

HOMEGROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME FOR THE PREVENTION OF DROPOUT OF PUPILS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed the homegrown school feeding programme for the prevention of dropout of pupils in public primary schools in Delta State. Two research questions were raised to guide the study and a null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance for the study. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 571 teachers in 55 primary schools in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State in the 2020/2021 academic session. A proportionate sampling technique was used to randomly select 200 teachers. Three experts validated the instrument and Cronbach alpha statistics tested reliability and yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.71. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The t-test was used to test the hypothesis. From the results of the analysis, it was concluded that home grown school feeding programme has a high influence on the prevention of pupils' dropout rate and increasing regular attendance in public primary schools in Delta State. Experienced and less experienced teachers did not differ significantly in their rating on the influence of homegrown school feeding programmes on primary school pupils' dropout rate in Delta State hence the null hypothesis was accepted. Consequently, it was recommended that the Government and other stakeholders in charge of the programme should remain committed to providing the needed resources for the smooth running of the programme to improve the educational fortune of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, policy makers and implementers should embark on a careful examination of the programme by involving local communities instead of depending on donors to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Keywords: Homegrown School Feeding Programme, Pupils' Attendance, Dropout
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35386/ser.v20i1&2.439>

Introduction

School feeding programmes constitute 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' performance. In developing countries, almost 60 million children go to school hungry every day and about 40 per cent of them are from Africa (World Food Report, 2006). 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, 2015).

Food for education (FFE) programmes attracts children to school by providing nutritious meals in exchange for school participation. If children are undernourished, the programmes may also boost learning and cognitive development by improving

attention spans and nutrition. The attraction of these programmes is their potential to improve both school participation and learning and cognitive outcomes by increasing the consumption of nutritious food by undernourished children. However, FFE programmes also have their critics. They are often more expensive than other programmes that provide school inputs to increase school participation, and the nutrition benefits are small compared to those from nutrition programmes targeting younger children. In 2000, the United Nations met in Dakar to commit itself to the eradication of hunger and the attainment of universal primary education. School feeding programmes (SFPs) are one of the main interventions that could be used to address these challenges. School feeding falls squarely within the ambit of the UN declaration, and at least three of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), namely SDG 1 (to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), SDG 2 (to achieve universal primary education), and SDG 3 (to promote gender equality and empower women) (Bennett, 2003).

Tomlinson (2017) traced the emergence of the school feeding programme to the 1930s in the United Kingdom and the United States of America with a focus on improving the growth of children. In 1900, the Netherlands became the first country to move the programme to a new level of incorporating school meals into national legislation. By the 1930s, the United Kingdom and the United States had also instituted the school feeding programme as part of their national programmes. A further account indicates that school feeding initiatives have been in existence since the late 1700's and originated as projects of donors in Europe. The United States of America began the practice of initiating school feeding programmes in Austria as an act of international aid focused on combating the severe malnutrition of children in the 1940s after the Second World War. Since then, school feeding programmes have become a key part of food assistance, relief emergency and development programmes. School Feeding Programme is a social safety net for children and as part of the national development goals. It provides an important new opportunity to assist poor families and feed hungry children. It provides an incentive for poor families to send their children to school and keep them there.

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 an adequate meal during the school day (FME, 2016). 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 with the opportunity to sell their produce to participating schools. According to the Federal Government's directive, Federal, State and Local Governments were to fund the programme with the State and Local Governments providing the bulk.

School feeding programs have been defined by the World Bank as "targeted social safety nets that provide both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism, and improving food security at the household level" (WFP, 2012, p6). Beyond improvements in access to food, school feeding programs also have a positive impact on nutritional status, gender equity, and educational status, each of which contributes to improving overall levels of the country and human development. While school meals are

provided by the governments of most high- and middle-income countries around the globe, the children who may benefit most from school feeding programs are in low-income countries that do not have government-provided school meals. School feeding in low-income countries often starts through funding by international organizations such as the United Nations World Food Programme or the World Bank or national governments through programs such as the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. However, some governments have first started school-feeding programs and then requested the help of these organizations and programs.

Additionally, many countries have "graduated" from their dependency on foreign assistance by reshaping their school feeding programs to be country-led and self-supported (Bundy, 2012). While there are school feeding programs in several countries, each program varies widely from country to country in design, implementation, and evaluation. Thus, literature reviews and studies often focus on a small number of countries, as school feeding is not a uniform unit of intervention and cannot be compared or assessed on an international scale.

School feeding programmes constitute 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' performance. In developing countries, almost a 60million children go to school hungry every day and about 40 per cent of them are from Africa (World Food Report, 2006). 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, 2015).

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) guided governments in Sub-Saharan Africa to include homegrown school feeding as a critical intervention for the food security facet of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Several countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mali and Nigeria are currently taking part in home-grown school feeding programs (Masset & Aulo, 2013). 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 and School participation.

Delta was among the 12 States selected to begin a phased-pilot rollout implementation of the programme. The Buhari administration began the national implementation of this programme when it came in May 2015. The basic objective of the School Feeding Services is to reduce hunger among school children. It will also increase school attendance and reduce dropout rates particularly among children in poor rural communities and urban neighbourhoods (World Food Report, 2006). Students' attendance is perceived as the concept of students appearing at a school for a scheduled learning outcome. Measuring attendance is a significant concern for many schools, which invariably could use such information to gauge the effectiveness of

their efforts and to plan for future efforts. In classroom settings, attendance may be mandatory. Poor attendance by a student in a class may affect their grades or other evaluations. Poor attendance may also reflect problems in a student's situation, and is a likely indicator that students are not developing the knowledge and skills needed for later success. For students in elementary school and high school, laws may require compulsory attendance for the students to meet up with. School attendance is attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or programme, public or private, for organised learning at any level of education at the time of the census or, if the census is taken during the vacation period at the end of the school year, during the last school year (Glossary of Statistical Terms, 2001).

Collins English Dictionary (2019) defines a dropout as someone who has left school before they finished their studies. If you refer to the dropout rate, you are referring to the number of people who leave school early or leave a course or other activity before they have finished it. Policies to improve school progression and reduce the number of children dropping out of school are critical if Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be achieved (UNICEF, 2009). Espejo (2009) points that chronically hungry children do not go to school. Despite the government's effort in FPE, the primary school dropout rate remains very high due to chronic food insecurity (Finan, 2010). This poses a major challenge to achieve a universal primary school completion rate. The teachers are either experienced (10 years above) which means they have been in the teaching service for about 10 years or less experienced (9 years below).

The introduction of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) in Nigeria was mainly to achieve pupils' enrollment and retention ratio in schools. But from the researcher's observation, there seems to high rate of drop and low attendance primary school pupils in Delta State. Some of the schools visited by the researcher appear to give a declining scenario in primary education as pupils are seen roaming the street, hawking pure water and other items in search of livelihood. It also appears some parents abuse their children by forced labour. The schools registered the lowest attendance and highest dropout rates at 67% and 38% respectively (World Bank, 2012). Despite the low participation of pupils in schools in the arid and semi-arid regions, little has been done to find out the impact of food insecurity on pupils participation in schools. So, if the issue of food insecurity is not treated with the seriousness it deserves and its effects on education curbed, opportunities that would have been available for pupils to advance academically in Delta State will become foreclosed due to low participation of pupils in school. Hence, it will be difficult for Delta State and Nigeria in general to achieve the goals of Free Primary Education and Education for All. Can a homegrown school feeding programme change this narrative? This is not immediately known to the researcher.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain a homegrown school feeding programme for the prevention of dropout of pupils in public primary schools in Delta State.

Determine the influence of the homegrown school feeding programme on primary school pupils' regular attendance.

Ascertain the influence of the homegrown school feeding programme on primary school pupils' dropout rates.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does homegrown school feeding programme influence primary school pupils' regular attendance?
2. To what extent does a homegrown school feeding programme influence primary school pupils' dropout rates?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating between experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of the homegrown school feeding programme on primary school pupils' dropout rate in Delta State.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covered the homegrown school feeding programme for the prevention of dropout of pupils in public primary schools in Delta State. It covered areas such as pupils' regular attendance and pupils' dropout rates.

The geographical scope covered all public primary schools teachers in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Methodology

The study utilized a survey research design. A survey research method involves surveying people and recording their responses for analysis. This agrees with Nworgu as cited in Omoroguiwa (2006) that survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire population. The population of the study comprised 571 teachers in 55 primary schools in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State in the 2020/2021 academic session. The proportionate sampling technique was used to randomly select 35% of the teachers in the local government. The sample of the study was 200 teachers from the 55 primary schools in the local government. The instrument that was used is a questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Home-Grown School Feeding Programme on Dropout of Pupils (QHSFDP). The instrument had two sections - I and II. Section I contains demographic information such as years of experience. Section II consists of 16 items about the research questions as follows, Research question 1 has items 1-9, Research question 2 has items 10-16. The responses were rated on a four (4) point rating scale ranging from Very High Influence (VHI) = 4, High Influence (HI) = 3, Low Influence (LI) = 2 and Very Low Influence (VLI) = 1.

The instrument for data collection was subjected to face validity by three experts who have been involved in the construction of similar instruments. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the split-half method. The instrument was administered to 20 teachers in the population but not part of the sample. Cronbach's

alpha statistics was used to measure the degree of consistency which yielded a coefficient of 0.71.

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of a research assistant who assisted in administering the questionnaire which lasted for three weeks. The completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents after their responses. The data generated from the administration of the research questionnaire was analyzed using mean(x) to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was based on: if the calculated mean was greater or equal to 2.50 it was regarded as high influence, while the calculated mean less than 2.50 was regarded as a low influence. The decision rule for the hypotheses was based on a probability value of 0.05, such that when the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 the null hypothesis was rejected; otherwise, it was retained.

Results

Research Question One

To what extent does homegrown school feeding programme influence primary school pupils' regular attendance?

The data collected in respect of research question one are presented in table 1

Table 1: Extent of School Feeding Programme on Pupils Regular Attendance

S/N	Item Statement	Mean(x)	SD	Remarks
	SFP engenders regular attendance amongst pupils	2.94	0.99	High
	Feeding school children attracts them to school	2.82	0.97	High
	Termination of SFP impacts negatively on attendance rates, hence, hinder education achievement of the children	3.11	0.96	High
	School feeding programmes and other school-based nutrition & health programmes motivate parents to enrol their children to attend school regularly	2.90	1.07	High
	Children who come to school hungry have diminished attentiveness, a greater likelihood of becoming distracted and a lack of interest in learning	2.59	1.84	High
	Acute and chronic hunger affect children's access to school, regular attendance, their attention span, behavior in class and educational outcomes	2.86	1.18	High
	SFP increase the attendance, attention and concentration of students in producing gains in cognitive function and learning	3.03	1.13	High
	SFP enhance attendance of the girl-child whom are charged with various degrees of home chores	2.80	1.14	High
	SFP targets the most vulnerable pupils within schools for improved attendance	2.69	1.18	High
	Total	2.86	1.16	High

Source: Field Study, 2020

The data shown in Table 1 revealed that the mean ratings of the respondents ranged from 2.59 to 3.03. The table shows that all the variables (1-9) were rated high extent.

The result shows that homegrown school feeding programmes have a high extent influence on pupils regular attendance in Delta State.

Research Question Two

To what extent does the homegrown school feeding programme influence primary school pupils' dropout rates?

The data collected in respect of research question two are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Extent of School Feeding Programme on Pupils' Dropout Rate.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean(x)	SD	Remarks
	SFP improve school progression and reduce the number of children dropping out of school for the achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE)	2.90	1.13	High
	Poverty and food insecurity the main factors that jeopardized retention of pupils hence increasing dropout in many children	2.87	1.02	High
	Financial constraints in funding the school feeding programmes hinder the reduction of students dropout rate	2.73	1.16	High
	SFP implementation in Delta State has encouraged students to complete their primary education	2.93	1.18	High
	The long distances children have to travel to school encourages school dropout	2.91	1.01	High
	SFP has created employment amongst the community members which in turn, encourages pupils to complete their education	3.12	0.97	High
	Cultural meal practices that include no or small breakfasts or a lack of family time or resources to provide adequate meals to children before and/or during the school day promotes students dropout	3.24	0.84	High
Total		2.98	1.01	High

Source: Field Study, 2019

The data shown in Table 2 revealed that the mean ratings of the respondents ranged from 2.73 to 3.12. The table shows that all the variables (10-16) were rated as high extent.

The result shows that homegrown school feeding programmes have a high extent influence on pupils dropout rates in Delta State.

Hypothesis Testing

One hypothesis was formulated and tested at a significance level of 0.05.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean rating between experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of homegrown school feeding programmes on primary school pupils' dropout rate in Delta State.

The data meant to test hypothesis 1 were calculated and the results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: t-test result of the difference between the mean ratings of experienced and less experienced teachers on homegrown school feeding programme on pupils dropout rate

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value	Df	P	Remark
Experienced	126	3.71	0.38	-0.893	198	0.375	Accepted
Less-experienced	74	4.10	0.40				

Source: Field Study, 2018

The results shown in Table 3 indicated that the t value indicated -0.893, P-value indicated 0.375. The mean ratings of experienced and less experienced teachers indicated 3.71 and 4.10 respectively. The standard deviation of experienced and less experienced teachers showed 0.38 and 0.40 respectively. The degree of freedom remained 198. The number of experienced teachers stood at 126 while the number of less experienced teachers showed 74. Conclusively the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating between experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of homegrown school feeding programmes on primary school pupils' dropout rate in Delta State was accepted based on the fact that the t value of -0.893 was less than the P-value of 0.375.

Discussion of Major Findings

The result of the analysis of research question 1 as shown in table one revealed that teachers in Ika South Local Government rated homegrown school feeding programme influence on primary school pupils' regular attendance to a high extent. It revealed that home-grown school feeding programmes and other school-based nutrition & health programmes motivate parents to enrol their children in school and to see that they attend school regularly in the local government. The findings of Taylor and Ogbogu (2016) that the school feeding programme has resulted in an increase in pupils' regularity and punctuality in school attendance agree with the findings of this study. The teachers also opined that home-grown school feeding programmes increase the attendance, attention and concentration of students in producing gains in cognitive function and learning in the locality. The study of Espejo (2009) revealed high attendance rates in school feeding programmed schools and reduced attendance rates in non-programmed schools agrees with the findings of this study.

The result of the analysis of research question 2 as shown in table two revealed that teachers in Ika South Local Government rated homegrown school feeding programme influence on primary school pupils' dropout rate to a high extent. The study further revealed that a home-grown school feeding programme improves school progression and reduce the number of children dropping out of school for the achievement of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in the local government. A study by UNICEF (2009) revealed that by 2009, of the students entering class one, only 77% of the boys and 80% of girls reached primary five, while 55% of boys and 35% of girls reach junior secondary school agree with the findings of this study. The study also showed that home-grown school feeding programme implementation in Delta State has encouraged students to complete their primary education. The study of Reuben (2017) that food acts as a strong incentive for attracting pupils to school in food-insecure regions aligns with the findings of this study.

The test of hypothesis 1 as shown in table three also indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings between experienced and less experienced teachers on the influence of homegrown school feeding programmes on primary school pupils' dropout rate in Delta State. This implies that the teachers in Ika South Local Government Area did not differ in their rating based on years of experience as regards homegrown school feeding programmes influencing primary school pupils' dropout rate.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that a homegrown school feeding programme has a high extent influence on the prevention of pupils' dropout rate and increasing regular attendance in public primary schools in Delta State. This implies that a homegrown school feeding programme increases pupils' regular attendance and reduced dropout rates.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made drawing from the findings of this study: The government and other stakeholders in charge of the programme should remain committed to providing the needed resources for the smooth running of the programme to improve the educational fortune of the beneficiaries. The state government and Federal government through the Ministry of Education should allocate more funding to the school feeding programme to lessen the dropout rates. Policy makers and implementers should embark on a careful examination of the programme by involving local communities instead of depending on donors to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

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