



Provision of Classroom Instructional Materials and School Meal for the Administration of Universal Basic Education Schools in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated provision of classroom instructional materials and school meal for the administration of Universal Basic Education Schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population for the study comprised 1,244 Universal Basic Education (UBE) school heads in Rivers State which included 288 junior secondary school principals and 956 primary school head teachers. Sample for the study was four hundred and thirty-six (436) school heads comprising 153 junior secondary school principals and 283 primary school head teachers drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Instrument used for data collection was “Universal Basic Education Scheme Implementation and Challenges Questionnaire” (UBESICQ). The questionnaire was face and content validated by three experts comprising two from the Department of Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. A reliability co-efficient of 0.92 was estimated using Cronbach Alpha technique for internal consistency of the questionnaire. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Keywords: Classroom, Instructional Materials, School Mean, Administration, Universal Basic Education Schools, Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

It is no longer an issue in contention that classrooms play an indispensable and significant part in the teaching and learning process. The provision of classrooms enables students to learn under a conducive environment. Similarly, the classroom provided must be suitable enough as each classroom is designed to accommodate specific strength of students. The classroom is not expected to be overcrowded but rather spacious and well ventilated for learning. The classroom and other learning infrastructure are important as they enable students to develop the right skill, knowledge, attitude and ability in all the necessary domains.

The importance of making sure that the vital infrastructural facilities needed for delivery of the UBE scheme should be made adequately made available can hardly be ignored or taken lightly. The proper planning of the UBE scheme cannot be complete if adequate attention has not been given to the issue of infrastructural facilities (Udofot, 2003). Okonkwo and Obineli (2013) pointed out that the rural areas are worse hit by the issue of infrastructural inadequacy in the education system. There is no doubt that the unavailability of infrastructural facilities is a major hindrance to the implementation of basic education in Nigeria (Nwizu, 2011). Infrastructures and instructional materials play vital roles in the teaching and

learning process. There is no meaningful learning that can take place when the required instructional resources are not provided.

Instructional infrastructures and teaching materials in the school are provided not just to give comfort to students but they also serve as audio and visual resources needed for complete learning. Nwinyinya and Ekechukwu (2016) pointed out that the inadequacy of learning infrastructure is one of the inhibitors to the implementation of the UBE scheme. Similarly, Suleiman (2014) revealed that the inadequacies of school facilities such as library, classroom, instructional materials etc. are among the factors responsible for the slow implementation of the UBE scheme. Furthermore, Adeyemi (2011) pointed out that the wide ratio of educational resources to students further inhibits the implementation of the UBE scheme in Nigeria.

The State board of the Universal Basic Education (SUBEB) as cited in Agboola and Aloysius (2016) stated that “UBE Scheme described school buildings to include the classrooms, offices, libraries and play grounds” (p. 56). These facilities play significant roles in the teaching-learning activities that take place in the classroom. Furthermore, Denga in Agboola and Aloysius (2016) stated that to be rated as meeting the minimum school facilities standard to operate, it necessarily must possess the needed infrastructural resources such as standard school buildings, classrooms of standard, standard administrative offices, furniture in the classroom and offices, toilet facilities, water supply (pipe borne or dug-out well). Store room for instructional materials, first aid office and first aid box with essential drugs and materials for emergency use, play-ground for recreation activities and a workshop for instructional purposes both hardware and consumables (p. 56).

These facilities need also to be provided in appropriate quantity and condition for objectives of the free education scheme to be achievable. Similarly, there is need for constant maintenance of these facilities after a long period of usage. Obi (2005) stated that physical facilities in the school need to be constantly maintained for effective teaching and learning to take place. It is the condition of these learning facilities over a long period of time that will guarantee the successful implementation of the free education programme provided by the government.

The classroom is the most important part of the school system as it determines to a large extent teachers’ ability to meet and relate with the students and transmit knowledge. The condition of the classroom and the availability of instructional materials are very important for teacher-students interaction. This is why Oluremi and Oyewole (2013) in a study conducted in Ekiti State reported that as many as 319,950 instructional classrooms in the primary school level with a total enrolment of 21,294,515 pupils as at 2008. This gives a class size averaging 67 which may not be conducive enough for effectively for the teaching and learning tasks. This could affect either positively or negatively on the student-teacher classroom interaction and consequently the learning outcomes.

Similarly, Awuja-Ademu and Ukwedeh (2012) stated that “UBEC implementation declared all inclusive, child participation and gender equity in Nigeria but lack computer, internet and on-line experts to operate new instructional technology that surpasses physical classroom boundaries to learn from books only” (p. 5). The inadequacy of classrooms has limited the possibility of innovation in most schools and this has also hindered the provision of modern instructional facilities which are vital for teaching and learning.

Amuche and Kukwi (2013) conducted a study where he revealed that classrooms were overcrowded at about 32.50%. This implies that learning facilities such as desks, tables etc. were below the number of students enrolled for the UBE programme in the zone. He further stated that “Government should consolidate on the construction and renovation of existing facilities in UBE Schools and maximize strife in classroom construction, which will bring about the success of the UBE in the zone” (p. 166). Furthermore, Agi and Eremie (2018) stated that in some JSS, students are found sitting on bare classroom floors without desks or chair to learn. Sometimes, some of these classrooms have leaking roofs, and are lacking in some doors and windows. Some have sagging ceiling and cracked walls while high teacher/student ratio and high congested classrooms are the order of the day. These issues no doubt have negative impacts in the implementation of UBE programmes in Rivers State.

It is therefore obvious that the condition of classroom and instructional materials is nothing to write home about. These are possibly some of the justification why the implementation of the UBE scheme has not

received wide acceptance. There is no parent who will be willing to enroll his or her child in a school where the classroom has not been properly equipped.

The provision of learning materials is very important for a meaningful teaching and learning exercise in the school. Learning materials are very important as they help to concretize what the student has learnt in the class. Similarly, the provision of learning materials makes it easy for the teacher to have a meaningful interaction with the students. It is surprising to note that in this area of technological development where ICT facilities are used as instructional materials, common items such as charts and rulers are still scarce in UBE schools. One then wonders when these schools will catch up with other free education system in the Western world who are already going digital. The study conducted by Wordu and Emamoros (2017) on the use of computer in school reported that computers are yet to be used for teaching in schools in the study area. This reveals the shortage of instructional materials in almost all UBE schools in the country.

Food is clearly bone of the basic needs of man and the provision of free meal has been used by the government in different countries of the world to attract students into the compulsory education programme. The government at various levels has made diverse arrangements with food vendors across the country on the type and quality of food that should be provided for students as a way of attracting them to school.

School meal is one of the basic necessities of the free education programme in Nigeria. The government for years has continued to recognize the important role that school feeding programme can play in the achievement of the educational goals and objectives of the nation. The programme that government has instituted to ensure that schools feed pupils in school was considered as a necessity because stakeholders have perceived that most children come to school hungry and this constitutes a huge limitation to the success of the free education programme. According to the Study by Taylor and Ogbogu (2016), the introduction of free meal in schools has helped to increase enrollment, retention as well as increased regularity in attendance among students.

The government in recent times has made provisions in some states for the commencement of the school feeding programme in primary education. The government has recommended that every school child should be fed at least once in a day while in school. The government has taken it upon herself to provide the food needed and also pay cooks that will assist in the provision of meals. However, the lack of funds and monitoring has made some states to resort to other options in the provision of meals for the students.

Oduolowu (2007) stated that “children keep longer in school in Sweden than in Nigeria. This is easier for the children because free school meals are available to all pupils in the school programme in Sweden” (p. 97). The free meal programme does not only assist the students to be regular in school, it is also an opportunity for the students to get a balanced meal which is important for their overall development. The meals provided are given to students to also address their health needs (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). This helps to keep the students healthy for their educational pursuit.

The government has used the free meal programme to encourage parents and students to take advantage of the free education programme. Government of different states has used different methods to provide food for the students. There are state governments that provide food for student’s consumption while some others resort to the use of snacks, fruits and other eatables. Students are assured of at least one meal in a day at school before the end of the day. However, Egbosi and Offor (2016) stated that “government does not provide at least one meal a day to encourage pupils attend school” (p. 48). There are some state governments who are not sincere to the free meal promise and this has made it difficult for all students to be captured in the UBE programme.

The provision of free meal for students has been backed up by legal provisions. Maigida (2017) pointed out that “feeding the school children in the UBE is a law captured in the 2004 Act as the provision of midday meal for school children” (p. 701). The provision of a legal backing to the school feeding programme is to ensure that stakeholders show commitment to the programme. However, it is surprising to note that the government in some states of the federation has failed in implementing this scheme, which at the end has meant mocked the law establishing it.

The school feeding programme has been used over the years to achieve educational goals and objectives. Bolaji, Campbell-Evans and Gray (2017) stated that “providing school meals have been a global strategy

to meet education objectives through increasing attendance and improving health outcomes. India, as a case in point, has had a long tradition of school food programmes since 1920” (p. 7). This could be why planners in education have pointed out that any attempt to stop the feeding programme will spell doom for the free education programme especially among low income earners (Bolaji, Gray & Campbell-Evans, 2015). The free feeding programme is a necessity in Nigeria because most of the citizens are below the poverty line and the provision of food for students will help to reduce the education cost borne by parents. The health of students in school is also one of the paramount reasons why the feeding programme was introduced. Students who are malnourished cannot be attentive in class or learn meaningfully. Udachukwu (2012) revealed that “providing daily balanced school meal for the children will help the less privileged ones and also help to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition, anemia and parasitic infection” (p. 214). The introduction of feeding under the UBE scheme therefore has different direct and indirect benefits on the education system.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the provision of classroom instructional materials and school meal for the administration of Universal Basic Education Schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the extent to which classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State.
2. find out the extent to which items of school meal are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed in the study:

1. To what extent are classroom instructional materials provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State?
2. To what extent are items of school meal provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of head teachers of primary schools and principals of junior secondary schools on the extent classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State
2. No significant difference exists between the mean ratings of head teachers of primary Schools and principals of junior secondary schools on the extent items of school meal are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population for the study comprised 1,244 Universal Basic Education (UBE) school heads in Rivers State which included 288 junior secondary school principals and 956 primary school head teachers. Sample for the study was four hundred and thirty-six (436) school heads comprising 153 junior secondary school principals and 283 primary school head teachers drawn using stratified random sampling technique. Instrument used for data collection was “Universal Basic Education Scheme Implementation and Challenges Questionnaire” (UBESICQ). The questionnaire was face and content validated by three experts comprising two from the Department of Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. A reliability co-efficient of 0.92 was estimated using Cronbach Alpha technique for internal consistency of the questionnaire. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: *To what extent are class room instructional materials provided free to students and pupils in basic education in Rivers State?*

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of school heads’ ratings on the extend classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State.

S/No	Classroom Instructional Materials	Junior Secondary School Principals n=153		Primary School Head Teachers n=283		General N=436	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
20	Instructional charts	3.46	HE	3.58	VHE	3.54	HE
21	Chalk	3.29	HE	3.26	HE	3.27	HE
22	Board	3.32	HE	3.55	VHE	3.47	HE
23	Desk and chairs	2.37	LE	3.69	VHE	3.22	HE
24	Board marker	1.97	LE	3.72	VHE	3.11	HE
25	Board ruler	1.97	LE	3.72	VHE	3.11	HE
	Grand mean	2.73		3.59		3.29	

Keys: VHE = Very High Extent; HE = High Extent; LE = Low Extent

Results in Table 1 indicated that the responses of the Junior Secondary Schools Principals to items 20-25 yielded mean score ratings that ranged between 1.97 and 3.46 for items 24 and 20 respectively with a grand mean of 2.73 which are above criterion mean of 2.50. This indicated that the provision of free classroom instructional materials at the Junior Secondary School level is at a moderately high extent. Specifically, however, the provision of board markers and board rulers are at very low extent while on the other hand the provision of charts, chalk, board, desk and chairs are at approximately high extent.

Furthermore, table 1 showed that based on the responses made by primary school head teachers to items 20-25, a mean range of 3.26 to 3.72 were obtained. These indicated that at the primary school level, the provisions of chart, chalk, board, desk and chairs, board markers and board rulers are made approximately at a high extent. The high trend is the same when the responses of the Junior Secondary Schools Principals and those of the primary school head teachers were considered and combined as general responses. This is because their responses yielded a mean range of 3.11 to 3.54 and a grand mean of 3.29 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50 used for decision making.

Research Question Two: *To what extent are items of school meal provided free to students and pupils in basic education in Rivers State?*

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of school heads' ratings on the extent items of school meal are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State

S/No	Food items	Junior Secondary School Principals n=153		Primary School Head Teachers n=283		General N=436	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
26	Provision of food	1.95	LE	2.88	HE	2.56	HE
27	Provision of snacks	2.01	LE	2.88	HE	2.58	HE
28	Provision of fruits	2.00	LE	2.88	HE	2.57	HE
29	Provision of juice	1.70	LE	2.88	HE	2.47	LE
30	Provision of water	3.11	HE	3.87	VHE	3.61	VHE
	Grand mean	1.53		3.08		2.76	

Keys: VHE = Very High Extent; HE = High Extent; LE = Low Extent

The analysis in table 2 showed that the responses of the Junior Secondary School Principals on the extent items of free school meal are provided free to the students (items 26-30) yielded a mean score range of 1.70 for item 29 to 2.01 for item 27 and a grand mean of 1.53 which were all below the criterion mean of 2.50. All these indicated that at the Junior Secondary School level, items school meal are provided free to students at a low extent, except water a natural resources. Nevertheless, the responses of the primary school head teachers to the items yielded a range of mean scores between 2.88 for item 26 to 3.87 for item 30 with a grand mean score of 3.08. These indicated that at the primary school level items of free school meal are provided to the pupils at a high extent.

Furthermore, when the responses of the Junior Secondary Schools Principals and the Primary Schools Head Teachers were combined (general) their responses to the items yielded a range of mean scores between 2.56 for item 26 to 3.61 for item 30 and a grand mean score of 2.76 which are all above the criterion mean of 2.50. All these indicated that provision of free school meal to the pupils in primary schools in Rivers State is at a high extent.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One (H₀₁): There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of head teachers of primary schools and principals of junior secondary schools on the extent classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State.

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of the mean rating scores of school heads on the extent classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education based on their levels

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	2-tailed sig value	Remarks
J.S.S. Principals	153	2.74	1.01	434	9.84	0.000	V. Sig. Ho3 rejected
P.S. Head Teachers	283	3.59	0.76				

P < 0.05

The results in Table 3 indicated that the principals of junior secondary schools had a mean score of 2.74 (SD=1.01), while the head teachers of primary schools had a mean score of 3.59 (SD=0.76) on the extent classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State. These mean scores yielded a mean difference of 0.85, which when subjected to independent t-test produced a t-value of 9.84 at degree of freedom of 434 at 0.000 level of significance. ($p < 0.05$). Hypothesis one (H_{01}) was rejected. Therefore, a significant difference was observed between the mean rating scores of principals of junior secondary schools and head teachers of primary schools on the extent classroom instructional materials are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): No significant difference exists between the mean ratings of head teachers of primary schools and principals of junior secondary schools on the extent items of school meal are provided free to students in basic education in Rivers State.

Table 4: Independent t-test of the mean rating scores of school heads on the extent items of school meal are provided free to students in basic education based on their levels.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	2-tailed sig value	Remarks
J.S.S. Principals	153	2.15	0.79	434	10.90	0.000	V. sig.
P.S. Head Teachers	283	3.08	0.88				Ho4 rejected

$P < 0.05$

The results displayed in table 4 revealed that the mean ratings of the principals of junior secondary schools and the head teachers of primary schools are 2.15 (SD=0.79) and 3.08 (SD=0.88) respectively. These mean scores produced a mean difference of 0.93, which when subjected to independent t-test, a calculated t-value of 10.90 was obtained at degree of freedom of 434 at 0.0005 level of significance ($P < 0.05$). Hypothesis two (H_{02}) was rejected. This therefore indicated that a significant difference exists between the mean ratings of principals of junior secondary schools and the head teachers of primary schools on the extent items of school meal are provided free to the students in basic education in Rivers State. Furthermore, table 4 clearly showed that items of school meal are provided free to students at a low extent at the secondary school level in Rivers State (grand mean = 1.53), while at the primary school level, these items of school meal are provided free to the pupils at a high extent (grand mean = 3.08).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Level of Implementation of Provision of Classroom Instructional Materials Free to Students and Pupils in Basic Education

The results in table 1 showed that the provision of classroom instructional materials free to students at the junior secondary school level is at a high extent. However, while charts, chalk, board, desks and chairs are provided at a high extent, board markers and board rulers are provided at a low extent.

On the other hand, at the primary school level, provision of these items of instructional materials (charts, chalk, board, desks and chairs, board markers and board rulers) free to the pupils is at a high extent. Furthermore, the analysis in table 3 indicated that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of principals of junior secondary schools and the head teachers of primary schools on the extent classroom instructional materials are provided free to students and pupils in basic education in Rivers State (t-value = 9.48, $P > 0.05$). Hypothesis three was rejected. This implies that the provision of classroom instructional materials free to the students and pupils is not well implemented in basic education in Rivers State.

Apparently, there is a discrepancy in the implementation of this scheme in basic education in Rivers State. While the provision of classroom instructional materials free to students is implemented at a low level at the junior secondary school level, it is implemented at a high level at the primary school level. The reason for this trend is however not obvious. The findings of this study buttress the result of previous study by Sam-Ngwu (2009) which showed evidence that UBE schools have inadequate instructional materials for teaching and learning. Adebola (2007) Taylor and Ogbogu (2016), Uja (2008) and Wordu and Emamorose (2017) similarly reported that equipment and facilities for teaching are in short supply in

most Nigerian schools including those of UBE schools. Ogochukwu and Obendu (2015) noted that both public and private schools are not implementing the minimum standard for instructional materials in schools.

Level of Implementation of Provision of free School Meal to Students and pupils in Basic Education

The results in Table 2 indicated that at the junior secondary school level, items of school meal are provided free to the students at a low extent except water, a natural resource. Nevertheless, at the primary school level, items of school meal are provided free to the pupils at a high extent. The results in table 4 further showed that a significant difference exists between the mean ratings of principals of junior secondary schools and the head teachers of primary schools on the extent items of school meal are provided free to the students and pupils in basic education in Rivers State (t -value = 10.90, $P < 0.05$). Hypothesis four was rejected.

This clearly shows that there is also a discrepancy in the level of implementation of this scheme of free school meal to students and pupils at the junior secondary school and the primary school levels of basic education in Rivers State. While the scheme is implemented at a high level at the primary school level, it is at a low level of implementation at the junior secondary school level of basic education in Rivers State. The reason for this unprecedented trend is also not obvious. The result of this study agrees with the finding of earlier study by Taylor and Ogbogu (2016), which showed that pupils at public elementary schools in Osun state are fed daily through the school feeding programme. According to the authors, the introduction of free meal in schools has helped to increase enrolment, retention, regularity in school attendance and punctuality among the pupils.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusion was drawn from the findings of the study:

The free and compulsory universal basic education scheme is not being well implemented in Rivers State as planned, to have the desired impact on school attendance and participation. This may create a feeling of apathy on the part of parents and even school children towards future government educational policies or schemes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Other education stakeholders should also be dully sensitized to be committed to the realization of the objectives of the UBE programme by making available their own quota of the much-needed resources to complement government effort.
2. The ministry of education in partnership with the state UBE Board should organize seminars, conferences and workshops for UBE school heads and school administrators on the importance of data for effective educational planning.

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