

Achieving Gender Parity in Enrollment through Capitation Grant and School Feeding Programme in Northern Region of Ghana. A Myth or A Reality?

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Abstract

The government of Ghana has used many strategies including the Capitation Grant, the School Feeding Programme and recently the distribution of free school uniforms to pupils in basic school to improve enrollment and attendance in basic schools in Ghana. The Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme were not directed first at improving enrollment and attendances of pupils in basic schools, but it had unintended positive effects on enrollment and in many cases attendance in the rural communities in the Northern Region of Ghana. This paper is based on empirical analysis of whether the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding programme have really addressed disparity in enrollment and attendance in basic school in the rural areas in the Northern Region. The data were collected through interviews, case studies and observations of the activities within the operations of the programmes relevant to enrollment and attendance of pupils to school. The study found that though enrollment figures of both males and females in basic schools in the rural areas have increased since the implementation of the programmes, gender parity index in enrollment favors the females while disparity in school attendance favors the males thus, more males attend school than females. It was again found that parity in enrollment and attendance is not sustainable in the rural communities, it was difficult to achieve parity in school enrollment and attendance as a result of the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme and therefore, it is a myth rather than a reality.

Keywords: Gender Parity, Education, Gender Disparity, school Enrollment.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged to benefit individuals and promote national development. Educating females and males produces similar increases in their subsequent earnings and expands future opportunities and choices for both boys and girls. However, educating girls produces many additional socio-economic gains that benefit the entire society. These benefits include increased economic productivity, higher family incomes, delayed marriages, reduced fertility rates and improved health and survival rates for infants and children.

The barriers that keep girls out of school are well known, and solutions for lifting them exist. However, governments and donor agencies have focused primarily on increasing female access and enrollment with insufficient attention paid to the quality, parity or relevance of education for girls or their retention and achievement rates. According to Action Aid Ghana (2000), if primary school enrollment and completion rates of girls are high and the quality of education is low, then education has not really conferred the skills and knowledge that are the sources of the hope for greater earnings of girls, better health and more engaged in national development. Aikman (2005) noted that access, duration and quality are all critical variables in realizing educational benefits with most efforts focused on closing gender gap in primary school enrollment between girls and boys.

In response to this troubling reality, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), a partnership of organizations dedicated to promoting girls' education was launched in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar by then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. UNICEF was the lead agency and secretariat for UNGEI. Together with its partners, UNICEF worked hard to transcend barriers to girls' education and narrow the gender gap in primary. The goal was to ensure that by 2015, all children are able to complete primary schooling with girls and boys having equal access to free, quality education. The focus also was on the countries and regions with the widest gender disparities in primary education – those places where simply being born female resigns so many children to a life of illiteracy and missed opportunities.

Focusing on female enrollment has not sufficiently engaged male in confronting norms and attitudes that perpetuate disparity and therefore analyzing the relationships between and among girls and boys can identify the root causes of disparity in enrollment and attendance in basic schools, it will also assist in suggesting systemic transformative changes to educational systems that will eliminate those causes. Interventions involving both girls and boys appear to be successful in addressing constraints that limit girls' participation in education and through a USAID-funded project in Ethiopia, boys became more sensitive to the multiple burdens girls face that interfere with their basic schooling. As a result, boys began to help their female classmates with their homework and no

longer judge them intellectually inadequate.

USAID (2004) reported that in some parts of the world, boys' educational outcomes lag behind girls' outcomes. In Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia for example, many boys are taken out of school or denied entry all together to become cattle herders—a task that falls to them since many adult males are forced to seek wage employment elsewhere. Boys in Latin America and the Caribbean usually have higher repetition rates and lower achievement rates than girls. The reasons for boys' underachievement are becoming clearer through a growing number of studies. (UNICEF 2003) observed that boys' underachievement is inextricably linked to notions of gender and power. Boys' weak performance in school may be related to their traditional socialization for example, achievement in language and literature is considered to be more 'feminine' than 'masculine'. In Jamaica, UNICEF (2003) found that boys were continually told they were lazy and inattentive to their studies. This resulted in low self-esteem and poor academic achievement and test results; boys underachievement is a growing problem in Ghana that requires policy attention. However, it should not divert attention from the continuing issue of low access for girls to basic education (UNESCO 2007).

The district disparities in enrollment and attendance in Ghana do not mean that female-targeted projects are no longer needed (Kane 2005). According to the World Bank (2004), the primary issue of targeted interventions whether for girls or boys is how the activity is designed and executed. Targeted interventions addressing gender disparity should meet and identified need and demand grounded in sound gender analysis, promote learning, bring about systemic changes and transform the power dynamics between the sexes.

The government of Ghana in 1996 implemented the free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme (FCUBE) which has existed since 1960s arising from article 39(2) of the 1992 constitution just to provide every child of school going age with basic education. After almost a decade the Capitation Grant was introduced as a school based factor in 2004 in 40 districts and extended to all basic schools in the 2005/2006 academic year. The grant is expected to cover cost and levies for activities such as examination, registration, facilities and sports which were hitherto paid by parents as school fees in public basic schools. The amount paid by government per pupil per term was GHc 4.50 as at 2012 academic year.

Despite the policy of free-fee tuition in the basic schools in the Northern Region and as a way of addressing the problem of enrollment and attendance, the government of Ghana with the support of the Dutch government commenced the School Feeding Programme in 2005 with the immediate objectives of reducing hunger and malnutrition among school pupils, increase school enrollment, attendance, retention and to improve domestic food production throughout the country. This paper examines whether the two programmes thus Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programmes have been able to address parity issues relevant to enrollment and attendance in basic schools in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Translating the concept of gender equality in education into a practical framework will assist education programmers in better designing, managing, and evaluating education projects. To be practical, this framework must draw clear distinctions and demonstrate interrelationships among the concepts of gender parity, gender equity, and gender equality.

In addition to drawing out the nuances between equity and equality, the framework also reinforces other key issues in education such as access, quality, continuity, and relevance. Gender equality means that males and females have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights and contribute to economic, social, cultural, and political development. Parity and equity are the building blocks of equality in education.

Gender parity and gender equality in education mean different things (UNESCO 2007). Parity is attained when the same proportion of boys and girls—relative to their respective age groups—enter the education system, achieve educational goals and advance through the different cycles (UNESCO 2007). Reaching parity in enrollment is necessary but not sufficient for achieving equality and should be considered a first stage measure of progress towards gender equality in education. Equity is the process of treating girls and boys fairly.

To ensure fairness, measures must be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent girls and boys from operating on a level playing field. Equity does not imply treating all learners the same because many factors could disadvantage students in having a chance to achieve equitable outcomes. Responses may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (UNO 2006).

A basic principle of equity is equality of opportunity among people: that a person's life achievements should be determined primarily by his or her talents and efforts, rather than by pre-determined circumstances such as race, gender, social or family background (World Bank 2004). Equity mechanisms such as scholarships have been used to achieve gender parity in enrollment. For example, USAID/Egypt has provided over 28,000 girls' scholarships to help alleviate the disparity in boys' and girls' school enrollment (USAID 2004). Additional equity tools such as math and science camps for girls have been implemented to increase achievement and

encourage retention. In Tanzania, USAID supported science camps to motivate girls to stay in school. The camps gave many of the girls their first opportunity to conduct experiments using laboratory equipment. Equity strategies such as these are needed to eventually attain gender equality over the long term and must be reflected in policies and practices directed toward learners, teachers, and the community. Monitoring progress toward achieving gender equality is also important. Measuring changes over time requires that data be disaggregated by sex to illuminate the differential impact of activities on males and females. An effective strategy for educating girls needs to include attention to parity and equity simultaneously. Furthermore, interventions on behalf of girls should be integrated into a coherent overall strategy of education reform (USAID 2004).

The number of hungry school-age children is unknown, but is likely to be a significant problem in various circumstances. Many factors contribute to hunger in school children the long distances children have to travel to school in some cases, cultural meal practices that include no or small breakfasts or lack of family time or resources to provide adequate meals to children before and or during the school day. Simply alleviating this hunger in school children helps them to perform better in school and allow parents to enroll their children. In Jamaica providing breakfast to primary school pupils significantly increased enrollment attendance (McGregor 1989).

Meyers (1989) explained that the benefits of providing breakfast to disadvantaged primary school students. According to the author, before the start of a school breakfast program in Tanzania, eligible low-income children scored significantly lower on achievement tests than those not eligible. Once in the program, the test scores of the children participating in the program improved more than the scores of non-participants. The attendance of participating children also improved

Jacoby and Cueto (1995) noted that in Peru, 23 malnourished and 29 well-nourished between 9 to 11 year old boys were studied to assess the effects of breakfast on cognitive performance. Each boy served as his own control in a manner comparable to the Tanzania study cited above. Breakfast was a nutritionally fortified beverage and a baked grain product fortified with iron, similar to the meal provided in the government-sponsored school breakfast program. A series of cognitive tests were administered in an experimental setting. Speed in performing a short-term memory test and discrimination of geometric patterns were improved under the breakfast condition in both groups. The effect was more pronounced in the nutritionally disadvantaged children. A study in Nepal found that the probability of attending school was 5% for stunted children versus 27% for children of normal nutritional status (Moock and Leslie, 1986).

Glewwe and Jacoby, (1994) reported that in Ghana malnourished children entered school at a later age and completed fewer years of school than better nourished children. The number of days that a child attends school is related to cognition and performance Jacoby, Cueto and Pollitt (1995). The authors noted that School Feeding Programmes have a positive effect on rates of enrollment and attendance in school that the programme operates.

A recent evaluation of an on-going School Feeding Program in Burkina Faso found that school canteens were associated with increased school enrollment, regular attendance, consistently lower repeater rates, lower dropout rates in disadvantaged provinces, and higher success rates on national exams, especially among girls (Moore, 1994). World Food Programme in 1996 carried out a pilot survey over three months on School Feeding Program in Malawi and the results showed that it has positive effect on enrollment and attendance in basic schools. Over the three month period there was a 5% increase in enrollment and up to 36% improvement in attendance compared to schools that do not benefit from the feeding programme over the same period.

According to the World Food Programme report 1995 and 1996 Niger has one of the lowest school enrollment rates in the world the School Feeding Program was introduced and intended to enhance enrollment and attendance, particularly girls' enrollment and attendance. Beneficiaries receive daily recommended food intake in three meals per day. In addition, as an incentive for girls' participation in schools, some families receive an additional take-home ration.

Ahmed and Billah (1994) noted that the School Feeding Program has been used successfully to improve enrollment and attendance among school-age children, particularly girls. In Bangladesh a program of school-based food distribution increased enrollment by 20% versus a 2% decline in non-participating schools. The authors added that in Pakistan, a program provides an income transfer in the form of one or two tins of oil to families whose girls attend school for 20 days per month. In its pilot phase the oil incentive program demonstrated that it could make a significant contribution to full enrollment and attendance of girls. In participating schools, enrollment improved by 76% compared to 14% in the entire province. Attendance increased from 73% to 95% among participants. The program also claims to put additional food into the hands of mothers and to serve as a contact between mothers and teachers on distribution days (WFP report 1995; 1996).

Fortification of school rations is the most efficient and effective route to alleviating micronutrient deficiencies in school children where SFPs are in operation. A relatively new breakfast program in Mali, which includes an iron-fortified ration, was evaluated for its short-term impact on diet, amongst other factors. The program significantly increased dietary intakes of energy by 25%, protein by 28% and iron by 46% (Jacoby and Pollitt,

1997).

Jacoby and Pollitt (1997) further explained that schools that depend on the community to organize and implement SFPs offer certain advantages. These advantages include: increasing the contact, and hence communication, between parents and teachers, officials and others; giving parents the opportunity to become more aware of what goes on at schools; and serving to raise the value of education for parents and the whole community. For example, school canteens are viewed as an important feature of education policy. In Morocco WFP report (1996) explained that the government has supported School Feeding Programme since 1978. The programs have strong government and community support and are viewed as part of a necessary package of inputs for improving education. The feeding program is credited with helping to maintain high enrollment and attendance and encouraging community participation in education. School cooperatives support the school canteens and parents associations assist with the transportation of food aid (WFP report 1996).

Research Methods

Exploratory research procedure was used in order to gain an insight into the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme and whether these programmes affect gender disparity in basic schools in the Northern Region of Ghana. Data were collected within a time frame of twelve months at different levels with different research instruments (questionnaire and interview guides). According to Fayorsey (2010), exploratory procedure is often possible to use when the real purpose of an issue is as yet unclear as in the case of the School Feeding Programme and the Capitation Grant. Many sections of the public still disagree with the politicians that the main purpose of the two programmes was not to increase school enrollment and attendance in public basic schools in Ghana.

The most appropriate sampling technique employed was the multi-stage cluster sampling technique. It is the selection of respondents from clusters at different levels within the target population with the combination of different sampling techniques (probability and non-probability techniques. Kish (1967) cited in Babbie (2006) pointed out that when individual selection of elements in a study seems too expensive, it can only be facilitated by using the multi-stage cluster sampling technique. The author noted that this sampling technique is inexpensive, it might be associated with some errors but as compared with the other techniques like systematic sampling, quota sampling and simple random sampling it is the best technique for the study. It is also the technique that allows the researcher to use other sampling techniques especially, the non-probability sampling like accidental, purposive and stratified sampling one after the other. The study therefore used simple random sampling, purposive sampling, and convenient sampling as part of the multi-stage sampling technique. The following schools were purposively selected for the School Feeding Programme.

Table 1. Selected Schools for the School Feeding Programme

Districts	Selected Schools
Tamale Metropolitan	Koblismaahu Subria Islamic school
Gushegu/Karaga	Zori Yapala Primary School
Savelugu/Nanton	Nyolgu Primary School
Saboba /Chareponi	Wunjuga L/A Primary school
West Mamprusi	Gimsi Power of God Primary School
East Gonja	Saint Anthony Primary School
Zabzugu/Tatale	D/A Primary School
Bole	Sanyo Primary School

Source: Author's field Survey (2012)

At the Junior High School Level all the pupils were classified as one cluster which consisted of form 1-3, there were sampled and interviewed. A total of 450 pupil were listed from the school registers and the intention was to interview 150 pupils that is one third (1/3) of the total number. During the interviews, it was realized that the pupils were giving similar answers after interviewing 88 pupils the author decided to stop the interviews in order to avoid repetitions and waste of time. The District Directors who served as key informants were purposively selected and interviewed. In each of the community, one (1) headteacher was interviewed and since 30 communities were selected 30 headteachers were interviewed.

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was gathered through observations, key informant interview guides and through questionnaires. Interview guide was used for the key informants like the District Directors and the semi structured interview schedule for the pupils, head teachers. Case study method was also used. Observation was made on the behavior of children before and after the preparation of food. The secondary data was gathered through the internet, journals, published theses, dissertations and relevant textbooks. According to Mugender and Mugender (1999), the qualitative research is advantageous in that it permits the researcher to go beyond the statistical results usually reported in the quantitative research. Human behavior is

best explained by using qualitative research and behavior that cannot be investigated by direct observation such as attitude and feeling are best studied using quantitative methods. Additionally, questionnaire alone which is an instrument for collecting quantitative data is inadequate in explaining human behavior.

Babbie (2006) argued that it is advantageous to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods especially when some of the objectives are better assessed using qualitative while others are assessed using quantitative methods. When both are used, they complement each other in the analysis. Olive (1999) cited in Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) also explained that both qualitative and quantitative methods have some bias so, using both will help to avoid such bias. Each method is used to check the other.

The qualitative data was used to support the quantitative data except in instances where some independent variables emerged in the key information interviews; in that case, it was analyzed separately. Also, case study analysis was done in the case of the School Feeding Programme and the Capitation Grant. The quantitative data was coded, edited and entered into the computer and Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used for the data processing after which the author did the analyses. Frequency tables, percentages, bar, pie were used for the description of the data.

Major Findings

Contrary to the perceptions of some sections of the general public that pupils at the basic schools in the Northern Region do not pay fees as a result of the Capitation Grant, the study revealed that headteachers in basic schools in the Northern Region still charge levies as a way of mobilizing additional revenue for the running of the school. The fees charged as the study found out were for examination and Parent Teachers Association levy and some schools charge fees for the payment of Arabic teachers. However, considering the level of poverty and low levels of households incomes coupled with the fact that the Capitation Grant was introduced as way of reducing the burden of parents, provide school infrastructure and to remove some financial barriers to basic educational access, any form of fees be it examination or Parent Teachers Association fees have indirectly defeated one of the purposes for which the grant was introduced.

The study found that parents in basic schools in the Northern Region still pay fees. They pay 10.00 Ghana cedis yearly as PTA dues and pay 6.00 as termly examination fees. The parents attested to this by explaining that at times when they do not pay this charges their children are sent home and ask not come to school again until the parents pay the money. It is interesting to note that the headteachers disagreed with the parent by explaining that they pay only 5.00 cedis for termly examination and 6.00 cedis for yearly PTA dues. When the District directors were interviewed they accepted the fact that parents still pay some levies but that varies from school to school.

The study further revealed that generally, enrollments have improved as a result of the grant. This was not backed by the headteachers in a response to a question relating to the effects of capitation Grant on school enrollment. 86% of the head teachers explained that since the introduction of the grant, there is nothing to prove significantly that their schools have experienced an increase in enrollment as a result of the grant. This is because fees are still being paid by parents hence; it is still a challenge to most of the parents to enroll their children, especially the girl child. Only 14% said they have since an improvement in enrollment. When the author requested and checked enrollment figures from the school registers, there were facts to prove that enrollment have gone up as a result of the grant.

It was observed that there were increases in school enrollment in eight primary schools in (Saboba Chereponi, Gushegu/ Karaga, Savelugu/Nanton and Bole District). Enrollment went up from 876 to 1,945 from 2006 to 2012. When the headteachers were asked to comment on these increases, 80% of the headteachers explained that the observed increases were not as a result of the Capitation Grant, while 20% said that the increases were as a result of the grant and these were schools in the rural communities.

It was again observed that there was still gender disparity in enrollment in these schools the disparity was in favour of the girl-child. School registers from the various schools where the headteachers said there were increases. In order to be sure the author held other variables that were likely to influence school enrollment constant by using a case study of two schools that do not benefit from School Feeding Programme and had no assistance from any NGO in the region. The registers of these schools were checked and it was observed that there were increases in the school enrollment. For instance Zori Yipala Primary School in Gushegu/Karaga District had its enrollment figures rose from 67 to 342 from 2006 to 2012. Waribogu L/A primary school in Zabzugu Tatale District had its enrollment figures rose from 45 in 2006 to 231 in 2012.

In spite of these increases in enrollment in the two schools as a result of the Capitation Grant, there was still gender disparity in enrollment in favour of the boys. The parents further supported the findings when the parents were asked whether the Capitation Grant has a positive effect on the enrolment of their girls, 92% of the household responded in the affirmative and explained that though they do not know how the grant operates, it does impact positively on their girls' enrollment. The parent added that in spite the fact that they are still paying

some fees, it should not prevent them from enrolling their children. They also said that they heard the government was paying the school fees for them which they do not realize, they are still being asked to pay some fees. One of the parents remarked *"I am disappointed in government because we were made to understand that we will no more pay fees again but you see I pay 12 Ghana cedis before my child is allowed to write terminal examination."*

Eight percent (8%) the parents did not support the findings because of the levies some parents still pay, they were not able to enroll their girls in school and this were the people in the rural areas in the region. It can be explained that the Capitation Grant had positive effect on school enrollment in some of the schools visited, though the headteachers did not agree to this, result from some schools in the Tamale Metropolitan Area and the Zabzugu/ Tatala District indicated that though the purpose for the introduction was not to increase school enrollment, indirectly it positively affected disparity in enrollment in some of the basic school in the region.

The study further revealed that Capitation Grant has not improved school attendance. In this case both boys and girls are affected. There was no evidence from the school registers to prove that attendance of pupils in the schools visited have improved as a result of the Capitation Grant. The headteachers supported the findings in a response to a question relating to attendance as a result of the grant, 85.3% of the head teachers said that attendance has not improved as a result of the Capitation Grant. They explained that because fees are still being paid, parents are not comfortable to allow their girls to attend school regularly. 14.7% explained that they have seen the differences in attendance figures as a result of the Grant. In this case also, none of the headteachers was able to provide data to back the claim.

The girls in a response to a question relating to their attendance as a result of the grant supported the findings, 71% said that they do not know how the grant has influenced their school attendance. They further explained that they attend school not because of Capitation Grant because, their parents still pay fees. Twenty nine (29%) said that their parents now allow them to attend school because they are not asked to pay more money as fees, because of the money government gives to the schools. One of the girls who said that their parents now send them to school as a result of Capitation Grant said *"you see, my father had said he will remove me from school because he does not have money any more to take care of me in school but when the government started paying our fees he does not say anything again."* The explanation by this respondent was rather in support of the fact that some girls were enrolled in school as a result of the Capitation Grant.

It was observed that the schools where the School Feeding Programme operates were schools where majority of the headteachers claimed an increased in school attendance as a result of Capitation Grant. The study further revealed that though the Capitation Grant is a very laudable strategy its objectives are very silent on gender. The schools where girls' enrolment has gone up and attendance has improved were unintended achievement of the Capitation Grant. The study further revealed that the Capitation Grant was not gender sensitive in that there was nothing in the disbursement procedure that was reserved solely for either the boys or the girls. It was again found that the amount give was equal irrespective of gender. The headteachers did not support the findings in a response to a question relating to gender sensitivity of the grant, 56.8% of the head teachers said that Capitation Grant is gender sensitive while 43.2% maintained that the grant is not gender sensitive and these were the headteachers who supported the findings. Those who said the grant is not gender sensitive explained that all the pupils' irrespective of gender receive the same amount.

They do not see how gender sensitive the grant is. Those who maintained that the grant is gender sensitive explained that though not specified in the guidelines for the utilization of the grant and not part of the objectives some urgent needs of the girls are normally taken care of, for example, they provide cotton for those who menstruate at school and this goes a long way to encourage the parents to send their girls to school. When the girls were asked in an interview to substantiate what the headteachers said regarding the provision of cotton, majority of them decline to answer. One of them said, *"The headteachers sometimes give us cotton during menstruation but not always, at times, they will tell us to go home and clean ourselves, if the money they use to buy the cotton were part of the Capitation Grant, they would have been given us the cotton always."* This remark by the girls further goes to support the fact that the Capitation Grant is not gender sensitive. It can be interpreted that although the grant has improve school enrollment and attendance disparity continue to exist between boys and girls therefore parity is not achieved as a result of the Capitation Grant.

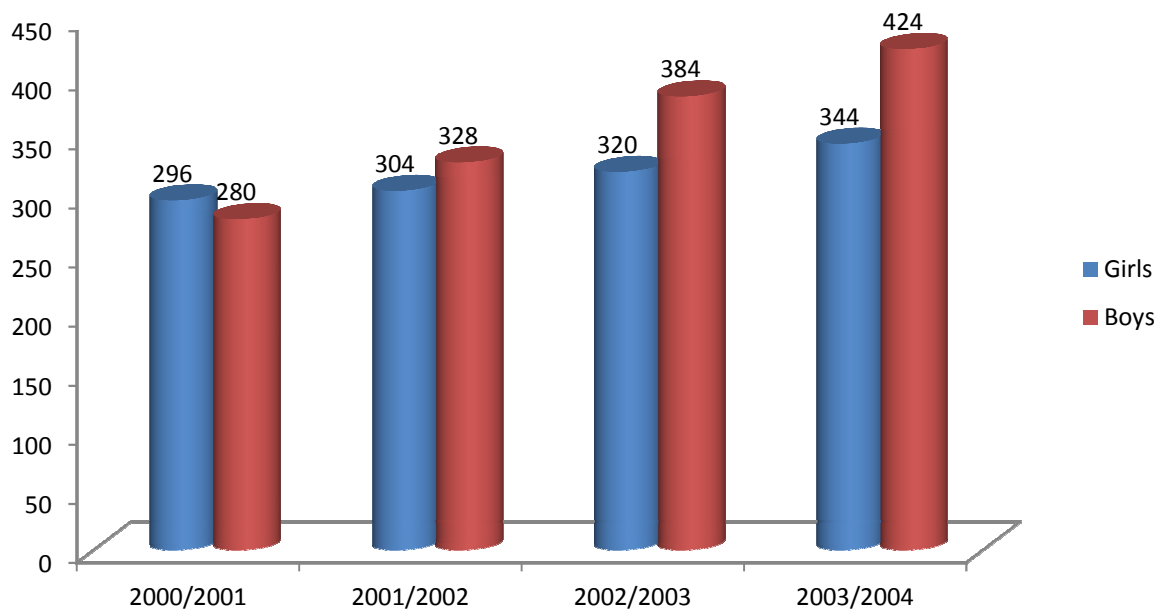
The study revealed that gender was virtually ignored during the programme plan and as the programme went on, it had unintended effect on girls' enrollment as compared with the boys' in the Northern Region of Ghana. The current study found very weak capacity to boost domestic food production in most beneficiary communities however, the programme has contributed significantly towards basic school enrollment especially girls' enrollment.

The study revealed that in general, school enrollment has increased under the School Feeding Programme. In absolute terms, enrollment increased in all the selected schools. It was observed that whilst absolute enrollment increased in some schools, funds for the School Feeding remained the same. This affected the capacity of the

programme to cope with the challenges associated with the increased in school enrollment. Absolute enrollment figures were taken from primary one of the school registers of the selected schools in the region from 2000 to 2004.

The chart below (Figure 5.3) represents the absolute figures from the school registers from the period 2000-2004 academic years. In both cases there was an increase in the enrollment of both boys and girls but these increases were relevant as can be seen on the chart. It can be seen that between these periods more boys than girls were enrolled.

Figure 1: Absolute Enrollment for Primary One before the Introduction of School Feeding Programme



Source: Author's field survey (2012)

The percentage increase for girls between 2000 and 2004 was 16.2%, 51.4% for boys and 33.3% as overall increase between the periods.¹ (See calculation in the footnote).

The figure 5.3 shows that between 2004/05 academic years the absolute enrollment increased by 80 and between 2006/07 and 2007/08 academic year it further increased by 256 a fast growth in enrollment and by 2009/2010 academic year, the absolute difference went up to by 588. This showed a significant increase in enrollment of these selected schools since the inception of the School Feeding Programme.

Girls: $(344-296)/296 * 100 = 16.2\%$ **Boys:** $(424-280)/280 * 100 = 51.4\%$ **and overall :** $(768-578)/578 * 100 = 33.3\%$ ¹
Girls: $(1136-824)/824 * 100 = 37.9\%$ **Boys:** $(1392-984)/984 * 100 = 41.5\%$ **Overall:** $(2528-1808)/1808 * 100 = 39.8\%$

Figure 2: Absolute Enrollment for Primary One after the Introduction of the School Feeding Programme



Source: Author's field survey (2012)

The study again revealed that although not consistent increase in all cases, it was observed that the increase in absolute enrollment for some of the selected schools was not as a result of the School Feeding Programme but transfer of pupils from non-School Feeding Schools since the programme did not cover all the schools in the districts.

In comparison, while the percentage of girls' enrollment before the introduction of the School Feeding Programme was 16.2%, the figure went up to 37.9% after the introduction of the programme for the period of four years. The percentage for boys was 51.4% but dropped to 41.5% after the introduction of the programme. The overall increase in percentage was 33.2% before the introduction of the programme but increased by 39.8% after the programme for the period of four years. This means a positive effect of the programme on school enrollment in the selected beneficiary school in the region.

In spite of the increase in the enrollment figures in the selected schools for this period, the issue of parity in enrollment was not given attention in most of the beneficiary schools in the region. The author calculated gender parity indices in enrollment for the selected school using the school registers between 2004/2005 and 2008/2009 academic year to be able to determine whether the disparity in enrollment favor the boy child or the girl child.

The table below shows that 5 of the 8 schools had disparity in favor of the girls while 3 schools had disparity in favor of the boys in 2008/2009 academic years. It was observed that all the schools have experienced consistent increase in the enrollment of girls for academic year 2011/2012. The data from the school registers have been used to calculate the overall gender parity index. The total enrollment of the kindergarten for the academic year 2011/2012 of the selected schools was 503 (301 for girls and 202 for the boys.). The gender parity index when calculated was 1.487 (disparity in favour of the girls).

Enrollments in twenty two (22) schools that do not benefit from the School Feeding Programme were also calculated so that the indexes can be compared. The total enrollment of both girls and boys from the schools registers were 1,211. Total enrollment of Girls was 511 and that of the boys was 700. The gender parity index in enrollment was 0.73 (disparity in favour of the boys). The Gender Parity Indexes of enrollment calculated for both beneficiary and non-beneficiary schools in the Northern Region indicated that schools where the School Feeding Programme operated had gender parity index higher than schools that do not benefit from the programme.

Table 1: Parity Indexes between 2004/2005 and 2008/2009

Districts	Beneficiary Schools	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Tamale Metro	Koblimahu Pri. Sch.	0.72	0.80	0.85	1.01	1.08
Saboba Cheriponi	Wanjuga L/A Pri.	1.85	1.86	1.03	1.05	1.10
Zabzugu District	Zabzugu L/A Pri.	0.59	0.55	0.49	0.63	0.70
Gushegu	Zori Yipala Pri.	0.61	0.63	0.70	0.71	0.76
West Mamprusi	Gimsi Pri	0.60	0.64	0.80	0.83	1.06
Savelugu Nanton	Nyolgu Pri.	0.59	0.63	0.64	0.71	0.73
Bole District	Sanyo Primary	0.70	0.83	0.91	1.03	1.05
East Gonja	S.t Anthony Pri.	0.81	0.89	1.0	1.03	1.05

Source: calculated from school registers in the Northern Region (2012)

It further shows that in terms of enrollment of boys and girls in the selected schools the girls were enrolled in the schools more than the boys. This in a way closes the gender gap between the boys and the girls as compared to the non-beneficiary schools in the region which existed for decades. Though disparity in enrollment still exists, it is in favor of the girls in the beneficiary schools. This shows a positive effect on gender disparity in the region. Disparity in enrollment still exists in non-beneficiary schools in favor of the boys. This was attributed to the non-existence of the Feeding Programme as one of the factors.

The study looked at the pupils' attendance to school as a result of the School Feeding Programme. It was revealed that in some selected schools in the districts, attendance has improved as a result of the School Feeding Programme. In the Saboba district and Tamale Metro, it was observed that there was a relationship between pupil's attendance and the pupil's favorite meals. The head teachers explained that any time the schools prepare rice and beans the school experiences high attendance though these head teachers could not produce any data to support their assertion.

The study revealed that attendance to schools by pupils in most cases is based on the preparation of the food and those instances where the food is not prepared in a particular day they record low attendance of pupils. This is especially, the case during the rainy season when the rains prevent the cooks from cooking. The study further revealed when the pupils wake up early morning, at about 7.00 am if they see smoke coming from the school's kitchen they quickly prepare and attend school, if there is no smoke it means that day they either attend school late or do not come at all and this what the author termed as "The power of the smoke" in the beneficiary selected schools. This was particularly the case in the rural areas in the Northern Region.

The study further revealed that there was gender disparity in attendance the headteachers could not say whether the boys attend more than the girls but the available data in the school registers, though not consistent, was used to calculate the gender parity index in attendance for 2010/2011 academic year. The total attendance was 1,472 out of which 601 were girls and 871 were boys. The parity index calculated was for beneficiary schools was 0.689, while that of schools that do not benefit was 0.67. In this case, more children attend school in the beneficiary schools than in the non-beneficiary school.

The parity indices for school attendance in the beneficiary schools and the school that do not benefit indicated that for the 2010/2011 academic year the attendance of girls lagged behind that of the boys in the beneficiary schools in the Northern Region of Ghana as well as non-beneficiary schools as the above parity indexes showed. The study revealed that in spite, of the achievement of the School Feeding Programme in the region the parity indexes were not encouraging in all instances because disparity in attendance is still in favor of the boys and that could be attributed to the factors already discussed in the previous chapters. The author further used a case study of the Koblimahu Primary in Tamale School to illustrate the positive effect of the School Feeding Programme in the region.

School Feeding Programme at Koblimahu Primary School in the Tamale Metropolis.

Koblimahu Primary School in the Tamale Metropolis is one of the schools where the School Feeding Programme started in 2005/2006 Academic year. Currently, it has a total primary school (Primary 1-6) population of 385 pupils, out of which 174 (representing 45.2%) are boys and 211 (representing 54.8%) are girls. Absolute primary enrollment rose from 77 in the 2004/05 academic year (When the programme had not started) to 98 pupils in 2005/06 academic year indicating a rise of 24% (with the Feeding Programme). Although there was a further increase in absolute enrollment in the 2006/07 academic year, the rate of increase was at a lower rate of (10.3%). The study observed that there were many changes which occurred in the course of the programme especially, between these years. Most people started to complain about the quality and quantity of the food served. According to the headteacher, this was the time pupils' had to share cups and plates and many

parents were discouraged to enroll their children for the fear that they might contract diseases from their colleagues.

In the 2008/2009 academic year the school enrollment figures rose to 254 pupils and out of which, 58.6% were girls and 41.4% were boys. In the 2008/09 academic year there was a further increase in enrollment. The girls' enrollment went up from 58.6% to 62.8% and in 2010/2011 academic year the absolute enrollment rose to 385 pupils. The headteacher explained that attendance always drops whenever gari and beans were prepared because most pupils dislike the food. Also, attendance increased whenever rice and beans were prepared because most of the pupils like the food. It was observed in Koblimahu Primary School that the gender disparity in enrollment favors the girl-child while disparity in attendance favors the boy-child.

It was again observed that the matron is often compelled to share a plate of food previously meant for one among two pupils as a way of reducing cost. Also an egg (previously taken by one person every Friday) was shared with two pupils while dessert was no longer served in Koblimahu Primary School. Other factors like late release of funds and lack of adequate washrooms and toilet have affected the quality and quantity of food in Koblimahu Primary School in the Tamale Metropolitan Area.

The study revealed that the effect of School Feeding Programme on school enrollment and attendance is being assessed by the Directors of the Ghana Education Service by looking at the school enrollment figures for a particular period usually between two to three academic years. These enrollment figures are supposed to be submitted by the head teachers of the beneficiary school to the District Directors to write a report after which the report is circulated to the various schools for their study. It was observed that none of the schools visited was able to provide report as evidence so far as the assessment of the programme was concerned.

It was further revealed that the Ghana Education Service is supposed to assess the programme yearly but quite often shirk this responsibility and expect the headteachers to provide data relevant to the School Feeding Programme. It was a clear indication that the assessment of the School Feeding Programme especially regarding the achievement in enrollment and attendance was not being done properly. The programme though very attractive to the school pupils is not being managed prudently by the stakeholders in charge therefore gender disparity in enrollment and attendance still persists in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Government of Ghana's strategy to improve access to basic education as well as close the disparity gap in enrollment and attendance in Northern Region of Ghana through the School Feeding Programme and Capitation Grant is laudable, achieving parity in enrollment remains a critical objective and is fundamental to gender equality in education. However, focusing on access as the primary issue for girls can undervalue the importance of quality and relevance, with the false conclusion that what happens in the classroom need not be analyzed for possible differences in girls' and boys' opportunities and experiences.

The Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programmes have been very successful in the rural areas of the Northern Region yet disparity in enrollment and attendance remain unresolved therefore it is a myth and not a reality to assume that these programmes have successfully resolved parity issues in enrollment and attendance. The traditional approaches to resolve parity issues in enrollment such as offering parents food or financial incentives to parents to send their daughters to school treat only the symptoms and not the root causes of disparity in enrollment and attendance, therefore striking a balance between equitable access, quality and relevance is one way to ensure a quality education for all learners.

As a matter of policy, the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme should be reviewed. Both the School Feeding Programme and the Capitation Grant had unintended positive effects on enrollment and attendance especially girls' enrollment. The Capitation Grant should be increased and all forms of deductions should be stopped at the regional and the districts education offices in the region and SFP be extended to all basic schools in the region. The review policy should be focused on gender that is, be more gender sensitive so that more girls and boys can be enrolled and attend school. Since disparity in enrollment in most of the schools now favors the girls, such a review policy will encourage parents to give attention to both boys and girls.

In order to ensure parity all the stakeholders in education including the teachers, pupils, parents, NGOs and Ghana Education Service must take part in the review of the policy this will ensure social justice in basic education. The intervention by the government should include an increase in funding; especially an increase in Capitation Grant of pupils per term will go a long way to relieve parents from paying more money which they are hitherto pay as school fees. This approach will motivate the parents to enroll their children, especially girls who are more disadvantaged when it comes to enrollment and attendance.

Take home ration programme should be instituted in all schools that enjoy the feeding programme. Girls who are able to make 100% school attendance in a month should be given raw grains to take home just to motivate others to attend school regularly and this approach should aim at achieving parity in attendance.

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