

Impacts of Subsidy Removal On Early Childhood Education, Administration And Management In Epe Area Of Lagos State

¹Popoola, Saidat Olusesan, ²Adewara Oluwasegun Seun

Corresponding author: popoolaso@lasued.edu.ng, 08060464073

¹Department of Early Childhood Care and Education & Primary Education Studies Lagos State
University of Education Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State (Epe campus)

²Department of Primary Education, Federal University of Education Kontagora Niger State

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Abstract

This study focused on impacts of subsidy removal on early childhood education, administration and management in Epe local government areas of Lagos state. Three null research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted survey research method due to the descriptive nature of the study. One hundred experts of early childhood administrators/managers in Epe local government area of Lagos state were selected through purposive sampling technique Questionnaires were used to collect data from the selected sample. Data generated from the respondents' responses to test the hypotheses formulated for the study using chi-square statistical analysis. As a result, the study shows that fuel subsidy removal adversely impacted on operational cost of ECE centres, punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children and budgetary adjustments of schools. Thus, it was recommended that school authority should ensure that palliatives and other incentives are given to caregivers in due time to prevent them from unbearable pain the subsidy removal might brought upon their standard of living

Keywords: Subsidy Removal, Early Childhood Education, Administration and Management

Introduction

In the contemporary time in Nigeria and other part of the world, child care and development between the age of 6 month to 3 or 4 years is mostly placed under the auspices of early childhood care and education centre due to the working role of parents in meeting up with numerous responsibilities in the family. As a result, the importance of quality early childhood care and education cannot be undermined. Amadioha (2017) cited by Maduwesi sees early childhood care and Education as the education offered to children who have not yet reached the statutory age of beginning primary school. He further maintained that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside home where by young children from about the age of 3 years are exposed through play like activities in a group setting through mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stages, until the mandatory age of government approved formal schooling. National policy on education (FRN 2013) refers to early childhood care and Education (pre-primary education) as an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrolment in the primary school.

ECE administration involves the management of all school operations, from creating a safe learning environment to managing the school budget. It is an essential guide to proper planning, organizing and control for the effective running of the ECE centre. It covers how well both human and material resources are utilized to ensure the realization of ECE aims and objectives (Illo, 2013). Effective ECE administration and management is measured through the masses contentment of the service rendered by caregivers in the public ECE centres. thus adequate finance, good school policies, good welfares of teachers/caregivers, good condition of service, suitable leadership style, availability and utilization of quality human and non-human resources, adequate security among others are factors that determines effective and quality ECE administration and management.

Presently in Nigeria, the aforementioned factors determining effective and quality ECE administration and management may have been affected by the recent government policy on fuel subsidy. According to Akinnibi (2023) Fuel subsidy is a financial assistance provided by the government to reduce the cost of fuel for consumers. It is done to keep fuel prices lower and make it more affordable for the general population. It is the transfer of economic resources by government to consumers or producers of a good or service Vanguard, (2023). Ayanruoh (2023) perceives it as any

grant of financial aid from the government used to maintain the prices of a particular item at a certain level.

The Nigerian economy has been subsidized in various ways for many years and this includes fuel, education, electricity, forex etc. Fuel subsidies began in the 1970s and became institutionalized in 1977, following the promulgation of the Price Control Act which made it illegal for some products (including petrol) to be sold above the regulated price. While the concept of subsidy itself is noble, its administration in Nigeria has been plagued with serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Without doubt, subsidy became a national buzzword in 2012 when then-President Goodluck Jonathan announced its removal. Fuel prices increased from N65 (\$0.14) to N140 (\$0.30) per litre and triggered almost two weeks of protests known as Occupy Nigeria, causing Jonathan to reverse the decision (Layade-Kowo, 2023). Thus, attempts to remove petrol subsidy by past administrations triggered protests and stiff resistance.

However, after swearing-in of President Bola Tinubu on May 29, 2023, he declared the removal of petrol subsidy in Nigeria and by implication, there was unbearable increase in the cost of petrol leading to high cost of goods and services. Survival becomes tiring while every sector including education turns struggling. Thus, subsidies can assist bring the price of schooling down to a level that is more manageable for families on a tight budget. However, people who are already at a disadvantage may have their access to education diminished if subsidies are eliminated. This is due to the fact that if tuition keeps rising, some families may be unable to afford it, resulting in a drop in student enrolment.

It was further noted that education quality may also be affected by subsidies. Subsidies can be used to upgrade infrastructure, such school buildings and supplies. In addition to enhancing learning outcomes, subsidies can be utilized to recruit and retain highly skilled educators. However, particularly in low-income communities, the elimination of subsidies might result in a decline in educational quality. This is because schools may lack the funds necessary to properly maintain and upgrade their facilities and teaching methods.

More so, education costs can be affected by subsidies as well. Subsidies, for instance, might lessen the financial burden of things like school fees and textbooks. Subsidies can also help families with

lower incomes by covering some of the costs of a child's education. A rise in tuition costs is especially problematic for low-income families if subsidies are no longer available. This may cause fewer students to enrol and more students to drop out.

Ogundare (2023) affirms that school administrations would likely need to revisit their budgets and make adjustments to accommodate the increased operational and transportation costs. This could mean re-evaluating priorities, reallocating funds, or seeking alternative energy sources to mitigate the impact of higher fuel prices. He further explains that the removal of petrol subsidies could also affect the welfare of school staff. Teachers and other employees who rely on personal vehicles to commute to work may face increased transportation expenses, potentially impacting their disposable income. Famorati (2023) presumes that higher transportation costs for families could also lead to increased absenteeism among students. Some families may find it challenging to cover the additional expenses of sending their children to school, potentially impacting student attendance rates.

Layade-Kowo (2023) perceived that the loss of subsidies can have serious consequences for the educational system, especially in terms of access, quality, and cost. The elimination of subsidies may have varying effects on schools depending on a number of variables, such as the extent to which they are supported by the government, the accessibility of alternative financing sources, and the prevailing economic and social conditions. That is why it is crucial to weigh the pros and cons of eliminating subsidies before making any changes to the educational system. Since petrol subsidy has been removed, thus it becomes paramount to determine its effect on early childhood educational system. In view of this, the aim of the paper is to investigate the effect of fuel subsidy removal on early childhood education, administration and management in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Fuel Subsidy

To subsidize simply means to sell a product below the production cost, thus fuel subsidy means to sell petrol below the cost of importation (Vanguard, 2023). Fuel subsidy is a financial assistance provided by the government to reduce the cost of fuel for consumers. It is done to keep fuel prices lower and make it more affordable for the general population (Akinribi, 2023). It is the transfer of economic resources by government to consumers or producers of a good or service Vanguard, 2023.

Ayanruoh (2023) perceives fuel subsidy as any grant of financial aid from the government used to maintain the prices of a particular item at a certain level. It can be properly defined as government effort in paying for the difference between the pump price of fuel at the petrol station and the actual cost of importation of the product (Layade-Kowo, 2023). So by paying the difference, the government enables fuel to be sold at a lower price so as to help ease the burden of its people especially lower income group. It is a grant of financial aid from the government used to maintain the low price of petroleum products.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is a term commonly used to describe programmes of formal schooling for children under the age of six years. Wilayat and Arshad (2012) referred to it as Education which is given in group setting to the age of round about three up to five years old children is called early childhood education, preschool learning or pre-school education.

Administration and management in an organization

Administration is a process and it is sometimes used synonymously with management. NOUN (2004) corroborate the statement by saying that administration is a part of management which is concerned with the installation and carrying out of the procedures by which programs, plans and targets are laid down and communicated, and the progress of activities regulated and checked against them. Brook (2013) conceptualized the term administration as “the capacity to coordinate many and often conflicting social energies in a single organization so adroitly that they shall operate as a unit” NOUN (2006) in his own view describes administration as the careful and systematic arrangement and use of human and material resources, situations and opportunities for the achievement of specific objectives. Essentially, administration in any human organization involves arrangement of resources for the achievement of organization’s objectives. This definition is applicable to any formal organization.

ECE Administration and management

ECE administration is the process by which principles, methods and practices of administration/management are applied in pre-school centres to establish, maintain and develop such institutions in line with the goals of the ECE. Akinwumi & Jayeoba (2014) define ECE

administration as the scientific organization of human and material resources and programs available for ECE centre and using them systematically and meticulously to achieve educational goals. NOUN (2006) claimed that ECE administration and management entails all activities and arrangement made by a pre-school head to harness efforts of people in the pre-school system towards resources utilization for the achievement of ECE objectives.

Statement of the Problem

The removal of petrol subsidy has been causing unbearable pains to Nigerians especially children in all ramifications. This affected the children physically, emotionally and retards their development. This also contribute for non-concentrating in the class activities which cause more stress for caregivers not performing their duties diligently. The removal of subsidies, particularly in sectors such as education, can have significant and far-reaching effects on the quality and accessibility of services provided to the public. In the case of Early Childhood Education (ECE), which is crucial for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children, the absence of subsidies may place an additional financial burden on parents, educators, and institutions.

In Epe area of Lagos State, the impact of subsidy removal on Early Childhood Education, its administration, and management has not been extensively studied, despite the increasing cost of educational resources and teacher training. With a growing population and varying socio-economic challenges, the effects of subsidy removal could manifest in higher fees, limited access to quality education, inadequate learning materials, and reduced teacher morale. Additionally, administrative and managerial challenges may arise as local education authorities struggle to balance funding constraints with the need to maintain educational standards.

This study seeks to examine the effects of subsidy removal on the administration and management of Early Childhood Education in Epe area, exploring the challenges faced by educational institutions, teachers, parents, and policy makers. It aims to assess how such policy shifts affect the delivery of early childhood services and to provide recommendations for mitigating negative outcomes in this critical sector of education.

Purpose of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Determine the effect of petrol subsidy removal on operational cost of ECE centers in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State
- ii. Determine the effect of fuel subsidy removal on punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children in ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State
- iii. Determine the effect of fuel subsidy removal on budgetary adjustments of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

Research Hypotheses

The following null research hypotheses serve as guide for the study

H0 1: Fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on operational cost of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

H0 2: Fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

H0 3: Fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on budgetary adjustments of ECE Centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this work due to its descriptive nature. The population of the study comprised of some selected ECE administrators/managers in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State. The sample for the study comprised one hundred (100) private ECE administrators/managers in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the ECE centres and their administrators/managers. A survey questionnaire was used to collect information from private ECE administrators/managers based on their observation and experience on the effect of fuel subsidy removal on early childhood education, administration and management in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State. Section A of the questionnaire consists of respondent's data while section B consists of 15 items on some common

observable factors with four point likert scales ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The instrument was given to experts in instrument design to examine its face and content validity. In the process, some items were modified, some removed, while few others were added. The instrument was administered twice on 15 randomly selected private ECE administrators/managers who were not part of the study's sample in Ikosi-Ejirin Local Council Development Area of Lagos State over a week and a coefficient stability of 0.64 was obtained as a result of which the instrument was considered reliable. A pre-visit to the selected private ECE centres was carried out by the researcher to pre-inform their administrators/managers on her intention and seek approval date for the administration of the instrument. With the cooperation of the ECE managers/administrators, the information needed was collected and the questionnaire was self-administered by the researcher and collected at the spot. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and chi-square statistical methods.

Result

Test of Hypotheses

The use of chi-square statistical method was adopted to test the following hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance value.

H₀ 1: Fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on operational cost of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

Table 1: Chi-square result analysis on fuel subsidy removal and operational cost of ECE centre in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

ITEMS	X ² -Cal	Df	X ² -Table	Decision
Fuel subsidy removal and operational cost of ECE centres	34.31	12	21.03	Rejected

Since the calculated value of 34.31 is greater than table value of 21.03 therefore, null hypothesis one was rejected. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected based on the result obtained from the findings, this revealed that fuel subsidy removal has significant effect on operational cost of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Ho 2: Fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

Table 2: Chi-square result analysis on fuel subsidy removal and punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

ITEMS	X ² -Cal	Df	X ² -Table	Decision
Punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres	42.12	12	21.03	Rejected

Since the calculated value of 42.12 is greater than table value of 21.03 therefore, null hypothesis two was rejected. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected based on the result obtained from the findings, this revealed that fuel subsidy removal has significant effect on punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

Ho 3: Fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on budgetary adjustments of ECE Centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

Table 3: Chi-square result analysis on fuel subsidy removal and budgetary adjustments of schools in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State

ITEMS	X ² -Cal	Df	X ² -Table	Decision
Fuel subsidy removal and budgetary adjustments of schools	48.03	12	21.03	Rejected

Since the calculated value of 48.03 is greater than table value of 21.03 therefore, null hypothesis three was rejected. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected based on the result obtained from the findings, this revealed that fuel subsidy removal has significant effect on budgetary adjustments of schools in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Discussion of Results

The first hypotheses which stated that fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on operational cost of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State was rejected after being tested. This revealed that fuel subsidy removal has effect on operational cost of ECE centres. The result agrees with Ogunode and Agbade (2023) that *subsidy removal in Nigeria led to increment in operational cost of running schools. The work of Nkpoju (2023) also affirmed that fuel subsidy removal contributed to increment in school transportation fares, increment in school fees and increment in prices of instructional materials.*

The second hypotheses which stated that fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State was rejected after been tested. This revealed that fuel subsidy removal has significant effect on punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children of ECE centres. The result corresponds with Bamidele (2023) that removing fuel subsidies has negatively impacted staff and learners' school attendance. This submission is in consonance with the present decision of Lagos State Government to reduce work hours from five to three days for lower cadre and four days for senior cadre.

The third hypothesis which stated that fuel subsidy removal has no significant effect on budgetary adjustments of ECE centres in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State was rejected after being tested. This revealed that fuel subsidy removal has effect on budgetary adjustments of ECE centres. The result is in consonance with Ogunode and Ukozor (2023) that fuel subsidy removal led to readjustment towards realizing the goals in school development plans in terms of expenses, income and charges

Conclusion

Based on this study, it is concluded that fuel subsidy removal adversely impacted on operational cost of ECE centres, punctuality and regularity of caregivers and children and budgetary adjustments of schools.

Recommendations

Consequently this study proffers the following recommendations:

1. Parents should assist ECE centres by providing for financial, material and other relevant assistance capable of reducing the hardship caused by the fuel subsidy removal on the realization of early childhood education's goals.
2. Concerted efforts of stakeholders such as parents, teachers' non-governmental organizations, educational authorities, corporate bodies, past students and government should be made to ensure that the adverse effect of fuel subsidy removal is reduced through various palliatives mechanism.
3. Government and private school authority should ensure that palliatives and other incentives are given to school staff in due time to prevent them from unbearable pain the fuel subsidy removal might brought upon their standard of living.

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