Abstract

This study was designed to find out the relationship between the Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme and Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) or pre-primary school system. The ECCE performance indices considered in the study were: children enrolment and the provision of infrastructure/facilities. To guide the study, two research questions and hypotheses were formulated. Expost facto design was adopted for the study. The study area was the central education zone of Cross River State-Nigeria. The sample size was 543 teachers or caregivers. The instruments for data collection were a 30 items questionnaire titled: Home Grown School Feeding and Early Childhood Care Education System Performance (HGSFECCESP) and a check list. PPMC was used in testing the hypotheses and the result revealed that there exists a significant relationship between HGSF and children enrolment in ECCE. It was also revealed that, HGSF significantly relate with the provision of infrastructure/facilities in ECCE centres in Nigeria. Based on the result, it was recommended among others that the Federal Government of Nigeria should improve on the quality and quantity of the meals served to the ECCE children.

Keywords: Home grown school feeding, sustainable development, enrolment and infrastructure/facilities.
One of the basic rights of a child is education. The United Nations General Assembly in 1984 has proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26, part one of the declaration states that, “everyone has the right to education”. The United Nation convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) wish was domesticated in Nigeria in 2003 also recognized the rights of the child to be educated to enable the child fulfill his/her potential.

Children are the future of any Nation. They need to be nurtured and assisted to develop into responsible and productive adults, who will take over the running of the affairs of the society later. According to a common local parlance, “children are the leaders of tomorrow”. It is therefore necessary that beyond sheer survival, children should have the right to thrive, develop to their full potential and live in a sustainable developed world.

Sustainable development according to Ajayi (2001) is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. It is the practice of maintaining the process of productivity indefinitely by replacing resources used with resources of equal or great value. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognized the child as an agent of change. There are seventeen (17) SDGs and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is included in goal four (4). Goal (4) state that: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” it is specifically mentioned in target 4:2 that: “By 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”.

To complement the effort of the United Nation (UN) in child education, the Nigerian government launched the Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) on 9th June 2016 in Abuja. The HGSF was formally launched by the vice president professor Yemi Osibanjo at a special meeting of the federal ministers and school feeding stakeholders. According to Osibanjo (2016), the Home Grown School Feeding programme (UHGSF) is part of a 500 billion naira funded social investment programme announced by President Muhamadu Buhari’s administration to tackle poverty and improve the health and education of children and other vulnerable groups.

Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) is a school feeding programme that provides food produced and purchased within the country to children in the public pre-primary or Early Childhood Care Education and primary school in Nigeria. According to Osibanjo (2016), HGSF which aims at providing free school meals with food procured from local farmers, seeks to strengthen communities across the country. The main purpose of Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding programme (HGSF) are: (a) increase school enrolment and completion to reduce the school dropout rate which currently stands at about 30% (b) Improve child nutrition and
health as Nigeria has the third largest population of chronically undernourished children in the world. (c) Strengthen local agricultural economics by providing a school feeding market in which farmers can sell their products. (d) Create employment opportunities with jobs in catering processing, farming to mention a few.

School feeding according to Aboti (2013), represents a more varied and comprehensive set of uses of food for the achievement of educational outcome. School feeding is simply the provision of meals to school children during school day. Aboti started that Nigeria had launched the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme (HGSFHP) in 2005 and the pilot phase started in 2005/2006 academic year with twelve states in six geographical zones of Nigeria. The states were Bauchi, Edo, Enugu, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Imo, Kano, Kogi, Nassarawa, Niger, Yobe and Osun state (Yunusa, Yunusa and Etima 2012). For effective implement of the school feeding programme, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was to provide a conducive school environment by building new blocks of classroom and providing the necessary facilities that would enhance the effective take off of the programme. The expected input of the HGSFH on UBE according to Federal Ministry of to Education (2007) was to increase school enrolment, attendance, retention, completion and achievement.

School feeding programme especially in pre-primary or Early Childhood Care Education school system would lead to increase enrolment owing to the poverty level of Nigerians which has forced school going aged children to the streets as hawkers. Increase school enrolment lead to overcrowded classroom owing to paucity of classroom and pre-school teachers in Nigeria. In view of the above, Afemikhe (2000) observed that large class size at any school system may have effect on the quality of education. Afemikhe further suggested that feeding children in school may compound the problems of managing and monitoring instruction in schools. The pre-school education without doubt is bedeviled with the problems of lack of manpower, the management of the feeding programme and other curricular and extra-curricular activities by few caregiver and nannies would certainly compound a problem of management in the school. School feeding programme therefore may contribute in worsening the instructional management in schools. Apart from the problem above, school feeding programme is capital intensive. The pupils and the caregivers must be provided with aprons, plates, cups, spoons and other refectory materials. On the obstruction of school feeding on the school system Anero (2011) asserted that: “the fact that some pupils are slow, moderate and fast while having their meals, it’s difficult in commencing, and ending the feeding of the pupil the same time. The diverse eating background therefore would in no small way tell negatively on other school activities because the feeding period may constantly exceed its allotted time” (p.74).
However, Yunusa, Yunusa and Etima (2012) justified the need of the school feeding programme by stating the following:

1. 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 grade to grade in completing a basic education.

2. School feeding helps close gender gap in school and helps to empower women by increasing their probability of employment.

3. School feeding leads to outcome that are mutually reinforcing, helping to lift households out of poverty to end the inter-generational cycle of hunger. It also facilitates education for girls and leads to improved food security, health and nutrition, the effect of which all contribute to ending hunger.

4. Motivate parents to enroll their children in school and have them attend regularly. Feeding programme can effectively reduce absenteeism and increase the duration of schooling, reduce dropout and repetition.

5. Address specific micronutrient deficiencies in school-age children. Most important are iodine and iron, which directly affect cognition.

6. Increase community involvement in schools, particularly where feeding programme 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.

On the important of school feeding, Brown (2008) asserted that inadequate nutrition is a major cause of impaired cognitive development in children. In support of this, Anero (2011), stressed that poor nutrition even in its milder form during any period of childhood can have detrimental effect on the cognitive development of children. The above further gain the support of Arob, Eju and Ekpeni (2012) who stressed that malnutrition is the bane on the academic performance of pupils in sciences.

The school feeding programme is a laudable idea which would help to implement the UBE objectives in our pre-primary school system. It will ensure high school enrollment, attendance and retention and above all ensure high quality of teaching in the pre-primary school education system. School feeding will thrive where teachers are well motivated, school activities supervised and infrastructure/facilities adequately provide (Brown 2008).

The attainment of maximum pupils’ enrollment in schools to achieve Education For All (EFA) goal is a concern of both developed and developing Nations. To this end, the American government declared the “No Child left Behind” Act 2001 (Namukwaya and Kibirige 2004). The Africa continent had not been left out in this pursuit as the Uganda government introduced some innovations and intervention to address the problem of low enrollment. The intervention according to Namukwaya and Kibirige (2014) are: supply of school facilities, introduction of school feeding facilities.
programme, establishment of school management committees and school funding programme. In Ghana, the government introduced some interventions to meet up with the demands of children school enrollment. The intervention programme according to Fielmua and Bendie (2012), includes; School lunch, sporting equipment, supply of instructional facilities, supply, of water and sanitation and capacity building for teachers. In Nigeria, the case is not different as the Nigerian government launched and relaunched the HGSF. The UBE Act also introduced some innovations that would help curb the problem of out-of the school children and the boosting of pupil enrolment in basic education, some of the innovations that would complement the HGSF and enhance the performance of ECCE, according to Cross River Universal Basic Education Board (CRSUBEB 2014) are: provision of infrastructure/facilities, supervision, workshops/training programme for staff, mentorship of staff by experts and school feeding programme. These innovations, even when not fully implemented have resulted to increase pupils’ enrolment in our public schools (Ebam 2014). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2017) reported that within 2016-2017, the enrollment figure of the pre-primary and primary school pupils had increased tremendously. Within state levels similar experiences were also noted.

Ameh (2004) asserted that as at 2003 there were 378,133 children enrolled in Ebonyi state pre-primary and primary school but with the implementation of the HGSF the enrollment figure rose to 516,607 pupils. In Awka Ibom State, Iyon and Ekpo in Anero (2011) asserted that pupils’ enrollment in schools has increase as Anero (2011) reported that; the state witnessed a yearly increase in enrollment.

Following the implantation of HGSF programme in Cross River State, public pre-school pupils’ enrolment had increased from 57,607 as at 2016 to 57723 in 2017. The analysis in table 1 shows the increased (CRSUBEB 2017).

Table 1: ECCE Enrolment Summary: 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Abi</td>
<td>4432</td>
<td>4279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Akamkpa</td>
<td>3365</td>
<td>2637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Akpabuyo</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td>1625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bakassi</td>
<td>1231</td>
<td>1415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bekwarra</td>
<td>2329</td>
<td>2228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Biase</td>
<td>3399</td>
<td>3874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Boki</td>
<td>3847</td>
<td>3964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Cal. Muni</td>
<td>2995</td>
<td>2064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Cal. South</td>
<td>2239</td>
<td>1756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Etung</td>
<td>1422</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Ikom</td>
<td>2809</td>
<td>2470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Obanliku</td>
<td>2716</td>
<td>2919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Obubra</td>
<td>2999</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Obudu</td>
<td>3349</td>
<td>3257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Odukpani</td>
<td>6777</td>
<td>4330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Ogoja</td>
<td>3775</td>
<td>4103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Yakurr</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>1676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Yala</td>
<td>5878</td>
<td>5924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>57670</strong></td>
<td><strong>57723</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: CRSUBEB: 2017*

There must be a corresponding increase in the provision of infrastructure/facilities to cope with the increasing enrolment of pupils in pre-primary and primary schools. School infrastructure/facilities according to Yusuf and Adigum (2012), determine the academic achievement of pupils in schools. Aluku (2006), conducted a survey research to find out the influence of school facilities on student academic performance and it was found out that poor performance of students is attributed to lack of or inadequate school infrastructure/facilities.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding (NHGSF) programme is meant to increase children enrolment and completion in the pre-primary schools. It is hoped that the programme would reduced or eradicate the number of out-of-school children from the streets, improve children nutrition and create employment opportunity for Nigerians. It is a programme meant to encourage vulnerable parents to send their children to school. If the pre-primary and primary school pupils enrolment increases, there must be a corresponding increase of school infrastructure/facilities to curb the envisaged population explosion.

Increase in school enrolment and provision of infrastructure/facilities are some of the indices that are used to measure a performing school system. This research therefore is to find out if the Nigeria Home Grown Feeding (NHGF) programme has influenced the performance of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) system in terms of pupils’ enrolment and provision of infrastructure/facilities.

**Objective of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to find out if the Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding (NHGS) programme relates with the performance of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) system. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. To find out if Home Grown School Feeding programme relates with Early Childhood Care Education pupils enrolment
2. To determine if there exists any relationship between Home Grown School Feeding programme and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education Centres.
Research Questions
The following research questions were raised to guide the study:
1. Is there any relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and Early Childhood Care Education children enrolment?
2. Is there any relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education Centers?

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were also formulated to guide the study and were tested at .05 level of significance.
1. There exists no significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the enrolment of children in Early Childhood Care Education
2. There is no significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education Centres.

Method
To meet the purpose of this study, the study adopted an expost facto design to determine the relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme and the performance of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) system.

The area of study was Cross River State of Nigeria, specifically the central education zone of the state comprising of six Local Government Areas namely Abi, Boki, Etung, Ikom, Obubra and Yakurr. The zone has 343 public Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) centres or pre-schools with a teacher population of 871. The entire children enrolment in the zone as at September, 2017 was 15,389. The sample size was 543 teachers or caregivers. A random sampling technique was use for the selection.

The instruments for data collection were a questionnaire title: Home Grown School Feeding and Early Childhood Care Education System Performance (HGSFECCEESP) made up of 30 items and a check list. These instruments were validated by three experts. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to establish the reliability of the instruments. Descriptive statistics was used to test the research questions while Pearson Product Movement Correlation (PPMC) was used in testing the hypotheses.

Data Analysis
Research question one
Is there any relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and Early Childhood Care Education children enrolment?

To answer this question, the nature of the correlation was examined as shown in table 2
Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation And Correlation Coefficient (r) for HGSF and ECCE Children Enrolment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HGSF</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.8588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECCE children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>15.23</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of \( r = .8588 \), revealed that there was a high positive relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) children enrolment.

**Research question 2**

Is there any relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education Centres.

The nature of the correlation is as shown in table 3

Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HGSF</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.8227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of Infrastructure/facilities In ECCE Centers</td>
<td>14.68</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of \( r = .8227 \) revealed that there was a high positive relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Centre.

**Hypothesis one (HO1)**

There exists no significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the enrolment of children in Early Childhood Care Education

Pearson Product Movement Correlation (PPMC) was used in testing the hypothesis and summary is shown in table 4.
Table 4: Pearson Product Movement Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and Children Enrolment in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Σx</th>
<th>Σx²</th>
<th>Σxy</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HGSF (x)</td>
<td>6252</td>
<td>237280</td>
<td>161235</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Enrolment in ECCE (y)</td>
<td>8227</td>
<td>161147</td>
<td>161147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 540, * Significant p < .05 *Significant p < .05 Crit r = .088

Since the calculated r (.8588) was greater than the critical r (.088) at df of 538 and .05 level of significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus there is a significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the enrolment of children in Early Childhood Care Education.

Hypothesis two (H0²)

There is no significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education centre.

Pearson Product Movement Correlation (PPMC) (r) was used in testing the hypothesis and the summary is shown in table 5

Table 5: Pearson Product Movement Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and the Provision of Infrastructure/Facilities in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Σx</th>
<th>Σx²</th>
<th>Σxy</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HGSF (x)</td>
<td>6252</td>
<td>237280</td>
<td>161003</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure/Facilities In ECCE Centre (y)</td>
<td>7928</td>
<td>159314</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 540, *significant p < .05, *significant p < .05, Crit r = .088
Since the calculated $r (.8227)$ was greater than the critical $r (.088)$ at df of 538 and .05 level of significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus there is a significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education Centre.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study shows that, there exists a significant relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and the enrolment of children in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE). This result is in agreement with Anero (2011), who reported that primary school pupils enrolment increased without a corresponding increase in teachers because of the introduction of lunch in schools. Anselem (2013), in his study on the expectation of school feeding programme impact on school enrolment, found out that the national school feeding programme implemented in Ghanaian basic schools showed positive effect on school enrolment. Similarly, Ebam, (2014) asserted that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) innovation of introducing school feeding was to attract school going age children to enroll into the basic education. Mboto (2015), in a study on school feeding and pupils academic performance, asserted that there is a shape increase of primary school pupils’ enrolment after the introduction of feeding in the schools. The Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board (2017) had declared an increase of their primary schools pupils’ enrolment from 576907 in 2015/2016 session to 57723 in 2016/2017 session after the introduction of the Nigeria Home Grown School Feeding in the state.

The findings of this study also show that the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme has a significant relationship with the provision of infrastructure/facilities in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) centers. The result is in line with the CRSUBEB (2017) who assert that the increase enrolment in the public primary schools had pushed them to establish new schools and rehabilitation 86 public primary school schools between 2015 to 2017. School facilities according to Yusuf and Adijum (2012) would not only curb with the problem of increase enrolment, but determine the academic achievement of pupils. Aluku (2006), assert that poor performance of student is attributed to lack of inadequate school infrastructure/facilities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme introduced in Nigeria public pre-primary and primary schools have a significant relationship with children enrolment.
2. There exists a strong relationship between Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) and the provision of infrastructure/facilities in the Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) centers in Nigeria.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings.

1. There should be improvement on the quality and quantity of the meals given to the children in the on-going Home Grown School Feeding programme as these would attract more children to enroll in the schools.

2. There should be a corresponding increase in school infrastructure/facilities to curb the increasing children enrolment in the public pre-primary and primary schools.

References


