

School Meal Feeding Policy Programme Implementation in Private and Public Primary Schools in the Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State

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Abstract: The study examined effective implementation of school meal policy at private and public primary schools in the Uvwie LGA of Delta State. The study was designed as a descriptive survey. Because the opinions of a sample of respondents were sought out and examined, this design was deemed to be appropriate. The study was directed by two research questions. The population of the study consisted of 1,548 public and private primary schools. Purposive disproportionate random sampling technique was used to select 450 respondents (300 from public primary schools and 150 from private primary schools). Implementation of Primary School Meal Feeding Policy Programme (PSMEPPQ) Questionnaires were developed as an instrument on a 4-point scale that ranges from implemented (I) 4points, Sometimes implemented (SI) 3points, Rarely implemented (RI) 2points and Not implemented (NI) = 1 point. An expert validated the instrument. These modifications were added to the instrument. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was calculated using the Cronbach alpha method and was 0.72. Mean scores and grand mean were used for data analysis. Key findings showed that home-groom school feeding was introduced in private primary schools but not in public primary schools. The report suggested that in order to quickly change the current feeding approach used in their schools, the government should implement punishment strategies for public school head teachers.

Introduction

One of the education reform programs is the school meal feeding policy program. It speaks about food provided to students who are receiving an education while they are in class. In the hierarchy of human needs, one of the basic requirements of man is food, which is ranked as the need that must be met before all other needs (Maslow, 2013). Children's development, growth, and health are, in large part, influenced by the food they eat. It is possible to think of the human body as an ordered mechanism that uses the food it consumes for a certain purpose. The body is therefore sensitive to the sort of food consumed and the timing of its consumption (Shina, 2002). A follow-up lunch at school will help students' bodies' metabolic processes since they are still in the early stages of development at the elementary education level. Longer periods of not eating could be harmful to a growing child's bodily structure. According to Adams (2014), denying a schoolchild access to meals is a form of pre-planned famine. Cobb (2001) noted that proper nutrition is a major factor in the significant changes in height and weight that occur during the pre-school years. Ihebereme (2006) believed that a child's intellectual development is influenced by consuming a healthy, balanced diet. Given the recent trend where most working women now undertake the twin roles of a housewife and an earner and do not have much time for child rearing, the introduction of a school lunch policy program is timely. As a result, several households no longer have moms in charge of feeding and dressing the kids for school in the morning. The situation is horrible right now because these housekeepers don't try to make sure that the children under their care are either properly fed for breakfast or given snacks to eat during break time. An undernourished child, according to Nwankwo (2008), is unable to focus on worthwhile tasks because they are preoccupied with finding ways to state their urgent hunger. Students who eat breakfast prior to class do better than those who don't, according to Akintola (2007).

Ihebereme (2007) argued that inadequate nutrition affects children's academic performance, which has major ramifications for the educational system as well as society at large. Particularly, Nelson (1992) and Geissler (1996) identified a connection between inadequate nutrition and intellectual impairment. Several academics concurred that good eating enhances intelligence (Glewwe, Jacoby, and King, 2001). Obasanjo (2005:2) listed the primary goals for implementing a school meal feeding strategy as follows:

- Reduce hunger among school children;
- Increase school enrolment, attendance, retention and completion;
- Improve the nutritional and health status of children in school;
- Enhance their comprehension and learning achievements;
- Promote equity of boy-girl enrolment;
- Stimulate local food production;
- Boost income of indigenous farmers;
- Enhance and strengthen community participation and community involvement in school management;
- Stimulate the development of small and medium enterprises (SMES); and Contribute to reducing the incidence of poverty;

These goals were genuinely focused on the areas that would encourage a comprehensive educational endeavor and value education. Primary schools are expected to effectively implement the policy in accordance with its admirable goals. It is surprising that the majority of public elementary schools have not successfully implemented the school lunch feeding policy; students can still be observed purchasing snacks and food items during break time from vendors. Giving their kids money to spend at the food and snack booths, parents exacerbated the practice. In another realm, only a small number of school principals in Nigerian basic education institutions allow their students to bring lunch to class. This is terribly incorrect and does not follow the guidelines established for the school feeding programme. Private elementary schools appear to be the lone exception to this rule, as some of these private schools provide students with snacks while others provide students with meals. In response, Okoli (2008) noted that the current push for extending school dismissal till four o'clock had made it easier to provide school food in private elementary schools. Uwadi (2008), on the other hand, believed that closing primary schools by 2:00 p.m. is the best course of action given that pupils' tendency to get hungry in class was not addressed by the provision of food or snacks. Ihebereme and Ade (2008) expressed the opinion that because they receive free meals while in school, students in private elementary schools are aware of the need of attending class every day. The assumption is that providing meals at school encourages students to engage in productive learning for an increase in performance. In light of this, the researchers thought it vital to look into the state of the school meal feeding policy's implementation at private and public primary schools in Delta State's Uvwie Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

Pupils in both public and private primary schools in Nigeria are required to receive food while they are enrolled in class as a result of the implementation of the school meal feeding policy. It is startling to see pupil's still bringing food and snacks to class. Several pupils arrive at school without their homemade meals and are starving. Other types of pupils pay their way to school. A circumstance like the one described has disproved the goals of the school food policy in primary schools. This has caused some stakeholders' minds to be worried, which prompted the researchers' study to learn the state of the school lunch feeding policy in both private and public primary schools. This study's focus was on this issue.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a guide for the investigation.

- I. Determine the extent public primary school implement school meal feeding policy?
2. Ascertain the extent private primary school implement school feeding policy?

Methodology

The investigation was planned as a descriptive survey. The investigation was directed by two research questions. The population of the study consisted of 1,548 public and private primary schools. Purposive disproportionate random sampling technique was used to select 450 respondents (300 from public primary schools and 150 from private primary schools). The decision to include more respondents from public primary schools was the best one because there are more public primary schools and teachers than there are private schools. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The instrument consisted of two parts and II. Part I contained personal data of the respondents while part II contained information on the implementation status of home-groom school feeding policy. The response option assigned to the questionnaire items ranges from Implemented (AI) 4points, Sometimes Implemented (SI) 3points, Rarely Implemented (RI) 2points and Not implemented (NI) = 1 point. An expert validated the instrument. These modifications were added to the instrument. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was calculated using the Cronbach alpha method and was 0.72. The instrument was deemed dependable due to its excellent reliability. Out of the 450 questionnaires that were given out to respondents, 430 were retrieved and used in the data analysis. Research questions were addressed using the means and the grand means. The decision rule's threshold was 2.50. Any item with a mean score equal to or greater than 2.50 was deemed implemented, and every item with a mean score greater than 2.50 was deemed implemented.

Result

Table 1: Mean Scores of responses on public primary school implementation of school meal feeding policy.

S/No	Items	Decision
1.	Pupils come to school with their food	2.68 Implemented
2.	Pupils come to school with money to buy snacks	3.88 Implemented
3.	Pupils are served food in the school	2.20 Not Implemented
4.	Pupils are served snacks in the school	2.21 Not Implemented
	Grand Mean =	2.49

Items 1 and 2 were deemed to be implemented because Table 1 revealed that they received mean scores over 2.50. Items 3 and 4 were deemed to be unimplemented because they received mean scores of 2.20 and 2.21, respectively. Further calculations yielded a grand mean of 2.49, indicating that public primary schools do not implement the home-groom school feeding programme.

Table 2: Mean scores of responses on private primary school implementation of school meal feeding policy.

S/No	Items	Decision
1.	Pupils come to school with their food	3.26 Implemented
2.	Pupils come to school with money to buy snacks	2.30 Not Implemented
3.	Pupils are served food in the school	3.54 Implemented
4.	Pupils are served snacks in the school	3.60 Implemented
	Grand Mean =	3.17

Items 1, 3, and 4 received high mean scores of 3.26, 3.54, and 3.60, respectively, according to Table 2. Their mean scores were higher than 2.50, indicating that private primary schools were using them. The mean score for item 2 was 2.30, which is less than the 2.50 required under the decision rule. As a result, private primary schools did not adopt item 2. Grand mean of 3.17 was found, indicating that private primary schools had implemented the school meal feeding programme.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 demonstrated that public primary schools did not follow the school feeding policy. This result was consistent with Uwadi's (2008) findings that it was ideal for primary schools to close at two o'clock given that neither food nor snacks were provided to address pupils' propensity for hunger while attending classes. When a child is hungry, his or her concentration in class decreases and instead they are focused on how to alleviate their hunger situation. Table 2 outlined the implementation of the school lunch feeding policy in private primary schools. The claim made by Okoli (2008) that the reason why the desire to extend school dismissal till four o'clock was successful was that the school provided the students with snacks or food also supported the finding. Ihehereme and Ade's (2008) assertion that students in private elementary schools are cognizant of attending class regularly due to the free meals and snacks provided to them provided additional support for the conclusion. It should go without saying that students' attention spans and level of eagerness to study are best observed when they are well-fed. Pupils are encouraged to regularly attend class as a result of the school feeding programme.

Conclusion

The act of serving pupils food while they are at school has been defined as school meal feeding policy in the investigation. The survey also confirmed that the prohibition against serving school meals to pupils in public primary schools are not in place. On the other hand, private primary schools participated in the introduction of the school meal feeding policy. The implementation gap between public and private primary schools' implementation of the school meal feeding policy would be closed if the recommendations made in this investigation were to be implemented.

Recommendations

The findings led to the following suggestions being made:

1. The government should enact sanctions for head teachers in public primary school so that they can swiftly alter the existing feeding strategy employed in their schools.
2. Heads of private primary schools shouldn't be embarrassed to discuss their difficulties adopting a home-groom school feeding policy in their school.
3. Authorities should prohibit food and snack carts from operating within and near school grounds.
4. When the Parent Teachers Association meets, primary school head teachers should issue a warning to parents to cease handing their kids money when they arrive at school.

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