

Stakeholders Perception on the Impact of the UNICEF Supported School Feeding Programme on Schooling

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ABSTRACT---- *This study investigated the perception of stakeholders on the impact of the school feeding programme on schooling of pupils in FCT Abuja. The research design adopted for this study was the expo-facto. A total of 180 teachers and 25 policy implementers responded to the questionnaire. Two structured questionnaire were used to obtain data from teachers and policy makers. The data obtained were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Based on the analysis, these were the findings that; Teachers were positively disposed to the programme because of the numerous benefits among which is that it helps pupils to remain in school and affect their academic performance. Policy implementers are interested in the school feeding programme because of its benefits to pupils, but expressed fears of its financial involvement. Based on these findings, it was therefore recommended that: The Federal Government of Nigeria should promulgate policies that will focus on how the school feeding programme can be effectively implemented in all the states in Nigeria.*

Keywords---- Perception, Parents, Impact, School Feeding Programme, Pupils

1. INTRODUCTION

The School Feeding Programme is the provision of meals to children in school. The programme varies from country to country, however those mostly practiced are in-school meals, where pupils or students are given ratios of meals during school hours or take home ratios where pupils or students are given foods as take home if they attend school regularly: whichever type practiced by any country is accepted to the controlling body the World Food Programme (WFP). According to WFP (2014) the expected benefits are;

1. to act as magnet to get children from poor families to school;
2. to act as safety net which is to give food security to children in times of conflicts;
3. to increase the nutritional status of children;
4. to serve as strong incentive to attract children to school and retain them;
5. to benefit local farmers and the entire communities as often as possible since food is procured locally, and
6. to alleviate short term hunger

As laudable as the programme may seem, WFP, (2014) reported that, in Nigeria, fewer than 50,000 children receive food in schools whereas countries such as Ghana, Lesotho, Egypt, Cape Verde, Morocco, Sudan, and Ivory Coast have better School Feeding Programme. According to the report, Lesotho and Cape Verde feed their pupils 100% and also have close to 100% attendance of pupils in school but Nigeria is said to be the worst, which may also be responsible for why many children are out of school in Nigeria. This is a strong indication that the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) that states that, in 2015 Nations should eradicate extreme hunger and achieve universal primary education may not be achieved in Nigeria. Statistics have it that close to 10.5 million school aged children are out of school in Nigeria, which account for about 47% of the global total. Nigeria has the highest number of school aged children that are out of school in the world and also topped the table of 12 problem countries in the world that have high incidence of out of school children, (UNESCO, 2012). Reasons vary why children of school age are out of school. However, serving of meals in schools may be very helpful in this regard, more children may be attracted to school by the meals thereby increasing enrolment and decreasing the number of those who are out of school.

Also among children, school meals may be able to stop classroom hunger. Many children come to school with empty stomach and others are discouraged not to come at all since morning breakfast is not often part of the house-hold routine in most families. In the absence of school meals, even those in school often go hungry after a few hours and find it difficult to concentrate in class. Short term hunger makes the child to be easily distracted by irrelevant stimuli (Pollit, 1991). Classroom hunger is also associated with poor attainment levels and cognitive functions. Short term hunger is likely to constitute an educational problem for well nourished and malnourished children alike and the effect of short term hunger may be more damaging to children who have history of malnutrition.

Malnutrition has been known to affect infants and children in school. Early malnutrition has been known to affect school aptitudes, time of enrolment, concentration and attentiveness. Children with history of severe malnutrition has been known to perform less in school than well nourished children. Malnutrition in Nigeria is severe and well documented. In Nigeria, 41% children aged five suffer from stunting as a result of malnutrition. UNICEF (2012) carried out a survey in all the states of the Nigerian federation and shows that there is acute malnutrition in Nigeria. In all the states especially in the northern part of Nigeria, this is said to be as high as 80% of the child population. Yet this is happening in a country that ranked 9 trillion in federal revenue in 2014 and is the 6th largest producer of crude oil in the world. Ignorant parents who are not conversant with healthy diets for growing children may be a major factor in these unhealthy national statistics that is why the school meals may be crucial to save children of today who are leaders of tomorrow.

However, the Programme was specifically launched by United Nation International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on September 27th 2005 in addition to the child friendly schools concept aimed at ensuring that all children are guaranteed primary education. UNICEF in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Education is currently implementing a large scale programme to accelerate girls' education especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. UNICEF has also been a major advocate for the concept of child friendly schooling for all Nigerians since the year 2002 and has assisted governments in pioneering nearly 300 child friendly schools across all states. Since the launching of this noble scheme (School Feeding Programme) in Nigeria, several states have introduced it; prominent among them is Abuja.

Stakeholders in education refers to anyone who is interested in the welfare and success of the pupils including administrators or policy implementers, teachers, parents, community members, elected board members and counselors. The school as a public institution is not only the responsibility of the government. Stakeholders are also obligated to be involved in important decision making relating to the governance, operation or improvement of the school. Increasingly schools in Nigeria are becoming more interventional, at the introduction of school feeding, all related at it and this paper attempt to find out specifically the perception of teachers and policy makers.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that were raised for this study include:

1. What is the perception of teachers on the impact of school feeding programme on schooling of pupils in the selected schools in FCT?
2. What is the perception of policy implementers on the impact of the school feeding programme on schooling of pupils in the selected schools in FCT?

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted in this study was the expo facto design whereby the perception of stakeholders on the impact of school feeding programme in relation to the characteristics of schooling were examined. In this study, the school feeding programme was the independent variable while schooling of pupils were the dependent variables. This choice was based on the fact that it represented a probe to describe a given state of affairs that existed at the given time where direct contact was made with the individuals whose characteristics, behaviours, or attitude was relevant to the investigation (Hassan, 1995).

Population of the study

The population for this study consisted of all teachers in primary schools in FCT, who were teaching in the schools where the school feeding programme took place for three years, and officials from the rank of Directors and Assistant Directors and Inspectors (policy implementers) in the Universal Basic Education Commission FCT, who were in service at the period of the school feeding programme were used for this study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The multistage sampling technique was utilized for this study. From each of the six Area Councils in Abuja, one primary school that was under the school feeding programme was randomly selected for the study through the balloting technique yielding a total of 6 schools that were utilized. For the teachers, 30 primary school teachers were randomly selected from each of the schools yielding a total of 180 teachers. 25 officials from the rank of Directors and Assistant Directors and inspectors (policy implementers) in the Universal Basic Education Commission, FCT were used also for this study.

Instrumentation

Two structured questionnaire were developed for the study by the researcher titled: Teachers' Perception on the Impact of the School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Questionnaire, and Policy Implementers Perception of the Impact of the School Feeding on Pupils Questionnaire (TPISFPPQ and PIPSFPPQ).

Teachers' Perception on the Impact of the School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Questionnaire

TPSFPPQ was used to obtain information from the teachers. It was a 16 item questionnaire which covered information on enrolment and attendance of pupils in primary schools. It also sought to elicit information on the children's nutrition, academic performance and the girl child education. Information for TPISFPPQ was developed from review of literature and public opinion on the School Feeding Programme. It was a four point questionnaire utilizing the following scale:

Strongly Agree	SA	4
Agree	A	3
Disagree	D	2
Strongly Disagree	SD	1

Policy Implementers' Perception on the Impact of the School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Questionnaire

PIPISFPPQ was used to obtain information from the policy implementers. It was a 13 item questionnaire which covers information on enrolment and attendance of pupils in primary schools. It also sought to elicit information on the children's nutrition, academic performance and the girl child education. Information for PIPISFPPQ was developed from review of literature and public opinion on the School Feeding Programme. It was a four point questionnaire utilizing the following scale:

Strongly Agree	SA	4
Agree	A	3
Disagree	D	2
Strongly Disagree	SD	1

Validity of Instruments

The validity of the instruments (TPISFPPQ and PIPISFPPQ) was determined by experts in the Department of Educational Psychology and Curriculum Studies, University of Benin, Benin City. The experts individually subjected the items in the two questionnaires to rigorous scrutiny with a view to ascertaining the representativeness of the contents of the instruments and the extent to which they relate to the study. In doing this, the experts were able to either remove any item they considered irrelevant or add any other item they considered important but not reflected in the instrument.

TPISFPPQ and PIPISFPPQ were further subjected to scrutiny by other experts in Home Economics in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Benin, Benin City. The criticisms and suggestions made by these experts were used by the researcher for the final modification of the instruments. This being done, the instruments were said to possess content validity.

Reliability of Instrument

The split half reliability coefficient was used for testing the reliability of the instrument. 10 policy makers for PIPISFPPQ. And 20 teachers for TPISFPPQ in primary schools not sampled for this study were used. The questions were split into two halves: the odd numbers forming one set while the even numbers: The reliability coefficient was computed for PIPISFPPQ and TPISFPPQ, using the Spearman Rho to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.74 and 0.72 respectively.

Administration of Instrument

The researcher engaged the services of 3 research assistants who were trained on the rudiments of the administration of the instruments. They possessed minimum academic qualification of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). Also the research assistants had good knowledge of the localities where the study was carried out. On the administration of the questionnaire, Teachers' Perception on the Impact of the School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Questionnaire (TPISFPPQ) was given to the selected teachers, while the Policy Implementers' Perception on the Impact of the School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Questionnaire (PIPISFPPQ) was given to Directors, Assistant Directors and Inspectors in Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Abuja.

Method of Data Analysis

The data for the analysis were obtained from the TPISFPPQ and PIPISFPPQ. A decision taken for positive statements were based on any mean of 2.50 and above was taken as 'Agree' while any mean less than 2.50 was taken as 'Disagree'. For negative statements, any mean 2.50 and above was taken as 'Disagree', while means less than 2.50 was taken as 'Agree'.

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question 1: What is the perception of teacher on the impact of school feeding programme in the selected primary schools in FCT?

Table 1: Teachers' Perception on the Impact of School Feeding Programme

S/N	STATEMENT	X	SD	Decision
	Level of Enrolment			
1	More children have enrolled in School	3.09	0.80	
2	More females are now in school	2.98	0.81	
3	Number of pupils in the various classes have increased	3.45	0.57	
	Mean of Mean	3.17	0.67	
	Level of Attendance			
4	School has become attractive to pupils	3.17	0.67	Agree
5	Pupils are now more regular in class	3.39	0.67	
6	Female children now stay in class till the end of school period	3.27	0.77	
	Mean of Mean	3.28	0.69	Agree
	Level of Performance			
7	Pupils scores have improved virtually in all the subjects	2.70	0.95	
8	More pupils have become attentive in class	2.66	0.81	
9	Children become more active in all class activities	3.10	0.83	
	Mean of Mean	2.82	0.84	Agree
	Management of Meal			
10	Academic activities are not distracted during eating time	2.95	0.95	
11	Teachers spend so much time supervising and organizing the serving of the meals	2.69	0.90	
13	Classrooms have become dirty and teachers find it difficult to manage	3.00	0.92	
	Mean of Mean	2.88	0.91	Agree
	Level of Nutrients			
14	Children have grown better with appropriate height for age	3.12	0.93	
15	Class hunger has been averted	3.26	0.73	
	Mean of Mean	3.19	0.78	Agree
	Recommendation			
16	The school feeding programme has been helpful towards pupils' schooling and we would like the programme to continue	2.93	1.64	Agree

N = 180

Table 1 reflects the perception of teachers on the impact of the school feeding programme on pupils in FCT. In the course of their teaching the teachers have noticed the following which they are happy about in items 1-6 mean of mean (3.17) which indicates that more children are now in school and that the number of pupils have increased in the various classes. They like the positive change in the level of attendance as indicated in items 4-6, mean of mean (3.28). In their responses, more children are now regular in school since school have become attractive to pupils. Teachers are happy with the level of the performance of their pupils as indicated in items 7-9, mean of mean (2.28). The respondents also indicates that pupils scores have increased virtually in all subjects. In table 4 respondents indicated that application of the meal was well managed which agrees with items 10-13, with mean (2.88). In addition, respondents agree that academic activities are not distracted during eating time. Other observations by the respondents in table 1 indicate that teachers are happy with the nutritional impact of the meals. This was indicated in items 14-15 with mean of 3.19. Also, the respondents agrees that pupils have grown better with appropriate height for age. The respondents recommends that school feeding should continue in schools as shown in item 16 with mean 2.93.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of policy implementers on the school feeding programme in primary schools in FCT?

Table 2: Policy Implementers' Perception on the Impact of School Feeding Programme

S/N	STATEMENT	X	SD	Decision
	Enrolment and Attendance			
1	More children are now in school	3.03	0.95	
2	More females are now in school	3.35	1.06	
3	Number of pupils in the various classes have increased	3.46	0.67	
	Mean of Mean	3.28	0.89	Agree
	Attendance			
4	School has become attractive to pupils	3.87	0.67	
5	Pupils are now more regular in class	3.71	0.82	
6	Female children now stay in class till the end of school period	3.97	0.79	
	Mean of Mean	3.85	0.81	Agree
	Level of Performance			
7	Academic activities are not distracted by the programme	2.98	1.05	
8	General academic environment have improved tremendously	3.25	0.81	
	Mean of Mean	3.11	0.78	Agree
	Negative Effects of SFP			
9	Teachers spend so much time in the culinary activities than teaching	3.38	1.06	
10	Other programmes have become difficult to executive	3.84	0.53	
11	Role of parents have been taken over by the government	2.67	0.97	
	Mean of Mean	3.30	0.77	Disagree
	Thinking of Government			
12	Government feel they may not be able to fund the programme	3.13	0.76	
13	Funds spend on school feeding can be channeled to other needs of the school	2.56	0.96	
	Mean of Mean	2.85	0.89	Agree

N = 25

Table 2 indicates that policy implementers are interested in the school feeding programme since it is beneficial to pupils in the area of increase in enrolment, increased in attendance, pupils have become regular in class. In the area of academic performance, Policy implementers indicated that general academic environment have improved tremendously. They disagree with the negative opinion that role of parents have been taken over by the government, but they expressed fears that government may not be able to fund the programme, and that funds spent on school feeding programme can be spent on other school needs.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 reveals that teachers acknowledge increase in enrolment of pupils, reduction in drop out of pupils, increase in female enrolment, attractive of school to pupils, and retention of female children in school till the close of school day. Supporting these findings is Dreze (2004) who reported that teachers concurred that mid-day meals have raised daily attendance especially among young children. Furthermore, Ulukaligil (2005) corroborated this findings when he/she reported teachers' willingness to continue the programme because of the enormous benefit noticed by them in the cause of teaching. Prominent among the benefit of school feeding programme, is increase in female enrolment and retention in school. This finding gives credence to the perceived opinion of improved pupil academic achievement virtually in all the subjects, increased attention span in class and children have become more active in all class activities. This finding is supported by Makwampur, Nuwakor, Ramechap, Rasuwa and Udayapur (2006) who reported that in almost all schools visited by them, teachers found positive changes in pupils' attentiveness span, attentiveness in the classroom, and in the cognitive and learning abilities of pupils. They also reported that teachers noted positive changes in pupils' violence and aggressiveness in the classroom. The changes noted by teachers are capable of helping pupils to do better in all subjects.

Table 2 reveals that policy makers are happy with the school feeding programme. The policy implementers acknowledged increased enrolment and attendance in schools where meals are given to children. Table 2 also shows that policy makers complained that teachers spend time supervising culinary activities which may not be of benefit to the children. This finding is supported by Chandrashekar (2005) who reported that policy makers had the belief that the provision of cooked meals disrupts classroom processes, in that teachers spend much time supervising culinary operation. This implies that teachers' involvement in serving of meals is not encouraging as it were, and may take the pupils time and disrupt the time table of the school. However, Dreze (2004) in his report, stated that sensitization of teachers about

the operation will help to avert the problem. Furthermore, Table 2 shows that policy makers are skeptical about the money spend in running the school feeding programme; according to them the money can be utilized on other government programmes. The benefit of the school feeding programme should be considered by the policy makers since the benefit will eventually supersede the financial involvement.

6. CONCLUSION

The school feeding programme is a laudable programme with all its benefits of increasing enrolment and attendance in schools. The school feeding programme can be utilized by the government to eradicate illiteracy. This is a useful tool towards the actualization of the millennium development goals of 2015. In addition, it is also evident that stakeholders of education are well disposed to having the programme. This indicates that they are likely to be well disposed to the implementation of the programme. The implemented can be enlarged since stakeholders seem to be ready to have the programme.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Federal Government of Nigeria should source fund from NGOs and international body for the full implementation of school feeding.
2. Parents Teachers Association should be encouraged by the government to function in all schools, where parents can assist government to maintain school programme and policies.
3. Government should use food sources in the locality to reduce cost of providing the meals in schools.
4. Federal Government of Nigeria should put structures on ground that works, so that all states of the federation can implement the programme.

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