

IMPLEMENTATION OF GHANA'S SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME: THE CASE OF GOMOA WEST DISTRICT.

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Abstract

This study explored the implementation of the School Feeding Programme in the Gomoa West district. It focused on school enrollment and the promotion of local food production and consumption resulting from the implementation of the School Feeding Programme (GSFP) in the district. It adopted a case study design that was situated in the interpretive paradigm. The study population covered headteachers, caterers, and the zonal coordinator in the district. The zonal coordinator, five (5) headteachers, and five (5) caterers of beneficiary schools were purposively selected. The instruments for data collection were interview guides and documents. Thematic data analysis was employed in the analysis of data. The study found that the GSFP has increased school enrollments in the Gomoa West district. The programme is also boosting local food production in beneficiary communities and other communities where food is procured. Delays in payment and insufficient funding were, among others, identified as challenges in the district. In light of the challenges identified, it is recommended that the current GHS 1.00 per pupil a day be increased by the government to improve quality and quantity. Furthermore, Communities and NGOs should provide standard kitchens for beneficiary schools to enhance hygiene in the programme.

Keywords: School Feeding, Enrollment, Local Food Production

Introduction

Many developed and developing countries have implemented a school feeding programmes (SFPs) in the education sector (Uduku, 2011). According to Awojobi (2019), SFPs consist of meals served to pupils in schools and take-home rations. It is a common way of enhancing school participation, promoting learning, and complementing school-age children's insufficient diets. These school meals have the possibility of reducing short-term hunger and aiding pupils' concentration to learn. The meal is frequently fortified to tackle nutritional deficiencies and enhance health and cognitive functioning (Awojobi, 2019).

According to the World Bank, SFPs are targeted social safety nets that provide educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism, and improving food security at the household level (World Bank, 2012). One of the main objectives of the Ghana School Feeding Programmes (GSFP) is to increase primary school enrollment, attendance, and retain school pupils (Odame, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The policy objectives of the GSFP were to improve school enrollment, attendance, and retention among pupils in the most deprived communities in Ghana as a strategy; promote an increase in domestic food production and consumption; increase the incomes of low rural households; and improve the health and nutritional status of the pupils (Government of Ghana, 2015).

A number of studies have, however, highlighted the impact of the School Feeding programme on enrollment and retention (Nyarko, 2014; Serebour, 2017; Tagoe, 2018 & Awojobi, 2019) with no focus on the connection between the SFP and domestic food production even though it is also part of the policy objectives. Further literature review revealed that researchers had given less attention to how the School Feeding programme promotes domestic food production and consumption. This creates a gap in the literature as far as this subject is concerned. The study explored the implementation of the School Feeding Programme in the Gomoa West district. It specifically focused on enrollment and local food production and consumption due to the performance of the Programme in the Gomoa West district.

Research Questions

1. How is the School Feeding Programme promoting an increase in domestic food production in the Gomoa West district?
2. What is the state of primary school enrollment in the Gomoa West District after implementing the School Feeding Programme?

Review of Related Literature

As a social intervention policy, the GSFP is considered by governments as an effective combination of education (that is the first objective of the GSFP) and agriculture (the third objective of the GSFP). The practical implementation of school feeding programmes can increase school attendance and stimulate the market demand for locally produced food commodities especially, in beneficiary communities.

Several studies have been conducted by researchers on the impact of school feeding programmes on primary education, especially regarding enrollment, attendance, and retention of pupils in schools in the areas of the programme's operation. A descriptive survey by Nyarko (2014) revealed that school meals increased enrollment, attendance, and retention; however, some challenges affected

the implementation of the programme at the school level. Similarly, despite the positive impact of SFP on educational outcomes, fees levied on school pupils by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) affected the result (Osei-Fosu, 2011). In the Atwima Mponua and Atwima Nwabiagya districts, it was discovered that school meals positively impact enrollment (Serebour, 2017). One of the operators of the social safety net attested to the positive impact of the intervention "...it is gratifying to note that the school feeding programme has so far gone very well. The enrollment numbers have almost doubled and, the current population of the pupils we have from Primary One (1) to Primary Six (6) is even getting out of hand" (p.91)." Aside the increase in enrollment in the two beneficiary schools, findings from Serebour's study revealed that the social safety net positively impacted attendance and retention.

The study that took place in the Ghanaian capital, Accra among the selected research of this review shows how little kids that are not supposed to be in school are enrolled due to the school meal "...little kids whom you wouldn't expect to be in primary school have now come to school. They can barely read or write, but they are here. I believe their parents brought them here because of the programme..., and it's simply because it never used to be the case before the introduction of the school feeding programme"(Tagoe, 2018, p. 51).

In the Telensi district, Konzabre (2018) found that GSFP had an impact on primary school enrollment and retention. After the introduction of GSFP, enrollment increased by 213 pupils. However, the study revealed that other confounding variables such as natural population increase, the absence of school fee payment, proximity to the school, and school academic achievements also impacted the school enrollment. As for retention, the study asserted that due to the GSFP, retention increased significantly. Rice with groundnut soup, rice and stew, Jollof rice, and other types of food provided by beneficiary schools in Bawku municipality was the subject of a study by Gyasi, Asante, Adams, and Antwi Boasiako (2018). Analysis from the pre-post research shows that enrollment and attendance increased when GSFP was introduced compared to when there was no GSFP. Odame (2014) analysed the impacts of the GSFP on educational outcomes in the Tema municipality. The beneficiary schools experienced an increase in school enrollment and attendance from households that did not have the resources to support their school-aged children to have a primary education. Findings from these studies thus provide an indisputable conclusion that the school feeding program has a positive impact on enrollment, attendance, and retention.

Through private caterers, the GSFP awards contract to procure, prepare and serve food to pupils in beneficiary schools, with each caterer feeding not more than 500 pupils prescribed by programme implementers.

Successful national school feeding programmes in middle-income and high-income countries tend to rely on local procurement of commodities. In contrast, programmes in low-income countries usually find themselves dependent on food aid (Bundy et al., 2009). This might suggest that there is an opportunity for low-income countries to kick-start their transition, not only to establish sustainable sources for some of their commodities but also contributing to local economic development. African governments, in pursuit of this opportunity in 2003, included locally sourced school feeding programmes in the Comprehensive Africa Development Programme. That same year, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, together with World Food Programme (WFP) and the Millennium Project Task Force on Hunger, launched a pilot Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Programme designed to link school feeding to agricultural development through the purchase and use of locally and domestically produced food (Bundy et al., 2009). They further argued that because school feeding programmes run for a fixed number of days a year (on average 180) and usually have

a predetermined food basket, they provide the opportunity to benefit local farmers and producers by generating a stable demand for their products.

The GSFP's procurement is highly decentralized and engages with the private sector to a large degree. It gives contracts to caterers to procure, prepare, and serve food to students in beneficiary schools. Caterers usually purchased foods from the local community market or traders. Foods from the local community market may have been sourced from within the proximate geographic area but may have also traveled from other regions or countries (Carvalho et al., 2011).

Methodology

The case study design was adopted. Glenn (2019) considers case research an exploratory and descriptive analysis related to a person, group, or event. This makes the case study a suitable design for this study because it is methodologically exploratory and descriptive. The findings of this study are meant to be understood within the context of the Gomoa West District. Stakeholders of the School Feeding Programme in the Gomoa West district were the target population of this study. By stakeholders, it is meant, school children, parents, school teachers, caterers, zonal coordinators, education directorates, district assembly, etc. Not all stakeholders' categories could be sampled for the study due to time and space, even though all of them have higher stakes in the district's programme. Five schools were purposively selected on the basis of the number of years of implementation of the programme. The researchers sought to include schools that had implemented the programme within a span of 5 to 10 years. The five selected schools have all implemented the programme for 9 years and hence their inclusion in the study. In all, a sample of eleven (11) was selected for the study comprising the Zonal Coordinator, five (5) Headteachers, and five (5) Caterers. The researchers purposively selected participants who possessed adequate knowledge about the implementation of the School Feeding Programme in the Gomoa West district.

Interview guides and documents were employed as instruments for collecting data. The Caterers' interview guides focused mainly on the first research question, which bothered on promoting an increase in domestic food production and consumption in the Gomoa West district. The interview guides for the Headteachers and the Zonal Coordinator focused on the study's two research questions. Regarding document analysis, class registers were analysed to enable the researchers to make accurate description of enrollment trends in the selected beneficiary schools.

A face-to-face interview was conducted within two weeks. With the permission of participants, the talks were recorded with the phone. This is in line with Cohen and Crabtree's (2006) view that it is generally best to tape-record interviews and later transcribe the data for analysis. Thematic analysis was adopted as the procedure for the analysis of interview data. Transcription of data began during the period for the interviews. This was done based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) position that data analysis may begin informally during interviews or observations and continue during transcription when recurring themes, patterns, and categories become evident. Before transcription, the audios were attentively played and listened to. Codes were then derived after a careful reading of the transcript had been done where the salient ideas in each response were captured in these codes. Categorization was done by determining the connections between the codes.

Similar codes were categorized to generate the themes presented in the analysis. Concerning document analysis, the researchers analyzed class registers of each beneficiary school from the year before implementation to the current year. The records used in the Years Before Implementation (YBI) were first analysed to obtain the year's enrollment figure before the execution. After this, registers covering nine years after the implementation were analysed to get the enrollment figures

for the nine years after the performance in each of the five selected beneficiary schools in the Gomoa West district.

Findings and Discussion

Two of the objectives of the School Feeding Programme were set out to be explored in this study. Selected responses from the eleven participants produced five themes - enrollment, Local food production, Financing, Quality and quantity, and Monitoring. All five themes derived have a bearing on the two objectives of the study. Each of the themes is presented below.

Enrollment

The participants commented positively on the School Feeding programme and basic school enrollments. In expressing her view, the coordinator had this to say:

The programme is really improving enrollment. Even some parents leave behind their children who have not yet attained school going age to enjoy the food. Sometimes there is attrition of pupils from non-beneficiary schools to nearby beneficiary schools. It is difficult to find a child of school going age out of school in a beneficiary community though sometimes some of the children come to school and leave immediately after enjoying the food. Despite all these I would say more children are in school due to the School Feeding programme (Zonal Coordinator).

A headteacher also commented:

In fact, let me be honest, there are challenges but the truth is that no system is hundred percent perfect. So, I will say the programme is good. I was told the programme started here in 2011 and since then the school has seen massive enrollment. The records show this. Enrollment in the primary school used to depend solely on pupils from our kindergarten but now we do admissions at all classes. The situation has changed because of the introduction of School Feeding Programme in the school. So, the programme is good and I pray that it continues because there will be a lot of dropout in the community if the programme is taken off the system (Headteacher 1).

Another headteacher expressed her view in the following way:

I have been told that there was attrition of pupils from other schools to this school when the programme was introduced in this school. So enrollment shot up at the initial years when the programme was implemented. As we speak now enrollment is not as high as the beginning. This does not also mean that we have more children of school going age in the community. The issue is quite complex but I think may be at the beginning a backlog of children who should have been in school long time were rushed to school thereby shooting the figures up initially. I must admit that sometimes it is difficult to tell the intention with which parents bring their wards to our school. But for us, our main concern is that children are coming to school to stay and learn (Headteacher 2).

A comment by another headteacher on the issue is captured below:

There are several children who followed their parents to the farm before the introduction of the school feeding programme in this school but all these kids are in school now after the introduction of the programme (Headteacher 4).

The responses above present a different dimension of enrollment which is pupils' attrition to beneficiary schools. This phenomenon means that as the programme increases enrollment in beneficiary schools, it reduces enrollment in non-beneficiary schools. It appears from this response that the School Feeding Programme is serving other needs apart from its core objective in the school in terms of increasing enrollments. If parents leave their children behind in schools for them to have a share of the food, then the programme is also helping to control hunger in our various communities. This finding coheres with the view of Awojobi (2019) that school meals have the possibility of reducing short-term hunger. The responses generally mean that the School Feeding programme is increasing enrollments though some responses also indicate otherwise. This finding confirms that of a number of studies (Ahmed, 2004; Mohamed, 2015; Nyarko, 2014). These studies found that School Feeding Programme can increase enrollment, attendance rates as well as test scores among pupils. Adamba et al. (n.d) had also found that net enrollment at the kindergarten level increased by nearly eleven per cent after the introduction of School Feeding Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa. From the data, it is clear that the programme is changing admission trends in primary schools in the district. Admission used to be done to enroll pupils in class one but now admissions can be done to enroll pupils into other classes. The data also suggest that the School Feeding Programme is checking dropout in primary schools in the district as retention of pupils is getting higher. The responses indicating either an increase or decline in enrollments after the implementation of the SFP are further corroborated by data from the document analysis.

Document Analysis

To obtain an accurate picture of enrollments in the selected beneficiary schools, class registers were analysed. The registers used in the Years Before Implementation (YBI) were first analysed to obtain the year's enrollment figure before the implementation. After this, registers covering nine years after the implementation were analysed to get the enrollment figures for the nine years after the implementation in each of the five selected schools. Data from the registers are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Enrollments in selected beneficiary schools

School	YBI	ENROL.	YEAR	ENROLLMENT						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
SCHOOL A	380	374	410	414	315	366	335	394	441	408
SCHOOL B	217	212	227	241	292	148	146	158	153	148
SCHOOL C	305	288	424	436	323	370	347	442	419	400
SCHOOL D	199	329	348	359	358	142	220	211	219	237
SCHOOL E	187	212	228	237	202	242	286	189	186	176
Field data (2020)										

Table 1 displays information gathered from document analysis about selected schools in terms of Years Before Implementation (YBI) with its corresponding enrollment in parenthesis. The table also displays the years of implementation of the programme with their corresponding enrollment figures in parenthesis. In school A, the programme commenced in 2012 with an enrollment of 374.

Meanwhile, enrollment in the year before implementation (YBI) 2011 was 380 which was higher than the enrollment in the year of implementation in school A. In 2013, enrollment increased by 36 at 410, 2014 had an increment of 4 at 414, 2015 realised a decrease of 95 at 319, 2016 realised an increase of 47 at 366, 2017 had a reduction of 31 at 335, 2018 realised an increase of 59 at 394, 2019 realised an increase of 47 at 441 with 2020 realising a decrease of 33 at 408. This gives five occasions of yearly increment and 3 occasions of yearly decline in enrollment since the implementation of the SFP in School A. This presents an unstable trend of enrollment in School A. In school B, the programme commenced in 2012 with an enrollment of 212. Meanwhile, enrollment in the year before implementation (YBI) 2011 was 217 which was higher than the enrollment in the year of implementation in school B. In 2013, enrollment increased by 15 at 227, 2014 realised an increment of 14 at 241, 2015 realised an increase of 51 at 292, 2016 realised a decrease of 144 at 148, 2017 realised a decrease of 2 at 146, 2018 realised an increase of 12 at 158, 2019 realised a decrease of 5 at 153 with 2020 also realising a reduction of 5 at 148. This gives four occasions of yearly increment and 4 occasions of yearly drop in enrollment since the implementation of the SFP in School B. This presents an unstable trend of enrollment in School B.

In school C, the programme commenced in 2012 with an enrollment of 288. Meanwhile, enrollment in the year before implementation (YBI) 2011 was 305 which was higher than the enrollment in the year of implementation in school C. In 2013, enrollment increased by 136 at 424, 2014 realised an increment of 12 at 436, 2015 realised a decrease of 113 at 323, 2016 realised an increase of 47 at 370, 2017 realised a reduction of 23 at 347, 2018 realised an increase of 95 at 442, 2019 realised a decrease of 23 at 419 with 2020 also realising a decline of 19 at 400. This gives four occasions of yearly increment and four events of yearly decrease in enrollment since the implementation of the SFP in School C. This presents an unstable enrollment trend in School C. In school D, the programme commenced in 2012 with an enrollment of 329. Meanwhile, enrollment in the year before implementation (YBI) 2011 was 199, which was lower than the enrollment in the year of performance in school D. In 2013, enrollment increased by 19 at 348, 2014 realised an increment of 11 at 359, 2015 realised a decrease of 1 at 358, 2016 realised a reduction of 216 at 142, 2017 realised an increase of 78 at 220, 2018 realised a reduction of 9 at 211, 2019 realised an increase of 8 at 219 with 2020 also realising an increase of 18 at 237. This gives five occasions of yearly increment, and 3 occasions of yearly decrease in enrollment since the implementation of the SFP in School D. This presents an unstable trend of enrollment in School D.

In school E, the programme commenced in 2012 with an enrollment of 212.

Meanwhile, enrollment in the year before implementation (YBI) 2011 was 187 which was lower than the enrollment in the year of implementation in school E. In 2013, enrollment increased by 16 at 228, 2014 realised an increment of 9 at 237, 2015 realised a decrease of 35 at 202, 2016 realised an increase of 40 at 242, 2017 realised an increase of 44 at 286, 2018 realised a reduction of 97 at 189, 2019 realised a decrease of 3 at 186 with 2020 also realising a decrease of 10 at 176. This gives four occasions of yearly increment and 4 occasions of yearly decrease in enrollment since the implementation of the SFP in School E. This presents an unstable trend of enrollment in School E. It is evident from Table 1 that enrollment increased in the first two years after implementing the SFP. However, in subsequent years, enrollment could either go up or come down. Thus, the instability in enrollment began from the third year onwards. Therefore, it can be posited that SFP implementation increases enrollment at the early stages, but enrollment becomes unstable as the programme is implemented for a longer time. The decline in enrollment in some years after implementing the SFP in the five selected schools is a departure from the trend of findings in the literature, which highlighted increase in enrollment

after the implementation of the school feeding programme. The meaning of the data in Table 1 is that implementation of SFP may not always lead to an increment in enrollment as years go by despite the fact that implementation of school feeding programme leads to an increase in enrollment generally.

Local food production

The second objective of the study was to explore the School Feeding Programme regarding how it promotes local food production. The coordinator expressed her view by saying:

Food items are not necessarily to be purchased in the local community. In fact, they could be bought from anywhere just that they must be local food stuffs. I think the promotion of local food production should be given a national interpretation but not that production in each beneficiary community should increase because of the School Feeding Programme though it's a possibility. The idea is that, when local food stuffs are used in cooking for the pupils, it would increase local food production in Ghana. This can reduce poverty too (Zonal Coordinator).

On the same issue, a headteacher said this:

I will say the programme is boosting local food production because the caterer uses local food stuffs. The vegetables are usually bought from the community. The caterer sometimes even brings some of the food stuffs from her own farm. She cooks Gari and beans, plantain, banku. As for rice she normally buys from Mankessim, Apam or Swedru (Headteacher 3).

A caterer also had this to say:

I will use myself as an example, I am planting certain vegetables now in my farm because of this programme. I have told other people to do the same so that I do not travel far to go and buy food stuffs. I most of the times buy my corn in this community. The only problem I am facing is that sometimes I buy on credit but the farmers want ready cash to take care of their families. Even with this I will still say the programme is boosting local food production (Caterer 2).

Another caterer on the same issue commented:

I buy some of the food items such as rice and beans from Swedru and Mankessim markets. These are food items which are not produced in this locality and even though some people sell some here we look at the competitive nature of prices. Imagine someone bringing maize from Techiman to sell here, can you buy it? Products such as vegetables and fish which are produced here, we buy from the local market because it's cheap (Caterer 3).

The data discussed means that the SFP is boosting local food production. However, the word “Local” appears to have been understood in two different ways. First is the understanding of “Local” in terms of the nation Ghana as a single community. Second is the understanding of “Local” in terms of a beneficiary community. Thus, if local food stuffs are used in cooking for the children irrespective of where they were purchased in Ghana, the programme could still be said to be improving local food production. On the other hand, if caterers also rely on food stuff in the beneficiary community, the programme could still be considered boosting local food production. These two dimensions are reflected in Carvalho et al. (2011) finding that caterers usually purchased foods from the local

community market or from within the proximate geographic area, or the traders could have also traveled from other regions. The benefit of these two dimensions is that they offer a broader perspective on the concept of local food production about the School Feeding Programme. The finding that foodstuffs are purchased from local farmers or traders in the beneficiary communities is supported by Bundy et al. (2009) who emphasized that because school feeding programmes run for a fixed number of days a year (on average 180) and usually have a predetermined food basket, they provide the opportunity to benefit local farmers and producers by generating a stable demand for their products. In this sense, the GSFP could be said to be influencing food production in a positive manner in the beneficiary communities and Ghana at large.

Finance

Issues of finance bothered on the mode of payment and availability of funds to implement the programme in the district. The following comments were made by the coordinator.

In terms of payment the government deals directly with the caterers. Each caterer is captured in Accra and so payments are done directly to their accounts. Each caterer will have to pre-finance for payment to be made later. Things appear to be better now because now if you pre-finance for three months, payment will be done in bulk for all the 3 months, unlike previously where it would have been paid in bits. Formerly the caterers were paid salaries but the payment delayed and now it has been attached to the overall payment for each child. Currently government pays GHS 1.00 per pupil per day. This GHS 1.00 is also to cover salary of the caterer and her cooks in the school. (Coordinator).

A headteacher also had this say:

As a head I am required to monitor the programme in the school and that is all. How they get money to cook is actually not part of what I am in charge of. But I know that the money paid to the caterers is inadequate. She is really trying her best in cooking something good for them. The former caterer used to complain about delays in salaries but now it appears their worry is about the amount which they say is small (Headteacher 2).

Another headteacher expressed quite a contrary view:

I must tell the truth that the payment is not regular and this is making the work of the caterer very difficult. She has always been pre-financing, but the money is not paid on time. She has had to purchase food on credit sometimes. For that aspect they need to do something about it. The amount itself is not enough and it is not regular too (headteacher 3).

A caterer's view on the issue is captured as

As for our money it takes quite some time before we get it. As I talk to you now we are in arrears for two terms whiles our creditors are also demanding their money. Sometimes, I have to purchase food items on credit otherwise the children will not eat. You know am also a parent so.....For me this is my major problem (Caterer 5).

The data highlight the mode of payment currently in use. Thus, the government deals directly with caterers without intermediaries. It is a kind of contract between the government and the caterers to provide food for the primary school pupils. This finding is a confirmation of the view expressed in Carvalho et al. (2011) that the GSFP's procurement is highly decentralized and engages with the private sector to a large degree. He said further that the GSFP gives contracts to caterers to procure, prepare, and serve food to students in beneficiary schools. This study's findings imply that all other stakeholders are supporting agents meant to help the government achieve her ultimate goal. As a kind of contract, caterers are expected to pre-finance for payment to be made later. Unfortunately, payment is said to be delayed by government sometimes though there is a dissenting view of this opinion. The data also suggest a kind of self-remuneration on the part of the caterers. They remunerate themselves on the remaining amount after cooking for the children for a specific duration. Caterers therefore determine the amount to be spent on cooking and what should be used as remuneration for themselves and supporting cooks, if any. The data also indicate how inadequate the amount paid for each child on a day is and how this is making the work of caterers very difficult.

Quality and Quantity

Data gathered also throw more light on the issue of quality and quantity in the programme. Quality deals with how nutritious the food is and the quantity has to do with the volume of food given to each child at a meal. Commenting on the quality, a headteacher said:

The quality of the food is good and it is prepared under good hygienic condition. We don't have a kitchen so the caterer prepares the food from the house and brings it. I have been visiting her house from time to time to monitor the hygienic conditions under which she cooks and also to check whether she uses good ingredients to cook. In fact, things are not bad at all. Sometimes I taste the food myself and it is good and nutritious. As for the quantity it varies because when they cook rice you can see from what the children are holding that it is not enough. However, when they cook Banku or Gari, the quantity is always not bad, so it varies (Headteacher 4).

Another headteacher expressed her opinion in the following words:

I will say that the quality is sometimes a problem because of the large number of pupils they cook for. So, for me the quality problem is not as a result of bad ingredients used but the volume of food cooked creates the quality problems. I sometimes hear complains when they cook Banku in particular for the children. You know that preparing Banku is very difficult and the problem becomes worse if the quantity is large. So this is what we are facing here. For the quantity I will say it is not bad. They cook gari and beans, wakyie, rice balls, plain rice, banku etc. (Headteacher 3).

The responses on quality and quantity present diversified opinions in relation to the food cooked for the children. Though quality is presented to be good with regard to the food and to highlight the right hygienic conditions under which the food is cooked, there is also a perception that the quality concerning a specific diet (Banku) is not good. The position on quantity is fairly positive as there is a view that the quantity of rice is usually small. These mean that there is a need for improvement in the quality and quantity of the district's food in general. However, generally, it is found that the food is nutritious. This affirms the original goal of the school feeding programme, which is to feed school children with nutritionally adequate, locally prepared food with a focus on local foodstuffs

(Government of Ghana, 2015). This finding also finds support in Awojobi (2019) that school meal is frequently fortified to tackle the nutritional deficiencies and enhance health and cognitive functioning.

Monitoring

To ascertain how effective the School Feeding Programme is in increasing enrollment and promoting local food production, it became necessary to explore monitoring issues. Expressing his view on monitoring, a headteacher said:

Monitoring is effective because the school is close to the District Assembly. On a scale of ten, I will rate monitoring at 7. The DCE sometimes comes here to see what is going on. The coordinator also comes to check on them. The District Director of Education is even involved in monitoring. He has come here just to see how the programme is going. I have also been tasked as a head to monitor the programme closely in the school (Headteacher 1).

A caterer also commented that:

We are not allowed to do what we like here. They ensure that we cook in hygienic environment because of the conditions of our kitchen. The headteacher does the monitoring more than the other officers. I am not saying the office people don't come but because the headteacher is with us here, he is always on us. The coordinator comes here but hers is not frequent. The DCE also comes here to see what we do. The last time he came here I told him that the GHS 1.00 is not enough so he should do something about it (Caterer 3).

It is evident from the above data that monitoring of the School Feeding Programme is effective in the Gomoa West district. The monitoring is done primarily by the DCE, District Director of Education, Zonal Coordinator, and the Headteachers. Among these four, the headteachers are presented as actively engaged in monitoring, perhaps because of their proximity to the kitchen.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study sought to explore the SFP on two of its objectives: enrollment and promotion of local food production. The study found that the SFP increased enrollments in the Gomoa West district but there were instances of decline in enrollment after the implementation of the SFP. It also found that the programme was boosting local food production, but it should be understood from a broader perspective rather than limiting it to a single beneficiary community. In light of the challenges identified, it is recommended that the current GHS 1.00 per pupil in a day should be increased to improve quality and quantity. Also, there should be timely disbursement of funds, and also some form of mobilization funds should be advanced to caterers. Finally, Communities and NGOs should get involved to provide standard kitchens for beneficiary schools to improve hygiene in the programme.



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