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INFLUENCE OF GHANA'S SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME ON RETENTION OF BASIC SCHOOL PUPILS IN WEST MAMPRUSI MUNICIPALITY OF THE NORTH EAST REGION

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ABSTRACT:

Insufficient scientific studies on the impact of the GSFP on retention have been conducted, particularly in the West Mamprusi community, and this highlights the need for this study to fill the gap in the literature. This research examines the impact of the GSFP on primary schools in the West Mamprusi community in the north-eastern region of Ghana. The study examined the extent to which retention was influenced by the SFPs. The study adopted the mixed-methods approach of selected primary schools in the West Mamprusi municipality in the north-eastern region of Ghana that utilized the GSFP. Students and teachers were used for this study. The student population was two thousand twenty-eight (2,028) from which two hundred (200) students were randomly selected as the sample size. Twelve (12) teachers and their head teachers were specifically selected to form part of the sample size. The questionnaire was the main research tool while the interview was used to support the main research tool. The research found that the GSFP was a critical and important factor influencing primary school retention in the schools.

KEYWORDS: Ghana School Feeding Programme, Junior High School, Sustainable Development Goals, School Feeding Committee, World Food Program me, schoolchildren

INTRODUCTION

Formal education and employment are the two critical factors that are highly correlated with poverty reduction. According to Boateng, Boakye-Yiadom and Oduro (2000), there is a strong correlation between poverty and schooling. Therefore, any attempt by government(s) to improve access to and quality education at primary level and even beyond is greatly appreciated and commended. The Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) was launched in 2005 as an initiative of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). This initiative was designed and then implemented to improve food security, fight poverty and hunger, increase indigenous food production in underprivileged communities and improve access to basic education in Ghana. The concept of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) is to provide schoolchildren in a few select public elementary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas of the country with one hot, nutritious meal a day, using locally grown food to target 80% of the feed costs to be distributed in the local communities.

The concept of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) is to provide schoolchildren in a few select public elementary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas of the country with one hot, nutritious meal a day, using locally grown food to target 80% of the feed costs to be distributed in the local communities. Society expects the children and youth of Ghana, who are the future leaders of the nation, to mature into responsible citizens who are able and willing, within their abilities, to make meaningful contributions in various ways to their own development as well as to the development of the nation as a whole. The expectation can only be realized through an appropriate basic education in a supportive social environment during childhood.

According to Hesse (1994), educated people are better equipped to serve themselves and their society as individual family members, business workers, or leaders because education enhances their intellectual abilities, social responsibility, and understanding of the modern world. In Ghana's GPRS II, it was decided to make schooling compulsory for all children for 11 years - from 4 to 15 years - including two years of kindergarten and three years of junior high school with real secondary school content.

The Government of Ghana attempted to achieve this goal by providing a constitutional basis and in 1992 included it as a legal requirement in its Constitution. Attempts have been made to achieve this goal since then, including a major reorganization of the first and second cycles in 1987, which reduced their duration from 17 to 15 years. This was also complemented by a school feeding program to improve the nutritional status of school children and to promote access, retention and quality of education. Against this background, this study attempted to examine the impact of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) on school retention in the West Mamprusi community in the north-eastern region of Ghana

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Basic education refers to the level of education in each country, which is the basic level for all children (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991). Nelson Mandela emphasized the importance of education when he said that education is a great engine of personal development. Only through education can a farmer's daughter become a doctor, a miner's son can become the manager of the mine, a farmhand's child can become the president of a great nation (Mandela, 2000, p.559).

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) is one of the pro-poor programmes initiated by the government to increase primary school retention rates. School meals are school meals introduced over the years to provide meals or snacks at school in hopes of reducing children's hunger during school hours (Del Rosso, 1999). The World Food Program (2004) claimed that it is a tool that can enable hundreds of millions of poor children worldwide to go to school in both developed and developing countries.

However, after a decade of GSFP implementation, there are serious concerns from various stakeholders about the success of the program and/or the degree of achievement of its stated objectives. In the West Mamprusi community in particular, insufficient scientific studies have been conducted on the impact of the GSFP on retention and this highlights the need for this study to fill the gap in the literature. Even where attempts have been made to assess the programmes' impact on enrollment, they have mostly ignored retention in many parts of the country. This study therefore intends to fill the literature gap and propose strategies to improve primary school retention in the West Mamprusi municipality of the Northeast region through the activities of the GSFP. This was done through a critical examination of a few select GSFP schools in the West Mamprusi community in the North East Region

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine the impact and consequences of the GSFP on primary education in the West Mamprusi municipality of the North East Region. The study specifically examined the impact of GSFP on primary school retention in the West Mamprusi community of the Northeast region.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer the following questions

1. What is the relationship between the GSFP and retention of pupils in basic schools in West Mamprusi Municipality?
2. What are the challenges (if any) of the GSFP on basic school education in West Mamprusi Municipality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

According to Vitahl, Jansen and Jansen (2013), quoted in Kamaludeen (2014), the theoretical framework is a well-developed, coherent explanation of an event/phenomenon. Theories help in the interpretation and understanding of events in the world. Similarly, the purpose of a theory is to provide tools for interpreting collected data, preventing fragmentation of knowledge through order, giving focus to investigation, and providing theoretical explanations and a deeper understanding of what is being studied. In this study, change theory was applied to examine the impact of GSFP on retention problems in the schools studied.

The change Theory: figure 2.1



Source: Kurt Lewin's model (1935)

Unfreeze in the words of Kurt Lewin (1935) are the forces that seek to maintain the status quo and dismantle the current mindset. This is usually done by presenting a provocative problem or event to get people to see the need for change and seek new solutions. Transition is a phase of adopting new behaviors, values and attitudes. This can be a time of confusion as we move from the old ways to a new one. Freezing is the final phase of crystallization and ownership adjustment to the new concept. The organization can revert to previous practices at this point, unless the changes are reinforced by freezing. This framework was particularly relevant in this study for assessing the impact of the GSFP on primary school retention in the West Mamprusi community

The literature review is largely premised along the following strands:

The Development of School Feeding Programmes (SFPs)

School feeding programs exist in almost every part of the world. They are common to both developing and developed countries. The rationale behind school feeding programs is to reduce short-term hunger in students so they can focus in class and learn better. Del Rosso (1999) identified four goals of school feeding programs.

1. Alleviate short-term hunger among malnourished or otherwise well-nourished school children. When children are fed at school, it most likely increases their alertness and focus, leading to improvements in cognitive function and learning.
2. Motivate parents to enroll their children in schools and allow them to visit regularly. By providing food to students while they attend school, they are forced to avoid absenteeism and improve their stay at school. This leads to an improvement in some educational outcomes (achievement and retention).
3. Address specific micronutrient deficiencies in school-age children. Iron and iodine deficiencies are the most damaging types of malnutrition affecting cognition. According to Del Rosso (1999), iron deficiency makes children listless, inattentive and disinterested in learning.
4. Increase community involvement in school governance. It is well known that community involvement in school affairs gives parents the opportunity to be more aware of what is going on at school.

The setting up of a School Feeding Programme entails some commitment, resources and time. In initiating or developing one, it is recommended that great care and attention is given to it if the programme is to improve education. In connection with the above, Del Rosso (1999) recommends that the following steps be followed when introducing a School Feeding Programme:

1. Build a consensus on policy and objectives that focus on how school feeding can effectively contribute to improving education and meeting the nutrition and health needs of school-age children.
2. Develop targeting criteria and mechanism that concentrate programme resources on high risk children and communities in terms of poverty and hunger.
3. Elaborate appropriate guidelines for ration composition and the timing of school meals.
4. Identify and address any potential bottlenecks in implementation: such as the availability of supplies and other resources, the appropriateness of cooking practices and the management of private sector inputs.
5. Develop monitoring systems that focus on programme processes, that is, how a programme is functioning, and institute an evaluation system to assess the impact of the programme on specific outcomes.

6. Integrate feeding programmes with other intervention that address the primary nutrition and health problems of the school-age population.

Education and the GSFP

Education universally is considered to be an important tool for national development. As a result, many economists have emphasized the impact education has on economic growth (Lucas, 1999), although other authorities have raised questions about the causal relationship between education and economic growth. Education has also been found to play a critical role in the adoption of new agricultural technologies in so many countries (Rosenzweig, 1996). Education is also seen as a means to improve health and reduce fertility (Strauss & Thomas, 2007), as well as an intrinsic good in itself (Sen, 2002). The phenomenon of SFPs is common to both the developing and industrialized countries. Many countries around the globe have SFPs running. For example, in 2004 the WFP alone had SFPs in 72 countries, covering 16.6 million school children. School Feeding is defined as the provision of food to school children (Bundy, 2009; Gelli, 2010). Generally, SFPs come in one of two basic modalities (Gelli, 2010):

1. In-school feeding, where children are fed in school; and
2. Take-home rations, where families are given food if their children attend school.

The In-school feeding can be divided into two common categories, these include, programs that provide meals, and programs that provide high-energy biscuits or snacks (Bundy, 2009). A take-home ration on the other hand is where a family is provided with uncooked food supply if their children attend school throughout the month or twenty (20) days in a month. Generally, the objectives of School Feeding Programmes are to provide meals or snacks to reduce short-term hunger in the classroom so that students can concentrate and learn better, and to attract children to school and have them attend regularly (Ahmed, 2004). Early malnutrition and/or micronutrient deficiencies can adversely affect physical, mental, and social aspects of child health (Muthayya, 2009). The effects of malnutrition on physical health may include underweight, stunted growth, lowered immunity, and mortality. Early malnutrition and/or micronutrient deficiencies have been linked to poorer cognitive functioning (Scrimshaw, 1998; Worobey, 1999; Leslie, 1990). Short-term hunger can adversely affect attention and interest (Levinger, 1996; Read, 1973). Overnight and morning fasting (e.g. skipping breakfast) has been shown to adversely affect performance on cognitive tasks, particularly for children who are nutritionally at risk (Pollitt, 1995).

The GSFP was established in 2005 by the Government of Ghana and the Dutch Government as a means to boost domestic food production and increase school enrolment, attendance and retention among kindergarten and primary school children. However, the SFP started in September 2005, with 1,984 pupils, in 10 pilot schools, one in each region of Ghana. The programme, which received widespread praise when it was established, was inspired by the CAADP Pillar 3 of NEPAD under the recommendations of the UNHTF and part of government's efforts to attain the MDGs 1 and 2, which sought to eliminate extreme hunger, poverty and achieve universal basic education (Ghana News Agency, 2014). In August 2013, the National Coordinator of the programme, Mr. S.P. Adamu, disclosed that the programme is "now feeding 1,600,000 pupils from 4,920 public primary schools throughout the country and Four hundred thousand (400,000) more pupils are to benefit from the GSFP, beginning the 2013/2014 academic year" (Daily Graphic, 2013). The GSFP is the Ghanaian version of a HGSFP that has been mandated to provide pupils in selected public primary schools in the country with one hot, nutritious meal per school day, using locally-grown foodstuffs (Afoakwa, 2009). It was a four-year programme (2007 to 2010) with funding from the Dutch and Ghana governments. The programme was expected to link the demand for food created by school feeding to the supply of food by small-scale farmers through local procurement mechanisms. Thus, the demand for home-grown food is expected to stimulate local market forces in such a way as to inspire small-scale farmers to expand production. The GSFP has wider implications for farmers in strengthening community food production and consumption systems through reduction in post-harvest losses, provision of a ready market for farm produce and incentives for increased production which will ultimately enhance food sovereignty (Quaye *et al.*, 2010).

The established literature suggests that GSFPs were developed by implementing organizations to improve school enrollment, retention, nutrition and academic performance. Notable achievements have been demonstrated in the literature on nutrition and registration in Ghana.

The empirical literature concludes that the GSFP has broader implications for farmers in strengthening community food production and consumption systems by reducing post-harvest losses and providing a ready market for farm products to increase child enrollment and retention at school, particularly in the West Mamprusi community.

The Influence of School Feeding Programmes on Retention

In general, the Ghana School Feeding Program has had a positive impact on student attendance and retention in primary schools. Kedze (2013) notes that the school feeding program has gained importance in developing countries due to its multiple functions. What the author meant is that enrollment alone is not the only challenge to achieve universal basic education, but regular attendance and dropout rates.

The feeding program, Kedze said, motivates children to attend schools as attendance is a necessary condition for access to food. This applies in the Ghanaian context. Bukari et al. (2015) point out that there is a positive correlation between the Ghana School Feeding Program and academic achievement. This revelation suggests that the school feeding program has achieved its goals. Mohammed (2014) suggests that the significant increase in enrollment and retention is due to the school feeding program motivating students to stay in school and learn, leading to improved universal literacy in the country. Mohammed (2014) therefore suggests that although one hot meal per school day is significant, students should be given snacks as a supplement. The author maintains that the importance of the nation school feeding programme must not under any circumstance be undermined. The national school feeding programme promotes and supports: the right to food, the right to education, local development and economic growth, food and nutrition security, gender enhancement and participation (Global Child Nutrition Forum, 2014). These efforts mark significant steps towards educational development in the country through achievement of universal basic education.

The empirical review has provided evidence on the effects of school feeding interventions on enrolment. The literature also provides that school feeding programmes leads to increase in attendance and reduction of drop-out rates in beneficiary schools in different places. These findings will serve as basis for comparing the influence of the GSFP on enrolment, attendance and retention of pupils in basic schools in the West Mamprusi Municipality.

Implementation Challenges of the GSFP

The Ghana School Feeding Programme has failed to meet its stated objectives. The programme has essentially failed to meet objective three in particular i.e. to boost domestic food production, as well as part of objective one that is to reduce malnutrition. What the programme has largely done is to reduce hunger by feeding school children. In the view of many commentators, school feeding is a welfare issue which suggest that the current location and housing of the GSFP is misplaced, thus rendering implementation of such a programme complex. Stated differently, the institutional framework of the programme is clearly misplaced. (Gyarko, 2011)

Ideally, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs responsible for social welfare and the Ministry of Health should be given oversight responsibilities. The Ministry of Health has a specific mandate to monitor the country's health status, formulate strategies and design programs to address the country's health problems. In addition, the ministry is also tasked with implementing, monitoring and evaluating all health issues related to the SFP. Therefore, the Ministry of Health has the ability to measure the health and nutritional status of school children in the country. It is therefore essential that this ministry is also given responsibility for supervising all matters relating to the health of school children. These are the areas where the Department of Local Government and Rural Development has intervened. Although it does not have the capacity to deal with such issues, it currently has oversighttasks of the GSFP. The GSFP of all indications must collaborate with the MoE, MoH and MoFA if it is to be successful. However, it is clear that effective cooperation with these line ministries is a major challenge. A common aspect of this challenge has to do with communication on GSFP issues both within and between the three technical ministries. For example, district directors for health, education and agriculture have information about GSFP but do not share it with GSFP offices or line ministries. (Gyarko, 2011)

Another intractable challenge has to do with the inability to link GSFP to local agriculture production. Even where linkage exists, its desired impact is nothing to write home about. It is common knowledge that most farmers and GSFP caterers are not linked hence the dream of GSFP boosting domestic food production remains a mirage. Alfa and Fyn (2011) reported that apart from selected communities in the Ga East District and certain parts of the Northern sector of Ghana, where some positive linkages have been achieved, the status of the relationship between farmers and caterers in many beneficiary communities are not known fueling the general belief that farmers in these communities are not linked to their local caterers and therefore do not derive direct benefits from the school feeding programme. Funding also remains the most difficult challenge to the GSFP. The GH ¢ 0.40 per child per meal is woefully inadequate considering the current economic conditions prevailing in the country. This amount cannot appropriately provide a balanced nutritious meal for the school going child. Even as we bemoan the feeding amount per every meal, it is true to add that these monies are not released in good time to the caterers thereby making them to feed pupils on credit. The danger in this is that quality and quantity of the food may be compromised.

Also, same funds are either nonexistent or very little for other important aspects of the programme such as monitoring, sensitization and general administrative duties. For the programme to be effective there is the need to source funding for both the feeding and other operational activities of the programme. Alfa and Fyn (2011, p7)

The targeting and selection of the beneficiary schools also remains a major challenge for the Ghanaian school feeding program. According to official GSFP statistics, the biggest beneficiaries of the program are the Greater Accra, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions. Together they represent 60% of the total number of students who benefit from the program. This problem is further compounded by the fact that the cities of Accra and Kumasi alone account for most of that 60%, although they may not deserve that percentage under the eligibility criteria. Conversely, the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions are said to be the poorest in Ghana only 15% of all students benefit from the program. Admittedly, there is a certain dynamic and power involved in targeting and selecting the beneficiary schools. However, it must be noted that the situation where a large number of non-qualified schools are included in the program at the expense of qualified schools is certainly detrimental to the achievement of the program objectives. The reliance on external support poses a threat to the programme. This is particularly so because there are several existing cases/examples of withdrawal from School Feeding Programmes by external donors. Examples of countries that experience donor withdrawal include Botswana (1966-1972) Cape Verde (1979-1995) and Namibia (1991-1997). Alfa and Fyn (2011)

Some members of the public, mainly parents whose children attend primary schools and kindergartens, have expressed concerns about the type and quality of food served to children under the GSFP (Alfa and Fyn 2011). They are also concerned about the environment in which some of the food is prepared and served. Parents are particularly concerned about their children's health because in cases where some schools have acute water problems, some of the plates are usually not washed/rinsed well before the food is served. According to these parents, some of the food or ingredients are not of good quality, but the surroundings of some of these cooking sites are not equally hygienic. A visit to some GSFP schools will show that some kitchen staff need serious training in cleanliness. Alfa and Fyn (2011)

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the mixed methods approach. According to Gray (2009, p. 199), the mixed-methods approach to social research includes at least one quantitative method and one qualitative method, with neither type being inherently associated with any particular investigative paradigm. According to (Creswell et al., 2013, p. 212), mixed methods involve the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, in which the data are collected simultaneously or sequentially, are prioritized and involve the Integration of data in one or more phases of a research process. The mixed approach was deemed appropriate for the study as the weaknesses of one approach are offset by the strengths of the other (Creswell, 2013). Gray, 2009) provides further evidence of the importance of the mixed-method approach when he claims that the use of mixed-methods allows researchers to simultaneously generalize from a sample to a population and gain a more comprehensive, contextual understanding of what is being studied phenomenon (Gray, 2009, p.204). The research design was of the descriptive type.

The descriptive research design was chosen because the research attempted to uncover some of the relationships that exist between the GSFP and primary school retention. A total of sixteen (16) schools with 6,339 students made up the population. From this number, four (4) schools Nabari D/A Primary, Daboya No.2 D/A Primary, Guakodow D/A Primary and Shilinga D/A Primary with a sample population of 2,028 students were selected for the study. The reason for targeting these schools was mainly to assess the impact of the GSFP on such rural schools. From the overall sample population, a simple random sampling method was used to select two hundred (200) students, while targeted sampling was used to obtain the twelve (12) teachers/head teachers. . Fifty (50) students were selected from each school. Two (2) teachers responsible for the GSFP in their respective schools and the school head teacher were automatically selected for the study. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interview.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Background Data of Respondents

In this section, the background information provided by the respondents is presented and discussed.

Table 1: Age distribution of pupils in GSFP schools in West Mamprusi Municipality

Age	Below 10	10	11	12	Above 12	Total
Number of pupils	0	10	60	20	110	200

Source: Field Survey (2019)

The age distribution of the students signals that the majority of the students (participants) were in junior high school, as 45% (90 students) were between 10 and 12 years old and 55% (110 students) of the participants were over 12 years old. The teachers, eight (8) were males while four (4) were females. The age of the teachers can be described as youthful as eight (8) of the teachers were under 30 years of age, while no teachers reached 51 years of age or more. See details in Table 1.4 below.

Table 2: Age distribution of teachers in GSFP schools in West Mamprusi Municipality

Age	Below 30	30- 40	41 - 50	50 -60	Above 60	Total
Number of teachers	8	3	1	0	0	12

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Many of the teachers I interviewed had Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) certification. One (1) teacher each held the Post-Secondary Teachers Certificate A, Higher National Diploma (HND), two (2) teachers each held a first university degree, while eight (8) out of twelve (12) teachers held DBE.

Retention Levels of Pupils

Q. 1. What is the relationship between the GSFP and retention of pupils in basic schools in West Mamprusi Municipality?

The study looked at student retention in GSFP schools. At the selected GSFP schools, data on the whereabouts of students was collected for the school years 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. Tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 show the retention figures for the academic years 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019

Table 7: Retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2016/ 2017 academic year

Name of School	Number of pupils at the start of year	Number of pupils at the end of year	Number of pupils who dropped out	Percentage of pupils retained at the end of year
Nabari D/A Primary	861	811	50	94.2
Daboya D/A Primary	534	504	30	94.4
Guakodow D/A Primary	250	223	27	89.2
Shilinga D/A Primary	300	278	22	92.7

Total	1,945	1,816	129	93.4
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Source: Field survey (2019)

Table 8: Retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2017/ 2018 academic year

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Shilinga D/A Primary	300	278	22	92.7
Total	1,945	1,816	129	93.4

Source: Field survey (2019)

Table 9: Retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2018/ 2019 academic year

Name of School	Number of pupils at the start of year	Number of pupils at the end of year	Number of pupils who dropped out	Percentage of pupils retained at the end of year
Nabari D/A Primary	918	913	05	99.5
Daboya D/A Primary	580	572	08	98.6
Guakodow D/A Primary	298	296	02	99.3
Shilinga D/A Primary	368	368	00	100
Total	2,164	2,149	15	99.3

Source: Field survey (2019)

Tables 4.7 and 4.8 show that the total number of students admitted at the beginning of the academic year was 1,945. At the end of the school years (2016/2017 and 2017/2018) the number fell by 129 students to 1,816. Further investigation revealed that of the 129 students, 9 died, 20 dropped out of school and the remaining 100 went to live with their parents. This resulted in a dropout rate of 6.6% versus 93.4% for the overall retention rate. While the number of early school leavers may seem small, it is considered significant as the ideal situation is to achieve 100% student retention. On the other hand, the results from Table 4.9 show that there were 2,164 students enrolled at the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year. At the end of the year, the number fell slightly by 15 students to 2,149. The dropout rate for the year was 0.7%. It is therefore clear from the table that the overall retention was 99.3%. A comparison of Tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 shows that student retention has improved tremendously from 93.4% in the 2016/2017, 2017/2018 school years to 99.3% in the 2018/2019 school year. The improvement in retention within the study period was examined through interviews. In general, the interviews revealed a direct and positive correlation between student retention and GSFP. This means that the presence of the GSFP in the 2018/2019 academic year has led to an increase in deductibles.

Q.2. What are the challenges (if any) of the GSFP on basic school education in West Mamprusi Municipality? The GSFP's challenges in relation to basic education have been examined in the following sub-areas

- I. Teaching and learning challenges
- ii. Challenges for teachers
- iii. Infrastructural challenges

Teaching and learning challenges

Regarding the teaching and learning challenges of the GSFP in basic education, the teachers said that the GSFP has led to an increase in the enrollment and regular attendance of students. They further added that when schools did not join the GSFP, a number of students from their school returned to their homes for meals during school hours and some of the students did not return, affecting their learning, but now when the students come to school, they stay for the whole school term. Most of the school leaders interviewed alluded to the views of their teachers.

This is consistent with the observation of Bukari et al. (2015) in the Garu-Tempene district of the Upper East region of Ghana when they indicated that the GSFP had succeeded in increasing enrollment among participating schools. This also confirms Ahmed's (2004) findings that providing meals increases concentration and the quality of learning. Ahmed (2000) and Akanbi (2011) said that providing school meals not only attracts children to school but also attends them regularly. The views of school leaders and teachers are supported by Del Rosso (1999) when he said that feeding children at school is most likely to increase their attention and cognitive function and learning. In this respect, the actual goals of the GSFP were again emphasized by those surveyed

Challenges for Teachers

Regarding the challenges of the GSFP in terms of teacher requirements, teachers said that prior to the introduction of the GSFP; the teacher-student ratio was 1 teacher to 40 students. However, they pointed out that the increase in enrollments and retention as a result of the GSFP means additional work for them, as this does not automatically lead to an increase in the number of teachers. This means there are not enough teachers to manage the students in their learning needs. According to the teachers, 1 teacher taught between 52 and 59 students in one class in school year 2016/2017, 2017/2018, but in this school year 2018/2019 they teach between 64 and 68 students in one class. This means that the class teacher has a lot to do in terms of teaching and grading the activities.

Infrastructural challenges

Regarding the infrastructure impact of GSFP, the Head master at Guakodow D/A Primary School shared how his school suffered a decline in enrollment when the Catholic Relief Service (CRS), a school feeding programme, was discontinued. He attributed the drop in enrollment at his school to the exit from the CRS programme. He said again that the decrease or increase in student enrollment at my school is directly related to the absence or presence of GSFP. However, he pointed out that an increase in school enrollments and retention has led to overcrowding at his school. This view was confirmed by most participants. The views of these participants are supported by research conducted by Imoru (2010) when he stated that a 2008 national inventory of GSFPs by SNV Ghana found that the program had a positive impact on increasing first-time enrollments in most schools. Overall, primary school enrollment had increased by 12.8% by then, and kindergarten enrollment by 23.1%. Lambers (2009) attributed increased school enrollment, attendance, and retention rates to school meals. This study result was reflected in the GSFP's official record for the 2006/2007 academic year, when national enrollment and retention increased by 21%. The views of the participants in this study are clearly supported by the existing literature, as shown above.

However, a few participants noted that the increase in retention cannot be solely attributed to the GSFP as other factors play a role. They cited natural population growth, the lack of tuition payments, and parents' high educational awareness as contributing factors. A GSFP teacher at Daboya D/A Primary School said that while I agree that the GSFP is helping to increase enrollment and retention, it is also true to say that the population growth and the fact that parents are now interested in education, could lead to an increase in the numbers we're seeing these days. The views of this teacher and others are not very different from mine. While I credit GSFP for student retention, other initiatives are equally capable of increasing student retention and attendance in schools. These include providing free uniforms and exercise books, as well as free basic-level education.

CONCLUSIONS

From the conducted study regarding the impact of the programme on primary school retention, it is concluded that there is a direct and positive association between the presence of the GSFP in a school and student retention in that school. Since the presence of the GSFP leads to an increase in retention rates, it is prudent to replicate the program in all public elementary schools. This is particularly important as this research has proven that the foods students eat in schools make a significant contribution to positively improving their learning

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights and other questions that arose from the study, I made the following recommendations to strengthen the program to meet its intended goals

- i. Since the presence of the GSFP leads to an increase in student retention, it is prudent to replicate the program in all public elementary schools. This is particularly important as this research has proven that the foods students eat in schools make a significant contribution to positively improving their learning.
- ii. Community implementation committees should continue to oversee the quality and quantity of daily meals provided to students. This is necessary because the quality of the food, like its nutritional value, is a factor that motivates students to stay in school.
- iii. In general, the GSFP is not cost-effective in many respects. The holistic nutrition of the school children deserves special mention. Some of the school children do not like the food for reasons best known to them. It is best to collect baseline data on the socioeconomic status of each child's family to determine needs. The experiences of other countries have revealed significant weaknesses in the area of monitoring and evaluation. It is therefore important to break through the failing system (theory of change) if we want to move forward with the GSFP. Detailed monitoring and evaluation plans that are designed should be followed. Consequently, the transition to sustainable local/national programs needs to be reviewed as they develop.
- iv. For the program to be successful, the government must provide additional teachers and classrooms for schools under the GSFP.
- v. School Feeding Monitoring Committees (SFMC) need to be strengthened as authorities to which rights holders can lodge claims. Duty bearers have a duty to fulfill contractual terms and should be held accountable for their performance. The committees should consist of students, parents and teachers. Students, teachers and parents could make claims in relation to a number of issues such as: B. the food quality that would be specified in the SFP directive

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