form catchment areas for the Elementary Schools. The community food vendors are fully integrated into the well-structured supply chain through which local farmers provide them with the necessary food materials required for the meals. This does not only ensure cost-effectiveness, but ensures that the money expended sinks back into the State's economy and generates maximum multiplier effects on the people (Yunusa et al, 2012).

The school feeding programme secretariat ensures that the food vendors are paid fortnightly in advance directly into their accounts as well as monthly transport subsidy. The vendors do not cook in schools however a nutritious and balanced diet is given to pupils. The strategic and technical partners for the programme include the Partnership for Child Development, based in Imperial College, United Kingdom and the Sahara Group / Food Basket Foundation International. The School feeding programme relies on continuous support and goodwill of these stakeholders. Innovative ways of funding, such as communities, philanthropists and non-governmental organizations fill up the funding gaps (Oyeniran, 2014). Neef (2020), claims that to alleviate short-term hunger, the School Feeding programme firstly requires children to be physically present at school in order to be fed and secondly the provided food is intended for only that (short) duration when the child needs to concentrate in learning. On the other hand, the 'Food for Schooling Programme' acts as an incentive to poor families to send their children to school regularly where, to be eligible for monthly food rations, children have to attend a certain number of classes.

Oyefade (2014), observed several factors with significant impact on many dimensions of poverty on school attendance and education quality, particularly early childhood malnutrition, deprivation based on gender and income inequality tend to be responsible. In many countries, such as Brazil, Philippines, Cambodia, Mali, El Salvador, Indonesia, Ghana, Bangladesh, Ecuador etc. where school feeding programmes are implemented, data reveals that the programme has increased enrolment and attendance rates over the years (Akanbi 2013). In Bangladesh, the research carried out by The International Food Policy Research Institute on the effects 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 1.3 days a month. Similarly, in Pakistan a programme provides an income in the form of one or two tins of oil to families whose girls attend school for twenty days per month. In its pilot phase, the oil incentive programme demonstrated that it could make a significant contribution to full attendance. In participating schools, enrolment improved overall while attendance increased from 73% to 95% among participants. The programme also claims to put additional food in the hands of mothers to serve as a contact between mothers and teachers on distribution days. In another study in Bangladesh, a programme of school-based food distribution increased enrolment by 20% and a 2% decline in non-participating schools (Ahmed, 2004).

Still on the issue of SFP and enrolment, Oyeniran (2014) observed that schooling and institutions regulating access to enrolment in developing countries, to some extent, contribute to the class and social divide in urban areas. Equally, educational opportunity is driven by unequal and asymmetric political decision-making structures whereby people from poorer backgrounds tend to bear the brunt of national and local policies. He contended that availability of schools does not automatically result in higher enrolment numbers and submitted that some families cannot send their children to school because the combined cost of fees, textbooks and uniforms is prohibitive. Poor education environment can contribute to drop out rate, while quality education increases enrolment which can lead to classroom overcrowding.

Psacharopoulos (1998) indicated that the quantified benefits of investing in education are highest at primary levels. This view provides a strong case for expanding investment in primary rather

than higher levels of education. Public interest in School Feeding Programmes have stemmed from the endorsement of the view that education is essential in the promotion of the quality of human life for economic and social development. Education has for many years served as a vehicle for empowering and transforming people for better societies and the world as a whole. In the last few years, SFPs have enjoyed massive support and attention from international organizations and many development partners, this can be attributed to the multi-faceted role of this social intervention (education, health, agriculture) in achieving development objectives in many countries and a 'perceived' demand for the programme. In its multi-faceted role, SFPs 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 (Birds all et al, 2005)

2.4 The Effects of School Feeding Programme on Pupils Academic Performance

Many studies on nutrition have shown that under nutrition in children stunts their growth and mental development, hence, the relationship between nutrition and academic performance (Alabi, 2003). Although, food has classically been perceived as a means of providing energy and building materials to the body, research over the years has provided exciting evidence for the influence of dietary factors on mental function. Not only are children motivated to get into school but also there is a significant impact on their nutritional status and development, cognitive capabilities and academic performance.

Literature has shown that the development and learning potential of the beneficiaries depend on the quality and nutrient components of food (Jukes et al, 2008). Nutritional and health status are powerful influences on a child's learning and how a child performs in school. Children who lack certain nutrients in their diet do not have the same potential for learning as healthy and well-nourished children. Children with cognitive and sensory impairments naturally perform less and are more likely to repeat grades. The irregular school attendance of malnourished and unhealthy children is one of the key factors for poor performance (Uduku, 2011). Yunusa (2012) stated 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 SFPs 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. Drawing from this, Uduku (2011) opined that SFPs would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Abraham Maslow's theory of needs, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, food is considered a basic physiological need and higher-ordered needs can only be achieved if the basic needs are met. In the education context, for learners to concentrate on learning and for educational institutions to achieve high-quality learning, learners' physiological needs i.e. food and water must be met before delivering teaching and learning activities. According to Norris (2021) countries introduced 'Food for Education' in a form of 'School Feeding Programme' and 'Food for schooling Programme' to achieve quality education and to redistribute food to poor families. While both programmes might have advantages, this essay argues that a 'School Feeding Programme', that practises 'Onsite Feeding' can achieve Sustainable Development Goal, i.e. quality equitable life-long learning for all learners. Conversely, a 'Food for School Programme' can increase enrolment of both boys and girls, however, it might fail to achieve quality learning and, furthermore, can develop a dependency mentality.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design and obtained its data from primary source. The primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered on 100 respondents in 10 public primary schools in Munya using the random sampling technique. The retrieved data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics in form of simple percentages.

Results and Discussion

Results generated from the questionnaires are presented in the tables below:

Table 1: There is an increase in school enrolment due to the provision of meals

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	75	75
Agreed	8	8
Undecided	2	2
Disagreed	10	10
Strongly Disagreed	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher’s survey 2022.

The above table is whether there is an increase in school enrolment as a result of school feeding, 75(75%) of the respondent strongly agreed, 8(8%) agree 2(2) undecided, 10(10) disagree 5(5) strongly disagree, the results clearly indicated that there is increase enrolment as a result of the school feeding programme, this is in line with a study conducted by Oyefade (2014) in many countries such as Brazil, Mali, Cambodia etc. where school feeding programmes are implemented. data revealed that the programme have increased enrolment and attendance rate. This is also in agreement with the response of the school feeding programme Desk officer in Munya local government in an interview who categorically stated that the program has really increased the enrolment of pupils in all the targeted schools in Munya local government area.

Table 2. School feeding encourages punctuality.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	87	87
Agreed	10	10
Undecided	0	0
Disagreed	2	2
Strongly Disagreed	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher’s survey 2022.

Table 2 shows the result on how school feeding encourages punctuality. It shows that 87(87%) of the respondents strongly agree 10(10%) agree 0(0%) undecided 2 (2%) disagree and 1 (1%) strongly disagree, this reveals that the school feeding programme encourages punctuality this is in agreement with a study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute on the effect of school attendance, the result revealed that attendance increased by 1.3 days in a month, the result also revealed with the response of the headmistress of UBE Primary School FukanKadara who stated that the programme has increased punctuality and pupils retention in school.

Table 3. There's increase in Pupils' academic Performance as a result of School Feeding.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	75	75
Agreed	15	15
Undecided	2	2
Disagreed	6	6
Strongly Disagreed	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher’s survey 2022.

The above table reveals the responses on pupils' academic performance 75 (75%) strongly agreed that there's increase, 15 (15%) agreed, 2 (2%) undecided, 6 (6%) disagreed and 2 (2%)

strongly disagreed this is also in agreement with the responses of most of the Head Teachers interviewed who stated that they have achieved some level of improvement in the students' tests and examinations since the introduction of the programme. This is in-line with an observation by Uduku(2011) who stated that irregular school attendance of malnourished and unhealthy children is one of the key factors for poor performance.

Table 4. Insufficient funding is a challenge affecting the implementation of the school feeding programme.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	65	65
Agreed	15	15
Undecided	10	10
Disagreed	8	8
Strongly Disagreed	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's survey 2022.

On the issue of insufficient fund as a challenge effecting the implementation of the school feeding programme 65(65%) strongly agreed, 15 (15%) agreed, 10 (10%) undecided, 8 (8%) disagreed 2 (2%) strongly disagreed. This is in line with the response of the Desk Officer who stated that the major problem they have been encountering is the problem of funding. This is also in agreement with a study by Uduku (2011) who opined that the School Feeding Programme would best improve the performance of pupils when coupled with adequate funding, learning materials, physical facilities and teacher motivation.

Table 5. Overcrowded Classrooms is a challenge affecting the implementation of the school feeding programme.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	65	65
Agreed	15	15
Undecided	10	10
Disagreed	8	8
Strongly Disagreed	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's survey 2022.

The above table is on overcrowded classrooms as a challenge affecting the implementation of the school feeding programme. The data revealed that 65 (65%) strongly agreed, 15 (15%) agreed, 10 (10%) undecided, 8 (8%) disagreed 2 (2%) strongly disagreed. This is in line with the response of the Desk Officer who stated that overcrowded classrooms is a major challenge facing the implementation of the programme as a result of increase in pupils' enrolment.

Table 6. Small Quantity of food is a challenge affecting the implementation of the school feeding programme.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	66	66
Agreed	14	14
Undecided	5	5
Disagreed	13	13
Strongly Disagreed	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's survey 2022.

The above table presents the result of the quantity of food served 65 (65%) strongly agreed

that is small, 15 (15%) agreed, 13 (13%), undecided 4 (4%) disagreed 1 (1%) and 2 (2%) strongly disagreed, this is in agreement with the responses of some of the head teachers who lamented that the quantity of food served is so small and lack of potable drinking water for the pupils to take after meals, it is in line with a study by Adekunle, and Christiana, (2016) in a study in Osun state which revealed that the quantity of food served is so small.

5. Conclusion

This study has revealed that School Feeding Programme is an intervention which has immense benefits in the educational development of public primary school pupils. It has improved the enrolment of pupils in public primary schools in Munya local government area of Niger State Nigeria. This study also discovered that School Feeding Programme encourages punctuality and pupils' academic performance. The study further revealed that the programme is affected by problems which include: insufficient funding, overcrowded classes as a result of increase enrolment, small quantity of food served amongst others.

School Feeding was not a novel idea in Nigeria. This is because The Basic Education Commission (UBE) Act of 2004 made provision for at least, a meal for pupils every school day, but there has not been demonstrable political will by successive administration in the country to actualize this.

Over the years, World Food Programme has shown keen interest in School Feeding Programmes across countries of the world and suggested standards to guide the design and implementation of sustainable school meals programme. These include: a strategy of sustainability, a national legislation/ policy framework, stable funding and budgeting, an institutional arrangement for implementation, monitoring and accountability etc. Unfortunately, this study found that the implementation of the School Feeding Programme falls short of some of the standards stipulated by the World Food Programme due to various challenges. The study concluded that the state government should double its efforts to address the problems identified by the study in the programme implementation, this will sustain pupils' enrolment and increase academic performance thereby leading to nation-building. This can be done through sustainable funding to be solicited from all stakeholders, corporate bodies and multi-national companies. The study further suggests that proper monitoring groups should be set up in each ward so as to supervise the vendors in the course of preparing and administration of the school feeding meals.

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