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## EVALUATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING AND HEALTH PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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***Abstract:** This work is on evaluation of the administration and policy implementation of the Universal Basic Education Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme (UBEHGSFHP) which was established to improve the nutritional status of school children, through providing adequate meal during the school hours. It was aimed at improving health needs of pupils and increase enrolment, and school attendance. The work evaluates how the programme started and fared in other countries and in Nigeria, the pilot study did not even take off in some states designated to have experimented the programme. It was discovered among other findings, that due to lack of government interest, monitoring and funding, communities, parents, head teachers, school administrators, teachers as well as pupils were not even aware of the programme. This made the implementation level low, parents were therefore, not generally disposed to the implementation due to varieties reasons of religious such as, traditional and superstitious belief. Vital recommendations aimed at ameliorating or totally eradicating the problems identified such as a government should embark on serious public enlightenment campaign to awaken awareness where offered.*

**Keywords:** Administration, Home-Grown, School-Feeding, Implementation, Nutrition.

### Introduction

Healthy eating habits among children play a key role in their mental and physical development and also promote growth and reduce many risks associated with both immediate and long-term health problems (Bardi P.L., Park, J.E., Alkins, S., Cald Well, D. & Devitas, C.A., 2002). Appropriate nutrition is a basic human need that remains unmet for a vast number of children; the trend of malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa is disturbing. For the region as a whole, no progress has been made in reducing the prevalence of children malnutrition over the past 15 years, and there are some indications that the situation has worsen. Ethiopia and Nigeria are countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa with very high rate of malnutrition (Getahun, Z., Urga, K., Genebo, T. & Nigatu, A., 2001); Adewara & Visser, (2011). Unfortunately the diets commonly offered to young children are of low quality and lack variety, which is the key to specific nutrient adequacy. They are usually of low energy and nutrient density and as a result, multiple nutrient deficiencies are common in this age group (Ogbimi & Ogunba, 2011). Malnutrition has continued to be public health problems in developing countries where the poor socio-economic condition has continued to work in synergy with malnutrition (Olusanya, 2010). Malnutrition has been identified to affect the cognitive development

of children (Politt, 1995; Grantham McGregor and Ani, 2001). Apart from the adverse effect of malnutrition on the cognitive achievement of school children, malnutrition is also likely to result in poor attendance at school, low health status which will invariably lead to high withdrawal rate (Olusanya, 2010). The Food Consumption and Nutrition Survey in Nigeria (FCSN, 2001-2003) reveal that children were stunted, 25% were underweight and 9% were wasted. Twenty nine (29.5%) of the children under five years of age suffer from vitamin A deficiency while over 27% were at different stages of iron and iodine deficiency (Maziya-dixon et al, 2004). 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 aims to provide a nutritionally-adequate meal during the school day (UNICEF, 2006). The pilot phase (September, 2005-July, 2006) has involved twelve (12) states in the six geopolitical zones; Bauchi, Edo, Enugu, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Imo, Kano, Kogi, Nassarawa, Niger, Ogun, Yobe and Osun States, although it has not been operating in Delta State.

According to the Federal Government's directive, the Federal, State and Local Government were to fund the programme with State and Local Government providing the bulk. Up to February, 2010, a total sum of ₦2,881,271,987.00 has been spent on feeding, deworming, equipment and materials, out of which the Federal Government has released only ₦88,788,460 (HGSEFHP, 2010). The focus of the programme in the state is:

- To get every pupil fed with a quantitatively and qualitatively adequate meal each school day.
- To ensure provision of healthy and inviting school environment.
- Provision of health facilities to take care of pupil's health needs and problems.

The programme is also aimed at boosting food production and farmers' income since all food must be purchased from the locality where schools are based. The school environment has to be conducive first by upgrading the infrastructures. New blocks of classrooms were to be constructed through the intervention of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). There were to be well equipped and well furnished programmes secretariat. Committees as stipulated in the National Programme Framework were to be inaugurated as the State, Local Government and the School Levels. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education was to serve as the Chairman of the State steering Committee (HGSFHP, 2010). In the realization of the central role of nutrition of education, the Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other International Development Part (IDPs), developed the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme, therefore, it is a new project that will support government action to deliver cost effective school feeding programme in Sub-Saharan Africa. The project was proposed to promote local agriculture and benefit rural farmers by using local-sourced food, providing regular orders

and a realizable income for local farmers, the majority of whom are women, while improving the education, health and nutrition of children (UNICEF, 2006). Recently, the Federal Government of Nigeria under the new leadership of General M. Buhari re-lunched the school feeding programme. It has officially taken off in Kaduna state under the leadership of EL-Rufai. Although the importance of education has been internationally acknowledged. It is estimated that in developing countries as many as 26% of boys and 30% girls of primary school age are not attending school. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2003), according to United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) (2005), in developing countries, almost 60 million children go to school hungry everyday about 40% of them in Africa. Among the poor, there is often not enough food at home, and most schools in developing countries lack canteens or cafeterias. School meals are a good way to channel vital nourishment to poor children. Having a full stomach also help them to concentrate better on their lessons (WFP, 2005) in countries where school attendance is low, the promise of at least one nutritious meal each day boosts enrolment and promotes regular attendance. Parents are therefore motivated to send their children to school instead of keeping them at work or care for siblings (WFP, 2005). The WFP also believes that in the poorest part of the world, a school meal programme can double primary school enrolment in one year. Among the key beneficiaries are girls who otherwise may never be given the opportunity to learn. In Nigeria, according to the Federal Ministry of Education, FME (2007), over 90% of morbidity and 80% of mortality in under-5 children arise from four causes: malaria, vaccine preventable disease, diarrhea and acute respiratory infections while malnutrition account for over 50% of such mortality (FME, 2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research work is to evaluate the Administration and Policy Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme which was established to improve the nutritional status of school children, by providing a nutritionally adequate meal during the school day and provide health facilities to take care of pupil's needs and problems, also aimed at increasing community involvement in schools and motivate parents to enroll their children in school and have them attend regularly. The work will specifically revealed parents, head teachers and teachers awareness level, government commitment in terms of funding, monitoring and general implementation level in pilot states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Possible solution will be offered.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from this work will be of immense benefit to educational managers in planning or replanning this or other related programmes. While educational administrators will find the findings very relevant in their day-to-day work especially in the areas of policy implementation, monitoring, inspection, supervision and evaluation of the UBE home grown school feeding and health programme in particular and other

educational programmes in general. Other researchers, students and practitioners of health education will also find the work interesting and useful.

### **Statement of the Problems**

Good meal is very important and necessary for the mental and physical development of a child, particularly, children within the age of schooling. In spite of this, malnutrition has continued to be a public health problem in developing countries where the poor socio-economic condition has continued to work in synergy with malnutrition (Olusanya, 2010). Developmental psychologist advice that children be provided good meals to enhance their cognition and physical growth. Therefore, the Universal Basic Education, Home Grown School Feeding programme could have served as an incentive. However, according to Okpako (2011) Nigerians have not accepted the programme due to various reasons. In Nigeria, 31% of children under 5 years of age are said to be malnourished. Reports on infant mortality rate in Nigeria 2008 indicate a total of 93.93 deaths per 1,000 live births, with most of the deaths traceable to malnutrition problems.

The question now is, what is the state of the administration and implementation of the programme in Nigeria? What plans has the new administration of President Buhari to implement the programme? How can such constraints that hindered the previous programme be removed or ameliorated? This is the reason this work is evaluating the administration and policy implementation of the Universal Basic Education Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms/words are operationally defined below:

**Administration:** This is the implementation of programmes through monitoring, supervision, and coordinating of human and non-human resources to achieve set overall objectives and goals of education.

**Evaluation:** Check against set out aims and objectives and goals if they meet required standard i.e. determining the value or amount of success in achieving pre-determine objectives.

**Home Grown:** Food products grown in and harvested from the pupils' environment.

**Malnutrition:** Lack essential nutrients in pupils diet (poor nutrition).

**School Feeding:** Feeding which takes place during school hours, prepared and served in the school for pupils.

### **School Feeding Programme in other Countries**

In spite of the common objectives there are differences in many significant ways, in the methods and content, from one place to another, one country to another. For example, some programmes provide only snacks, whereas others provide complete meals. In terms of provision, while some rely solely on donated products, others supplement them with locally purchased commodities. Even among programmes that offer complete meals, sizes and the composition of ration vary widely. School feeding programmes also differ significantly in terms of the populations they serve; some reach predominantly malnourished children, others do not. Similarly some operate in settings where primary school enrolments are high, whereas others are conducted in communities where only small privileged minority of the population completes 5 or 6 years of schooling. In developing countries, it is reported that in 1962, a school lunch programme was initiated in the Dominican Republic under the sponsorship of Centre for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CARE) over 21400 children throughout the country were being served daily. CARE and the Dominican Government began discussions on ways to shift the programme away from its almost complete reliance on donated commodities. This led to the termination of school lunch programme.

This led Gall and Eckroad as reported by Daubi (2009) that in a retrospective analytic study examined the impact of this dislocation on primary school enrolment after the school lunch programme ended. The report shows that from a sample of teachers of unspecified size provided comments on how they perceive the impact of the termination of the programme. The report shows uniform agreement among teachers that enrolment had been adversely affected. The investigators further examined enrolment records over 11 years for four primary schools in and around Santiago Rodriguez. These 11 years is for an 8 years functional lunch programme and a 3 years non-functional lunch period. The result shows that enrolments had dropped by 23.4 percent, teachers' perception on the possible causes of the decline in enrolment, attributed it exclusively to the termination of the lunch programme. This study also compared urban schools with rural schools and found that enrolment decline in the rural schools more than that of the urban schools and concluded therefore that the effects of terminating the programme is greater in rural schools than urban schools. Furthermore, the differential effects on boys/males having only 19 percent decline of enrolment compared to 43 percent of girls/females decline in enrolment.

In 1981, the food for peace programme in Ghana was evaluated by a team, including members from Development Association, Inc. USAID/Ghana, nutritionist serving as consultants, programme managers and teachers reported that more children attended when there have meals. The report also shows that children were able to pay greater attention to their lessons, thus facilitating learning. Most teachers noted that many of the children came to school without breakfast and without the free lunch, therefore it would be difficult for them to study. The World Bank Report (2006) shows that the world bank is supporting a school feeding programme for children in cities-oleic and the

poor areas of Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere and one of the most disadvantaged in the world, where nearly half the population is illiterate. The distribution of meals began on September 25, 2006 to 5,600 school children in cities-oleic, increasing the number receiving to approximately 23,906 (43 percent of school children in the area). The programme also sustained a previous programme funded under a LICUS School Feeding Project for 7,500 School Children in Plateau Central, one of Haiti's poorest areas. The schools feeding programme is also being sponsored by a \$250,000 grant from the post-conflict fund and a \$300,000 grant from the Brazilian government. It is part of school programme which aims at helping poor areas by creating hope and opportunity particularly in Haiti's most deprived communities. Caroline Austey, Country Director for Caribbean said that well-nourished and well-educated children represent one of Haiti's best hopes for a better future. The school feeding programme will increase the number of children in school in some of the poorest areas in Haiti and improve their nutrition, so they will have the energy to learn, parents, teachers and the children have reacted positively to the programme.

### **Nutrition and Cognitive Development**

The detrimental effects of undernourishment have been attributed to permanent structural damage to the brain during the critical growth or pregnancy and the first 3 years of life. When brain growth is most rapid, lower birth weights are associated with more severely cognitive impairments, Hack et al (1995) studies suggests that aspects of cognitive development occur before and after periods of rapid brain growth, suggesting that neurological damage from undernourishment may occur at other times as well. Meets et al (1995) supporting this idea, states that regardless of the cause, there is evidence that stunting has effects on motor and cognitive development. Research by the Centre of Hunger Poverty and Nutrition Policy (1994) also indicates that undernourishment during any period of childhood, even from relatively short episodes, can have negative effects on cognitive development. Pollitt, E., Golub, M., Gormon, M.K., Grantham-McGregors, S., Levitsky, D. Schorch, B. Stupp, B. and Wachs, T. (1996) writing on the studies of the effects of nutritional supplementation programmes, suggest that these programmes may ameliorate the effects of nutritional deficits, even if the interventions occur after the early period of rapid brain growth.

In a research report published by the University of California, Berkeley on how varying levels of food/energy intake affect the individual's ability to function in society with respect to cognitive development and social function, Calloway, Wood, Beall and Cattle (1980) noted that mild to moderate malnutrition acts synergistically with social-environmental factors to affect cognitive function. Studies on pre-school and school age children are consistent with these findings, they then, further suggested that malnutrition may be associated with deficient performance of tasks involving short-term memory and attention. Nutritional and health status are powerful influences on a child's learning and how well a child performs in school. Children who lack certain nutrients in their diet (particularly iron and iodine), or who suffer from protein-energy malnutrition, hunger,

parasitic infections or other diseases, do not have the same potential for learning as healthy and well-nourished children. Researchers have shown that weak health and poor nutrition among school-age children diminish their cognitive development either through physiological changes by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences or both. Deficiencies of critical nutrients such as iodine, vitamin A and iron among the school aged are pervasive (Partnership for Child Development, 1990). This calls for the need to fortify the meals served with iron and vitamins. Fortification of school rations is the most efficient and effective route to alleviating micronutrient deficiencies in school children where school feeding programmes are in operations. Kruger and Badenhorst (1994) revealed that in South Africa, soup fortified with iron and vitamin C was provided to 350 schools in an area of low socio-economic development on the cape peninsula. Results showed that initially 12 percent of six to seven year old and 20 percent of 8 to 12 years old children had low weight-for-age, and 49 percent and 31 percent had low serum Ferritin C a measure of iron deficiency/respectively. As follow up, after 15 weeks of intervention, iron status improved significantly, falling from 49 percent to 28 percent in 6 to 7 years old children and 31 percent to 21 percent in 8 to 12 years old children.

The National School Lunch Programme (NSLP) Act, in America signed by President Truman in 1946, officially authorized the NSLP, although funds had previously been appointed for over a decade without specific legislative authority. The 1966 Child Nutrition Act expanded the programme and added the School Breakfast Programme (SBP) on a pilot basis, 1975 legislation made the SBP permanent; and 1998 legislation expanded the NSLP to include reimbursements for snacks served to students in after-school educational and enrichment programmes (Schrim and Kirkendall, 2010). India is also said to have a long tradition of school feeding programme (some since the 1920s) largely by the state governments with some external assistance (Akanbi and Alayande, 2011). India Supreme Court directed the state governments to introduce school feeding programme in all government and government assisted primary schools. This was the result of a petition from the people's Union for Liberties, a large coalition of organizations and individuals that led to the Right to Feed Campaign (Akanbi and Alayande, 2011). In Brazil, the school feeding programme is in the country's national constitution, and it is part of the government's zero Hunger Programme. Covering nearly 37 million children each year, the programme is among the largest in the world. Its implementations are managed by an independent institution, the National Fund for Development of Education (FNDE), created in 1997, to be responsible for the disbursement of the financial resources for school meals in each municipality (Akanbi and Alayande, 2011).

### **Impact of HGSEHP on Enrolment in the Public Primary Schools**

As it is in some of the nations of the world such as Brazil, Philippines, Cambodia, Mali, El Salvador, Indonesia, Ghana, Bangladesh, Ecuador where schools feeding programme is in

place, data indicates that the programme has also increased attendance and enrolment rates over the years (Akanbi and Alayande, 2011).

**TABLE 1: Expected Impact of HGSFHP on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS)**

<b>MDGS (Goals)</b>	<b>Expected Impact of HGSFHP</b>
Eradication of extreme hunger and poverty	Poverty reduction in community   Reduction of child hunger
Achieve universal primary education	Increase in school enrolment, attendance, retention, completion and achievement
Gender equality and empowerment	Correct gender imbalance through increase girl-child enrolment in schools
Reduce child mortality	Improved nutritional and health status of learners
Improve maternal health	Improve income generation, nutrition and health education
Combatt HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB	Improve nutrition and health status of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and improve access to school
Ensure environmental sustainability	improve water supply, hygiene and sanitation and greening of schools
Promote global partnerships	Improve networking, team work and collaboration between the school and public/private sector.

*Source:* National Guidelines for School Meal Planning and Implementation (FME, 2007)

According to Garram (2010), children's school feeding contributes to the education and wellbeing of children. A hungry child does not grow, cannot learn as well and faces many health risks in the future. School feeding can bring children into school and out of hunger. School feeding resonates to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to hunger and poverty (MDG 1) education (MDG 2) and gender equality (MDG 3), and indirectly to child mortality and maternal health (MDG 4 and 5) (Table 1).

- School feeding leads to outcomes that are mutually reinforcing, helping to lift households out of poverty to end the inter-generational cycle of hunger. It also facilitates education and particularly for girls, leads to improve food security, health and nutrition, the effects of which all contribute to ending poverty and hunger.
- Providing food for consumption at school can relieve immediate short-term hunger which is very beneficial for learning. Alleviating short-term hunger among children at school helps to improve performance on school tests and promote normal progression from one level to another in completing a basis education.
- School feeding helps close the gender gap in schools and helps to empower women.
- When girls are educated they are more likely to have fewer and healthier children and to head families.
- Maternal and infant mortality rates will decrease and better educated girl will make more informed choices and contributes to community development.
- Nutritional and health status are powerful influence on a child's leaving and on how well a child performs in school. Suneon and Grantham-McGregor (1980) reports



that in Jamaica, providing breakfast just to primary school students significantly increase attendance and arithmetic scores.

### **Other Impacts/Values of the Programme**

Experience shows that properly designed and effectively implemented SFPs can:

- ❖ Alleviate short-term hunger in malnourished or otherwise school children. This helps to increase the attention and concentration of students producing gains in cognitive function and learning.
- ❖ Motivate parents to enroll their children and have them attend regularly. When programmes effectively reduce absenteeism and increase the duration of schooling, educational outcome (performance, dropout and repetition) improve.
- ❖ Address specific micronutrient deficiency in school-age children. Most important of these are iodine and iron, which directly affect cognition. Meeting the iron and iodine of school age children can translate into better school performance.
- ❖ Increase community involvement in schools, particularly where programmes depend on the community to prepare and serve meals to children. Schools with their communities behind them are more effective than schools with less community involvement.

### **Problems of Administration and Implementation**

From interaction with parents and as revealed by some literature, parents are not disposed to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme for the following reasons;

- Most parents do not encourage their children eating food prepared outside their homes.
- Most parents/guardians do not want their children eating between meals.
- Parents/guardians believe in food poisoning resulting from witchcraft or other superstitious, religious and traditional beliefs.
- Parents/guardians think school meal make children to be in-discipline at home as they have another source of feeding.
- Government constraints: The programme has not been encouraged by successive government in Nigeria i.e. the Federal, State and Local Government Areas who are expected to contribute their quarter in terms of funding, and the provision of infrastructural resources. As reported by Adepoje (2010) it is sad and disheartening that out of the twelve (12) pilot states, only Osun State still implement the programme. All other states never funded the programme.

Recently, Kaduna state started the pilot study in Nigeria January, 2016.

## **Summary**

This work is on the evaluation of administration and implementation of the Universal Basic Education Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme. The HGSFHP was intended by the Federal Government of Nigeria within the framework of the UBE Act of 2004. It is in pursuance of the Federal Government's effort to achieve Education for All (EFA, 2015), and attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The sole purpose is to reduce hunger among school children and improve their nutritional and health state. The programme was intended to be home grown, school based and community driven. The various literature reviewed revealed that the programme can be very useful to eradicate poverty, address the problem of malnutrition among nursery and primary school pupils, improve good feeding and health habit, and to provide balanced diet which will make pupils more agile, alert with good cognition, reduce absenteeism and truancy and increase pupils' attention span.

## **Findings**

The following emerged as the findings:

- School administrators, teachers, parents and pupils are not even aware of the programme.
- This low or a lack of awareness creates attitude of ignorance and non-acceptance, ignorance which affects the implementation.
- That there are superstitions, religious and traditional beliefs which are constraints to the administration and implementation of the programme.
- Lack of government commitment and release of fund is also a constraint.
- The programme when well implemented can improve parents-school, parent-teachers, teachers-pupils relationship and involvement in school administration.

## **Conclusion**

SFPs have been practiced in many developed and developing countries for several decades. As already indicated it is therefore a worthwhile exercise in Nigeria so as to enhance nutrition status, increase cognition and learning outcomes, increase enrolments, reduce absenteeism and improve parents' involvement in school administration. However, lack of government commitment in implementing the programme, low awareness of parents and teachers are constraints.

## **Recommendations**

In addition to the laid down guidelines toward successful implementation of SFPs, the following recommendations are proffered:

- ❖ Government should undertake serious enlightenment and publicity campaign to awake school administration's, teacher's, parent's, pupil's and the general public's awareness of the programme.
- ❖ Federal government of Nigeria's HGSFHP should be backed up with a legislative act and to include all the thirty six (36) states including FCT.
- ❖ SFPs should encompass both public and private primary and junior secondary school educational institutions across the country.
- ❖ Qualified food scientists, nutritionist, dietitians and caterers should be involved in running the programme and made responsible for the purchase of the needed food items to be cooked in the schools.
- ❖ The cooking and serving should be executed under the supervision of the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) and serving should be conducted in a uniform standard measure to ensure serving of standard size/quality meals.
- ❖ Feeding should be well guided by a menu which reflects the nutritional need for energy and micronutrients body requirements of Nigeria in particular geographical area.
- ❖ School based deworming of children; an integral part of the SFP is to be conducted once every six month to ensure nutrition and education outcome.

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