

The Contribution of the Ghana Schools Feeding Programme to Basic School Participation: A Study of Selected Schools in the Kwaebibirim District of Ghana

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Abstract

The paper analyzed the contribution of the Ghana Schools Feeding Programme to basic school participation in selected schools in the Kwaebibirim District of Ghana. A total of 94 respondents were involved in the study. Both simple random and purposive sampling techniques were applied in the selection of respondents. Secondary data was also obtained through the review of documents and reports on the subject. The study found out that the policy interventions have contributed to enrolment, attendance and retention in public primary schools. It has improved school attendance by at least 1 percent and at most 15 percent in the schools studied. It is however worth noting that the programme is bedevilled with challenges such as inadequate funds and delays in its release, reduction in contact hours with pupils and students, and undue interferences in the appointment of caterers.

Keywords: education, participation, enrolment, attendance, retention

Introduction

Education is seen as a basic human right and therefore universal and inalienable. This is supported by article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, which declared that everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory (Bishop, 1989:1 in Braimah and Oduro-Ofori, 2005). Based on these, everyone is entitled to it, regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity or status. It is again an essential prerequisite in any individual's and nation's development. The increasing demand for education and the considerable efforts made by people, both individually and collectively to obtain education attests to this. It is a widely accepted fact that education is key to socio-economic betterment and development of both the individual and the state (Braimah and Oduro-Ofori, 2005) as it is a process by which an individual acquires the many physical and social capabilities demanded by society in which the person is born into (Dienye, 2011). Therefore any country that fails to provide its population with the needed quality education is contravening the basic human rights of its people and depriving itself of sustained development now and in the future. In the light of this, the aspirations of any country to achieve any feat on the ladder of development will rest on its ability to improve upon access to education which will provide the rich human resource base for any accelerated development now and in the future. Conable (1989) then concludes that without education, development will not occur.

In relation to the above, the second millennium development goal of the United Nations seeks to promote education in all countries. The goal seeks to "achieve universal primary education," with the specific target of ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. This goal again echoes a commitment made by many countries in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 (Torres, 1999) to achieve universal primary education. The Jomtien commitment was reaffirmed and extended at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). The education of a country's population, especially its children is an issue of global concern and therefore very paramount to the development of all nations. In addition to the MDG's, other international conventions and treaties give special considerations to the basic rights and needs of the child. For instance in 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a convention on the rights of the child (ILO, 2006) which entreats states to take all appropriate measures to ensure the wellbeing of the child. Supporting the child through basic education is one of the key areas to his/her wellbeing and social development. Based on these, Ghana as a country in sub Saharan Africa is doing everything possible to provide its population with the best of education, especially basic education.

Recent approaches of the Government of Ghana in providing education to its people

The Government of Ghana has in various ways shown her commitment towards the achievement of Universal Primary Education and the provision of quality education to its populace. This commitment has been demonstrated through various policy interventions and directives such as the Education Trust Fund, the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) from 2003 to 2015 and the Free Compulsory Basic Education Programme (Adamu-Issah et al, 2007). The various approaches adopted to operationalize these interventions included the introduction of the Capitation Grant; expansion of Early Childhood Development Services, promotion of measures to improve Gender Parity in primary schools and the introduction of Nutrition and School Feeding

Programmes.

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) which is the focus of this paper is an initiative of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar 3 (Amoah et al, 2009, Government of Ghana, 2010) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The Programme is part of Ghana's efforts towards the attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN-MDG) on hunger, poverty and primary education. The concept of the programme is to provide children in selected public primary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas of the country with one hot, nutritious meal per day, using locally-grown foodstuffs. The immediate objectives of the programme include: reducing hunger and malnutrition; increasing school enrolment, attendance and retention; and boosting domestic food production achieved through a planned implementation process. The pilot phase of Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) was therefore launched in 2005 under NEPAD "Home Grown" SFP concept. The rationale behind this programme is to contribute not only to the improvement of the education service delivery but also to agricultural development and the reduction of malnutrition among school aged children.

Problem necessitating the study

Many developing countries and deprived regions in developed nations experience high primary school dropout rates and low participation in general. To date, efforts to achieve Education for All have focused heavily on getting children enrolled in school, rather than on improving either completion rates or student learning outcomes. This becomes problematic especially when considering its impact on lifelong literacy. Another common pattern is that children drop out of school before the end of the year, because of their own or other family members' illness or their families' need for their labour, and return to re-enrol in the same class the following year.

Despite the introduction and implementation of various policies by the Government of Ghana to enhance education, especially at the basic school level, there exists various challenging factors that inhibit their success. For instance basic schools, especially in the rural and deprived areas of Ghana suffer from gross inadequacy of teachers, insufficiency of school infrastructure, (classrooms, sanitary facilities,) unfavourable socio-economic and cultural factors, inequitable distribution and low enrolment of children with disabilities among others. Even though indications show that enrolment in basic education has made significant progress, the target to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling is yet to be achieved (Government of Ghana, 2010). Closely linked is the fact that repetition and dropout rates are still issues that require much attention so far as the achievement of MDG 2 is concerned. Across all public primary grades, the average percentages of promotion, repetition, and dropout in 2005/2006 were 90.85, 6.0 and 3.2 respectively given. If this trend continues, it means that 3.2 percent of pupils (possibly higher) will not complete school. Although the Ghana Schools Feeding Programme has been implemented in selected schools in districts across the country, the various challenges it is supposed to address are persistent in some communities. Also empirical research of the contributions and effects of this programme on school participation is less researched. This paper therefore seeks to investigate the contribution of the Ghana Schools Feeding Programme to school participation using enrolment, attendance and dropout as variables for assessment in some selected basic schools in the Kwaebibirim District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The Kwaebibirim district was selected as the area of study based on the fact that it is one of the few districts that benefitted from the pilot programme and has a total of 38 schools under the Ghana Schools Feeding Programme. This implies that the schools would have had ample experience and therefore adequate information could be obtained for the purpose of the study.

Questions and objectives of the paper

The paper seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- What has been the effects of the School Feeding Programme on school enrolment, attendance and retention?
- What are the prospects and challenges associated with the implementation, management and sustainability of the school feeding programme?
- How can the implementation of the School Feeding Programme in the district be improved upon?

The general objective of the paper is to assess the effects of the School Feeding Programme on school participation in some selected schools in the Kwaebibirim District. The paper considers school participation to include the enrolment of children within the school going age in school, their attendance and retention.

Research methodology and sources of data

To address the objectives of the study a sampling frame was drawn to include schools benefitting from the GSFP, thus 38 out of the 136 public primary schools in the district. A sample of 5 out of the 38 beneficiaries was purposefully selected for the study. These are schools that have been beneficiaries of the GSFP since its

introduction and as such have considerable experience with the programme for the past 5 years. The research took data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data were obtained through interviews with school heads, local politicians and opinion leaders, staff of the district education directorate and programme officers of the programme in the district. Also questionnaires were administered to school pupils, their teachers and parents to source for information on the effects of the programme. Times of serving meals, the kind of meals served and the place of eating were all observed. Also discussions were held with five caterers who are involved in the programme to know at first hand issues confronting their activities. In all, five head teachers, five local politicians and opinion leaders, a staff of the district education directorate and the deputy district coordinating director in-charge of the programme were interviewed. Again, eighty pupils, sixteen each from the beneficiary schools were involved in the data collection through the use of the questionnaire. Furthermore, thirty parents and fifteen teachers were interviewed. The pupils and teachers involved in the study were selected using the simple random method in the five selected schools while the other primary sources of data were selected purposively. Parents who had their wards in any of the five selected schools were selected randomly for interview. The secondary sources were obtained through the review of documents including reports from the district directorate of education and the selected schools. Various educational policy documents (Ghana Schools Feeding Programme, Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education, and the Capitation Grant), and other related articles from libraries, newspapers and the internet were also reference points for the research.

Profile of the Kwaebibirim District (study area)

The Kwaebibirim district was carved out of the then West Akyem District in 1988 as a result of the Government's decentralization policy. It is bounded on the west by Birim North District, on the east by East Akim Municipal, to the north by Atiwa District and to the south by West Akim Municipal. It has Kade as its district capital. The district lies within the semi-equatorial climatic zone with a double maxima rainfall regime. The highest annual rainfall of 8493.5mm was recorded in 1995. The District's maximum rainfall period coincides with the planting season. For planning and more specifically for agricultural activities, distribution of rainfall rather than its intensity is more relevant. Temperature ranges between a minimum of 26.5^o Celsius and a maximum of 27^o C. The District lies within the equatorial climate zone. The District lies on the semi-deciduous forest zone and the vegetation consists of low-lying species of hardwood. Large plantations of teak have been cultivated outside forest reserves. The District has two (2) forest reserves to the east- Ayaola Forest and the West Atiwa Reserves-these together cover an extensive area. The district has good and rich soils types that are of great importance for agricultural activities. The 2000 housing and population census recorded that the district had an estimated population of about 179,209. It was however estimated to be 196,992 in 2005 projecting it by using 1.9% inter censal growth rate. The high district population growth of 1.9% relative to the regional rate of 1.4% was as a result of both natural increase and the influx of migrants into the district to seek greener pastures in flourishing sectors mainly mining, trading and agriculture.

The Kwaebibirem Education Directorate has been divided into 10 circuits. They are Asuom, Atobriso, Abaam, Kade 'A' Kade 'B' Otumi, Boadua, Takyimang, Wenchi and Akwatia. There are 191 primary schools, 118 Junior High Schools, 4 Senior High Schools and 4 vocational/technical schools in the district. These educational sector receives support services from the Government of Ghana and other organizations such as the European Union (EU), Social Investment Fund (SIF), Department of International Development (DFID as well the Okyeman Educational Fund. The school participation rate (SPR), which is the total enrolment expressed as a proportion of the total number of children of school-going age is about 25 percent for pre-schools, 78 per cent for primary schools in the district and Junior High school stands at 80.1 percent. Even though enrolment in the district seems to be encouraging a lot still needs to be done to improve upon the quality of education. The Dropout Rate in schools is 4% in primary schools, and therefore measures have to be taken to reduce it. The main educational issues in the Kwaebibirem district that require attention are inadequate educational infrastructure such as school structure and furniture as well accommodation facilities for teachers. Insufficient Teaching/Learning Materials, indiscipline, inadequate teachers and lack of effective community participation in school management pose threats to effective education in the district.

Discussion of Results

Background of Respondents

A total number of 94 people were interviewed for the purposes of the study. The interviewees exclusively fell under eight different categories as shown on Table 1. Parents and pupils formed the greatest percentage of the total number of respondents as they are the primary beneficiaries of the GSFP. Obtaining the viewpoints and facts from relevant categories of people with different social, cultural, political and economic backgrounds was a step in ensuring a holistic assessment of the GSFP and its effects on school participation in the Kwaebibirim District.

Table 1 Number and Categories of Respondents

RESPONDENTS	TOTAL NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Pupils	30	31.9
Parents	30	31.9
Head Teachers	5	5.3
Teachers	12	12.8
Assembly Members	7	7.4
Traditional Authority	4	4.3
GSFP Coordinator	1	1.1
Caterers	5	5.3
TOTAL	94	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The study had a fair representation of both males and females. The proportion of males to females interviewed was 49: 51. However, among the individual categories of respondents, there were wide differences in the proportion of males to females. For instance, all respondents from the traditional authority were males whilst 80 percent of the head teachers were also males. All caterers interviewed were females, partly confirming that, food preparation is generally associated with women. Table 2 shows the sex compositions of respondents.

Table 2 Sex Compositions of Respondents

RESPONDENTS	MALE	PERCENT	FEMALE	PERCENT
Pupils	12	40	18	60
Parents	14	46.7	16	53.3
Head Teachers	4	80	1	20
Teachers	7	58.3	5	41.7
Assembly Members	4	57.1	3	42.9
Traditional Authority	4	100	-	-
GSFP Coordinator	1	100	-	-
Caterers	-	-	5	100
Total	46	49	48	51

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Majority of the parents interviewed (43.3 percent) were within the age range of 18-35. 10 percent of parents interviewed were of ages below 18. The survey also indicated that all parents under 18 years were unemployed single parents. From the survey it was realized that these under aged parents were females who had been victims of teenage pregnancy and with no gainful employment to cater for themselves and their wards. However, 21 out of the 24 parents within the labour force were engaged in one economic activity or the other with 3 being single parents. This implies that most of them would be in a position to provide some amount of support towards the education of their wards without having to depend solely on the Government of Ghana for the educational needs of their children.

Perspectives of Respondents on the GSFP

The views of Pupils in Benefiting Schools

All the pupils interviewed were aware of the GSFP, obviously because they are direct beneficiaries of the programme. Nonetheless, the study revealed that they have not been well educated as far as the GSFP is concerned. All they know is that the government of Ghana has made arrangements that food be provided once a day, and so they have no option but to eat whatever meal is served them. They knew nothing about the menu, the quality of meal that the GSFP recommends for them and even the immediate objectives of the programme. This implies that the school children are not consulted in the decisions made on the GSFP in their schools particularly regarding the menu and quality of meals provided. About 63.3 percent of them said they were satisfied with the meals provided in terms of quantity and quality. The rest of the pupils, who were not pleased about the GSFP, said so because apart from the meals not being nutritious, it is also not sufficient to sustain them throughout the afternoon. With regards to nutrition, 30 percent replied that sometimes the meal is not balanced, and there have been instances where they have had health complications such as running stomach from some of the meals, especially "gari and beans". The GSFP has had a direct effect on their pocket money to school. Most pupils (70 percent) had their pocket money reduced by about 30 percent, since their parents know that the GSFP provides lunch for their wards and so there is no need to give them the same amount of money for food as it was before the programme's introduction. The others (30 percent) responded that the meals are not served on time and not sufficient so there has not been any change in their pocket money for school. Yet, 96.7 percent desired that the

programme should be improved upon and continued because it supplements their feeding and a source of hope to the extremely poor pupils (i.e. 26.7 percent) who depend solely on the GSFP.

The views of Parents/Caregivers on the GSFP

Similar to the case of the pupils, the survey brought to light that the parents also did not have adequate knowledge on the GSFP, despite the fact that they all had some awareness. The survey analysis also sought to find out how the GSFP has benefitted parents with regards to their children's education, and in doing that, parents expenses on food before and after the introduction of the GSFP was looked at as well as how it has influenced the enrolment, attendance and retention of their wards in school. About 71 percent of the parents were content with the GSFP because it has been of great benefit to them in general and especially on their expenses on food. This they explained by saying that it has reduced their financial burden by about 25 percent and also in times of financial difficulties they can still persuade their children to attend school because at least they would be assured of lunch. This implies that the unemployed parents would at least benefit the most, since their monthly income was estimated to be less than GHC50. Parents/Caregivers who could not enrol their wards in schools because they would not be able to handle their feeding expenses also described the programme as a very good one. On the other hand, the others were of the view that the GSFP has a very negligible effect on their expenses since the monetary value of the meals served per pupil in a day, is just about GHC 0.40 which is usually insufficient for their wards. Apart from that, parents whose children still demanded the same amount of money for school were totally displeased with the GSFP. About half of the parents/caregivers responded that the GSFP encourages their wards to attend school regularly without running back to their homes with complaints of hunger, whilst the other half were of the opposite view. The reason for the latter view point is that the GSFP only makes provision for one hot meal in the afternoon, and so any child who does not eat in the morning from home, or obtain money for breakfast, would not be motivated to attend school. Most parents could not emphatically say that the GSFP is the only reason why their children have not dropped out of school, but attributed the retention of their ward in school to other contributing factors such as the capitation grant, supply of text and exercise books by government and awareness creation on the importance education.

The Views of Head teachers and teachers on the GSFP

Four out of the five head teachers interviewed have been head teachers since 2007, thus very acquainted with the trend of growth in their respective schools. About 60 percent of them were of the view that the GSFP has helped improve upon enrolment, attendance and retention whilst the remaining 40 percent said the programme has not had very significant effect on school participation. About 58.3 percent of the teachers interviewed said that the GSFP has brought about an increase in their class sizes hence increasing their workload by about 30 percent. About 41.7 percent however said the GSFP has not had any effect on their workload. Half of the teachers interviewed said the GSFP has contributed to the improvement of pupils' performance whilst the remaining half said it has not enhanced performance. Also 75 percent of them were of the view that the GSFP should be continued in the school and extended to other public schools since it motivates children to attend school regularly and reduces the financial burdens of parents.

The Views of the Traditional Authority

All members of the traditional authority interviewed were of the view that the GSFP has benefitted schools' participation in the district. They believed that it has increased educational awareness of the beneficiary communities and also given a boost to primary school education. Three out of the four traditional authority members interviewed said the programme should be continued because of the benefits stated above. However one of them said it should be terminated until the government of Ghana has obtained adequate financial resources to carry it out, because many other deprived schools do not benefit from the programme.

The Views of Assembly Members (local politicians)

All the Assembly members interviewed were aware of the GSFP and had considerable knowledge on the programme. In their view, the GSFP has been beneficial to the pupils and the community as a whole since it motivates children to attend school and also reduces the financial burdens of parents. Six out of the seven Assembly members interviewed contribute to the implementation of the GSFP by undertaking weekly visits to the beneficiary schools for monitoring purpose. The other one specifically the Assembly man of Takyimang said he visits the beneficiary school almost every two weeks and also provides financial Support to the caterer when the need arises. Nonetheless, not all of them supported the continuation of the GSFP. Whilst 5 of them hoped for the continuation of the programme, the other two said the GSFP does not benefit all public primary schools and therefore should be halted until it can cater for all children. They also perceived a biased system of selecting beneficiary schools since the criteria for selecting beneficiary schools is very subjective.

Effects of the GSFP on Beneficiary Schools

Changes in Enrolment in the selected schools

Kade Salvation Army Primary A and B

From table 3, it can be seen that about three academic years before the introduction of the GSFP, the population of the school was relatively lower even though it increased gradually every year. The increase in enrolment during those periods is attributed mainly to the capitation grant and to some extent the increased awareness on education. The greatest effects of the GSFP occurred within the 2007/2008 academic year and 2008/2009 year with about 66.2 percent increase; when the programme was new. Females benefitted most from this increase as there was about 89.6 percent increase among females as compared to 49 percent among the males. The provision of School Uniforms and books also contributed to the rise in the population of the pupils. The decrease in enrolment was as a result of the establishment of an Islamic Primary school within the locality of the Salvation Army Primary School. The Salvation Army Primary school is located at Abease (a suburb of Kade) which is a predominantly Muslim community. The school therefore had about 40 percent of its pupils being Muslims. Most Muslim parents in effect withdrew their wards from the school within the 2009/2010 academic year to the Islamic Primary School due to their religious background. This implies that many other factors have contributed to the trend of enrolment in the Salvation Army Primary School and therefore it cannot be solely attributed to the GSFP. Appropriate measures need to be put in place to ensure that the GSFP's objective of improving enrolment is sustained throughout the years of its operation.

Table 3 Changes in Enrolment at Kade Salvation Army Primary A and B School

ACADEMIC YEAR	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
2004/2005	97	52	149
2005/2006	101	79	180
2006/2007	102	74	176
2007/2008	104	77	181
2008/2009	155	146	301
2009/2010	98	102	200
2010/2011	104	121	225

Source: Field Survey 2012

Kade Presbyterian Primary A, B and C

Kade Presbyterian primary A, B, and C placed second after Asuom Presbyterian Primary in terms of enrolment. From table 4, it can be seen that there has not been much changes in enrolment throughout the years. Enrolment reached its peak in the 2007/2008 academic year.

The GSFP contributed most to this growth since it was still at the early stages of its introduction. The existence of capitation grant and the free supply of school uniforms and increased awareness on child education were other contributing factors. The percentage increase was greater among females. The major reason for the decrease is not different from the case of Salvation Army Primary school since they are both located within the same suburb of Kade.

Table 4 Trend in enrolment at Kade Presbyterian Primary A, B and C

ACADEMIC YEAR	MALES	FEMALES	Total
2004/2005	362	398	760
2005/2006	391	396	787
2006/2007	393	445	838
2007/2008	398	454	852
2008/2009	377	402	779
2009/2010	332	354	686
2010/2011	336	390	762

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Trend of Enrolment in Asuom Presbyterian School

Asuom Presbyterian primary A, B and C has not had any major changes in enrolment over the past years. The highest increase in enrolment occurred between 2006/2007 academic year and 2007/ 2008 academic year with

just 3.1 percent increase (see table 5). The female population increased by 5 percent whilst the male population increased marginally by about 0.5 percent within that period. Between 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 academic years, enrolment decreased by about 6.3 percent and decreased further by about 1.7 percent in the subsequent year. This implies that the GSFP has not improved upon enrolment greatly in the school as intended per the programme's aim of at least 10 percent increase from the baseline.

Table 5 Changes in Enrolment at Asuom Presbyterian Primary A, B and C

ACADEMIC YEAR	MALES	FEMALES	Total
2004/2005	454	371	825
2005/2006	445	385	830
2006/2007	417	402	819
2007/2008	419	425	844
2008/2009	421	413	834
2009/2010	381	400	781
2010/2011	364	404	768

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Trend of Enrolment in Takyiman Presbyterian School

The Population of Takyiman Presbyterian primary has not been constant over the past 7 years. There was a steady increase in the school's population from 2004/2005 to 2007/2008. This was attributed to the organization of educational awareness programme in the community that year by the District Assembly. During this period an enrolment drive was organized in the community to sensitize parents to enrol their wards and teachers were also admonished not to collect illegitimate money from school children since it had become a norm in the schools. Enrolment shot up by 54 percent between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 mainly because of the introduction of the capitation grant and increased by just 10 percent by 2007/2008 academic year. The GSFP has had almost an equal effect on the increase in male and female population as there has not been much difference in the percentage increase among both males and females. Table 6 shows the trend of enrolment at Takyiman Presbyterian Primary School.

Table 6 Changes in Enrolment at Takyiman Presbyterian Primary School

ACADEMIC YEAR	MALES	FEMALES	Total
2004/2005	83	107	190
2005/2006	146	142	288
2006/2007	213	230	443
2007/2008	244	244	488
2008/2009	244	243	487
2009/2010	242	205	447
2010/2011	228	220	448

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Trend of Enrolment in Anweaso Local Authority School

The number of pupils enrolled in the Anweaso Local Authority Primary school has not been consistent over the past 7 years i.e. from the year 2004 to the year 2011. From 2004/2004 to 2006/2007 academic year, the schools population had a percentage increase of about 29.8 (see Table 7). Two main factors accounted for the increase within this period. Firstly, Barry Callibaut International (a chocolate manufacturing company), provided educational materials mainly stationery and textbooks as part of their corporate social responsibility of promoting education in cocoa producing communities, hence boosting enrolment. Secondly the introduction of the Capitation grant inspired most parents/ caregivers to enrol their children in the school. Enrolment increased sharply by 52 percent from the 2006/2007 academic year to 2007/2008 academic year. In spite of the fact that the capitation grant policy was still in progress, the major contributing factor for the increase in enrolment was the introduction of the GSFP. It is however worth noting that the GSFP had a greater effect on the number of males enrolled in the 2007/2008 academic year since the male population increased by about 66 percent whilst the female population increased by just about 33 percent.

Table 7 Changes in Enrolment at Anweaso Local Authority Primary School

ACADEMIC YEAR	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
2004/2005	130	122	252
2005/2006	145	131	276
2006/2007	190	139	329
2007/2008	316	185	501
2008/2009	306	155	461
2009/2010	329	155	484
2010/2011	330	160	490

Source: Field Survey 2012

The rate of change in the school's population has also not been the same among males and females. For instance from 2004/2005 academic year to 2005/2006 year, whilst the population of males increased by 11.5 percent, that of females increased by just 7.3 percent. The GSFP has had an immediate effect of increasing enrolment of pupils in the Anweaso Local Authority Primary School (the only school in the community). Increase in enrolment over the years can also be attributed to the yearly supply of educational materials by the Ghana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), rehabilitation of the classroom block, and the non-existence of any other primary school at Anweaso. The study also revealed that 60 percent of the parents/ caregivers were migrants who are not permanent residents in the district, as such they move along with their wards and therefore a factor for changes in enrolment.

Summary Effects of the GSFP on Enrolment in all selected Schools

The 2004/ 2005 and 2005 /2006 academic years had the lowest enrolment figures even though enrolment was increasing gradually. This increase was brought about by internal educational programmes organized within the district and rehabilitation of school infrastructure, support from private organizations, as well as national policy interventions such as the Education capitation grant, and the provision of texts books. The GSFP was the main factor for the increase in enrolment among all the schools studied in the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 academic years. The programme had a greater effect on the enrolment of males than that of females (see figure 1). Enrolment however decreased by 9.2 percent in 2009/2010 academic year and increased marginally by 2.2 percent in the subsequent year. The GSFP only had greater influence on enrolment at the early stages of its introduction. This is likely to negatively affect the ability of the programme to achieve its long term goals unless measures are put in place to arrest it.

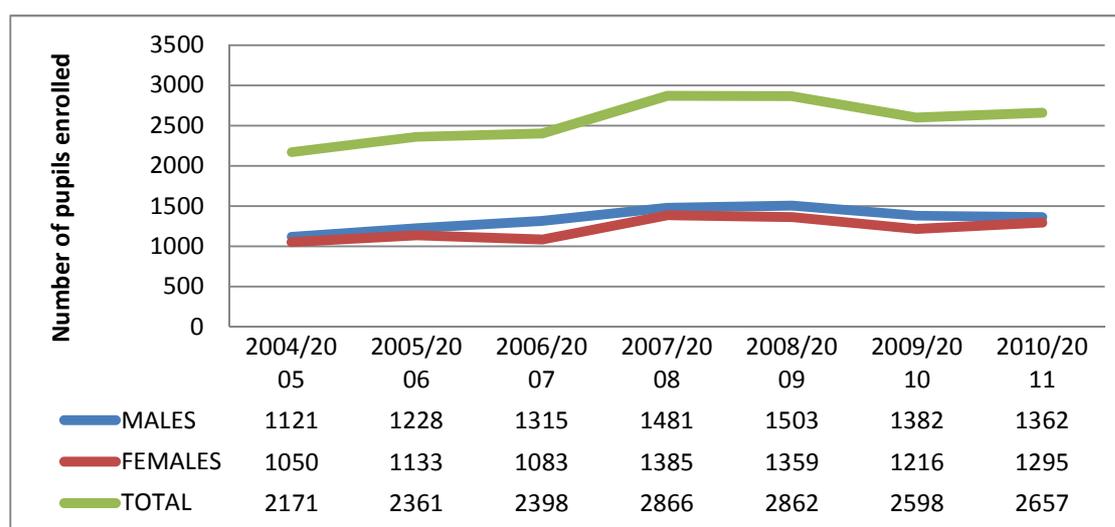


Figure 1 Changes in Enrolment in all selected Schools

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Effects of the GSFP on Attendance to School

In studying the trend of attendance in the various schools, the attendance registers were inspected to find out the average attendance rates before and after the GSFP, so as to know the extent to which the programme has

influenced attendance. To know the attendance before the GSFP, the registers from the 2004/2005 to the 2006/2007 academic years were assessed. Whilst the registers from the 2007/2008 to the 2010/2011 academic years were also checked to know the attendance situation after the introduction of GSFP. See Table 8 for the average attendance rates.

Table 8 Average Attendance rates in selected schools

SCHOOL	AVERAGE ATTENDANCE (BEFORE GSFP)	AVERAGE ATTENDACE (AFTER GSFP)
Kade Presbyterian Primary	80%	88%
Kade Salvation Army Primary	86%	90%
Asuom Presbyterian Primary	89%	90%
Takyiman Presbyterian Primary	77%	87%
Anweaso Local Authority Primary	70%	85%
Total	80	88%

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Anweaso Local Authority Primary, which had the lowest attendance rate before the GSFP, increased attendance by 15 percent whilst Takyiman Presbyterian Primary also increased attendance by 10 percent. However the average attendance rates of Asuom Presbyterian Primary and Kade Salvation Army Primary increased marginally by 1 percent and 4 percent respectively. The responses from the Head teachers also indicated that even though the GSFP had greater impact on attendance after the 2007/2008 academic year, other existing complementary programmes such as the capitation grant, provision of text books and uniforms and district educational programmes also contributed to the increase in attendance. In spite of the fact that an average attendance rate of 88 percent in all schools is encouraging, a total average increase of about 8 percent can be said to be marginal. The study also revealed that only 26.3 percent of pupils/students depend solely on the GSFP with the remaining 73.7 percent who either buy food from the school premises or bring food from home or both to complement what is provided by the GSFP. This implies that the GSFP, even though to some extent, motivates about a quarter of the pupils to attend school for lunch, it has not had any major impact on attendance of pupils to school.

Effects of the GSFP on Dropout

Dropout rate(s) in the district as a whole and/or the selected schools was not available from all possible sources. The Head Teachers responded that the issue of school dropout is not an outstanding problem in their schools. It is therefore not surprising that the primary level dropout rate in the district is about 4 percent. They however bluntly admitted that GSFP has had some positive effects on school dropout since the food given to the children arouses the children's willingness to remain in school. The few children who drop out of school usually do so because of poor parental care, teenage pregnancy or the requirement from their parents to follow them to the farm or help them with their other economic activities. In the case of Anweaso, the absence of a Junior High School in the community discourages the pupils from endeavouring to move to upper stages in school.

Challenges in the Implementation and Management of the GSFP in the District

Inadequate and delay in the disbursement of funds

Inadequate funding is one of the major challenges that cuts across all the benefitting schools studied. This is also evident by the fact that the feeding cost per child of GH¢0.40 per day which is inadequate to provide any good meal has not been reviewed since the introduction of the programme. This was a major issue raised by District Assembly, Head Teachers, caterers and the traditional authority. Caterers as a result of inadequate funds, prioritize on cheap food items as against quality thereby affecting the nutritional value of the meals prepared. It is therefore not surprising that 70 percent of the pupils were not satisfied with both the quality and quantity of the meals provided. Inadequate funds adversely affect caterers in carrying out their duties. It was realized that most often the funds are not released by the GSFP Headquarters on time due to its bureaucratic procedures and sometimes inadequate funds. This affects caterers negatively, hence sometimes compelling them to cook with the little foodstuff they have hence affecting the quantity and quality of the food.

Interruptions in Contact Hours

In all the schools studied, meals were served at about 30 minutes after the first break period (at about 11 am) which is supposed to be classes hours. Also because they do not have canteens where the children would eat, serving and eating of meals span through a period of about an hour and half and some times more due to the fact the pupils have to join a long queue for their food. The schools resume classes after the last person has had his/her meal. This extends the total break period in a day from 45 minutes to about 2 hours, implying a reduction in contact hours. For instance the Head teacher of Kade Salvation Army Primary school said the school closing period has been extended by an hour because of the prolonged serving and eating of meals. Also at Asuom

Presbyterian Primary, the school authorities had to reschedule the school's time table. The second break period (12:15pm-12:30pm) has been taken out of the school's time table since the GSFP interferes in the contact hours between 10:45am and 12:00pm. This adversely affects teaching and learning, since it puts pressure on teachers in completing the syllabus as well as the academic performance of the pupils. Moreover a reduction in contact hours has negative implications on the quality of education provided.

Frequent Provision of the same type of meal

The study revealed that even though all the caterers had prepared a menu of meals that have to be served, none of them followed it. This was attributed to the irregular supply of food stuff and delay in the release of funds. Moreover, the GSFP does not make provisions for children who are medically recommended to be on special diets. Such children who are also from poor family backgrounds feel discriminated against since they do not benefit from the programme at all times. The pupils who reported that they have had complications from eating some types of food, made mention that frequent eating of gari and beans gives them diarrhoea. About 65 percent of the pupils also described the meals as "one way" i.e. the same kind, with the dominating food being gari and beans, and rice.

Undue Interference in the appointment of caterers

Even though the District Implementation Committee (DIC) does well in the selection of qualified caterers, most often the selection is done to favour members of political parties. For instance about 50 percent of the newly selected caterers for the new beneficiary schools are community women organizers of a particular political party. This implies that monitoring and evaluation of the programme by the DIC may be compromised and has the tendency to adversely impact on the integration of all the linkages within the programme. In the case of Anweaso Local Authority primary, the traditional rulers unnecessarily interfere in the work of the caterer due to their displeasure for her.

Some children run away from school after meals are served

The study also revealed that some school children especially those at the lower primary level return to their houses after eating the food served. About 33 percent of the teachers and 26 percent of the parents interviewed saw this as problem that needs to be addressed. Such a situation would not help the programme achieve its intended purpose of improving upon attendance and may limit the credibility of school attendance registers.

Absence of Canteens

From the survey, it was realized that all of the five schools understudy do not have canteens for serving and eating of meals. Due to the absence of canteens in schools, the pupils have but their classrooms to eat their meals. About 70 percent of teachers interviewed saw this as a major setback of the programme since the children soil their text and exercise books, and also make their classrooms unclean. This does not only affect effective teaching and learning but also has negative health implications.

Recommendations for improvement in the implementation of the GSFP

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should make adequate financial plans and make them available to the GSFP Secretariat so that they would be able to disburse them to the various districts without delays. There should be a well-equipped department that would be responsible for exploring other sources of funds e.g. international NGOs, and other development partners. The GSFP Secretariat together with the DDOs should set a standard time for serving and eating of meals so that classes are not disrupted. The SICs should be well monitored by the DIC so that they enforce timely serving of meals by caterers and eating by pupils. The Ghana Education Service should also ensure that contact hours are not affected by the programme. The School Implementation Committees should educate the school children, parents and the community on the rational and objectives of the GSFP so that they can effectively contribute towards the sustainability of the programme. Caterers should be encouraged to propose menus that give a blend to the types of meals and the pupils and parents should be educated on the GSFP. This would inform their attitudes towards the programme and give them an understanding so that they do not demand luxurious meals. Provisions should be made for children on special diets. Each school should be made to provide a list of children on special diets in each school so that caterers can prepare meals that favour such children. Plans should be made for the establishment of canteens in order for all benefitting schools to reduce the time spent in serving, eating, and soiling of books, and to improve upon sanitation in classrooms. The role of class teachers in ensuring that all pupils wash their hands properly should be enforced in every beneficiary school.

General Conclusion

The study revealed the situation of existing public primary schools that benefitting from the Ghana School

Feeding Programme in the Kwaebibirim district. It was made clear that the GSFP supported by other policy interventions have contributed to enrolment, attendance and retention in public primary schools. Even though some parents perceived that the GSFP has not been of any great benefit and ensuring that all key actors function as mandated by government would be a step in the right direction towards the sustainability of the programme. It is evident from the analysis and observations made by the researchers that the Government of Ghana has primary school education at heart especially with aim of achieving universal primary education (MDG 2). It is however worth noting that increasing enrolment, attendance and reducing dropout rates alone would not be sufficient to meet the goals of universal primary education. The goals of universal access to primary quality education cannot be achieved through the linear expansion of existing public schools system alone but the adoption of a holistic approach that includes quality education. The onus therefore lies on the government of Ghana to formulate and execute educational policies that would enhance the delivery of quality of education to complement the many existing policies that seek to promote economic access to education such as the Ghana School Feeding Programme.

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