

Assessing Influence of School Feeding Programme on Learners' Enrollment, Attendance and Academic Performance in Basic Schools in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality

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Abstract: This study utilized the qualitative research design to explore the influence of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) on learners' enrollment, attendance and academic performance in Basic Schools in Komenda, Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality. The research sought to address the objectives which include; to examine the influence of school feeding programme on improving enrolment, attendance and retention of Basic school learners in Komenda, Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality; to exploring the influence of school feeding programme on the academic performances of Basic School learners in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality and to examining challenges encountered by the school feeding programme in the Komenda, Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality. The study used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to explore between hunger and educational outcomes. Twenty-one respondents were selected from five selected schools in the Komenda, Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality of the Central Region, Ghana to participate in the research. Respondents for the research were selected through the purposive type of sampling and they included head teachers, school feeding coordinators, parents, teachers in charge of the school feeding programme in the various schools, and caterers of the programme. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study revealed the perceptions respondents have about the SFP and its influence on enrollment, attendance, completion and the academic performances of Basic School learners. Overall, the research respondents perceive the SFP to improve the educational and academic outcomes of Basic school learners. The research also found other issues such as improvement in cognitive development and reduction of hunger associated with the programme. Furthermore, the research found some major challenges of the SFP and its implementation. These include lack of financial resources, the delay of funds to support the implementation of the SFP and poor nutrition mainly associated with improper menu planning by caterers and the frequent absence of vegetables and fruits in school meals. The research also explored respondents' knowledge on the SFP and whether the programme should be expanded to other schools. The study also made some recommendations on the various ways in which the implementation of the school feeding programmes (SFP) can be improved to meet its objectives. This include; the government should ensure that money allocated to the programmes is expanded in the annual fiscal spending of the state, the government must ensure that there are increased collaborations and partnerships for the programme and periodic monitoring and evaluation could ensure that the objectives of the programme are met.

Keywords: School feeding programme, Learners, Enrolment, Academic performance, Influence, Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality.

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INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The introduction presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations and the organization of the study

1.1 Background to the study

The second United Nations Millennium Development Goal is to achieve Universal Basic

Education, more specifically, to "ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of basic schooling" (World Bank, 2005, p.15). Currently, there are more than 100 million children around the world of primary school age who are not in school. The majority of these children are in regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and within these countries, girls are at the greatest disadvantage in receiving access to education at the primary school level. Since the Millennium Development Goals were launched,

there have been many successes. For example, China, Chile,

Cuba, Singapore and Sri Lanka are all examples of developing countries that have successfully completed a campaign towards universal primary education. School access and attendance are factors that can determine the success of a child's education. Attendance promotes academic performance: lack of access to schooling can be extremely detrimental. In a study done to evaluate the relationship between school attendance and performance, researchers found that attending less than 100% of classes tended to reduce scholastic performance (Cohn, 2006). When schools are easy to access children are more likely to get an education and consequently, have a financially stable future. An education is an investment for the future and there is evidence to prove that not attending school regularly will reduce academic performance and consequently a child's opportunity for success.

Yet, Poverty prevents children from attending school and those that do not attend are at high risk of exploitation through child labour, child trafficking as well as becoming victims of violence (United Nations, 2000). According to World Food Programme (2000), hungry pupils do not concentrate on learning. Therefore, the disadvantaged pupils who attend school are likely to repeat the cycle of hunger and poverty in the future due to lack of education if not assisted with school feeding programme (United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organization, 1999).

Each year, World Food Programme provides millions of school children with food in the world as an incentive to lure children to school and maintain their attendance. The programme targets areas where enrolment ratios are lowest and which can have the greatest effect on improving education standards of the children (WFP,1999). In 2001, WFP launched a global campaign to expand access to education for millions of children in the world. By then, there were 66 million schoolchildren attending school hungry in the world (World Food Programme, 2001)

According to Ahmed (2004), school meals increased pupils' participation in school. Ahmed found that school feeding increased pupils' enrolment, reduced dropout rate, increased attendance and improved performance in participating schools as compared to their counterparts where no feeding programmes were available.

In Africa, some regions are adversely affected by drought and famines which affects children severely than adults. In 1999, 29 countries in these regions including: North of Africa zone bordering Senegal, Upper Volta and Chad in the South and Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Egypt in the North. The zone extends South East through Somalia and Northern Kenya. In the South of equator, the zone covers Lesotho parts of Cape, Northern Transvaal and Free State province of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and

parts of Zimbabwe. These regions benefited from WFP food assistance to relieve children from hunger (UNESCO,1999). It has been noticed that when school feeding programmes are introduced to school, enrollment increases.

For instance, when a school feeding programme that consisted school meals and home rations for girls was introduced in 2000 by WFP in Morocco, enrolment of girls in schools increased within two years of the programmes' implementation. Niger was one of the countries with the five lowest school enrollment rates in the world. However, the introduction of the school feeding programme which was intended to enhance the attendance of nomad and transhumant families, particularly of girls, enrolments were noted to have increased by about 30 percent within two years of the implementation the programmes (WFP, 1988).

School feeding programmes constitute critical interventions that have been introduced in many developed and developing countries of the world to address the issue of poverty, stimulate school enrolment and enhance pupils' performance. In developing countries, almost 60 million children go to school hungry every day and about 40 percent of them are from Africa. Providing school meals is therefore vital in nourishing children. Parents are motivated to send their children to school instead of keeping them at home to work or care for siblings (Akanbi, 2013). The introduction of school feeding is traced to the MDGs initiative and several conferences held thereafter by African leaders which aimed to tackle issues, such as peace, security, good economic, political and corporate governance and to make the continent an attractive destination for foreign investment. Some of these developments include the 'New Partnership for African Development' which according to the blueprint is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, to eradicate poverty and to place their countries on the path of sustainable growth and development and, at the same time, to participate actively in the world economy and politics. Also, the 'Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme' and the 'Millennium Hunger Task Force' amongst others were initiatives which were designed to link school feeding to agricultural development through the purchase and use of locally produced food (Bundy et al, 2009).

School Feeding Programme (SFP) is a crucial ingredient in the human's body growth and cognitive development. Children need a reliable food supply to meet the metabolic supplies of body growth and brain development (Akanbi, 2013). Setting priority to school feeding programme is fundamental involvement in reducing the short- term hunger, providing learner's cognitive function and enhancing the learning environment (Lawson, 2012). The school feeding programme would enable learners to increase their regular attendance in order to improve their academic

performance. The study carried out in Malawi had been indicated that school feeding programme had an effect on learner's enrollment and attendance. The enrollment increased by up to 5% and improvement of attendance was up to 36% (WFP, 1996).

It is believed that short-term hunger in the classroom may affect the academic performance of learners. Further, it has been suggested that a school feeding programme if provided properly did raise school enrollment and increased school attendance (Ahmed, 2004). School feeding programme greatly promotes the learning style of learners in schools. It is one of the key interventions for promoting learning to learners in the areas of food insecurity. This can motivate learners to concentrate and learn better so as to improve learning capacity and performance. Therefore, it is apparent that the supply of food to learners in the primary schools level had increased school attendance and reduced dropout among the learners in the community schools in Tanzania (Malila, 2015). Learners involved in the school feeding programme has access to enhancing their academic performance since it enabled them to attend school frequently and learn more efficiently (Yunusa, Gumel, Adegbusi & Adegbusi. 2012). Myers (2016) established that children from basic schools who participated in school breakfast programme had shown significant growth in academic function. In Ghana, school feeding programme introduced in 2003 made an amazing increase in pupil enrollment from about half a million to about 1.04 million by 2010 (WFP, 2001).

1.2. Statement of the problem

Subsidized meal programmes used primarily to promote enrollment and retention of rural children in schools have played an integral part in realizing the country's goal of universal primary education. The Ghana School Feeding Programme has been implemented since 2005 in the context of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar III and in response to the first and second Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education (Yunusa, et al. 2012). Throughout implementation, the basic idea of the programme has been to provide children in public primary schools and kindergartens with one hot nutritious meal, prepared from locally grown foodstuffs, on every school-going day. The broad and specific policy objectives were that school feeding efforts in Ghana would seek to improve school enrolment, 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 poor rural households; and improve the health and nutritional status of the pupils

Komenda,Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality in the Central Region is faced with food insecurity due to their main occupation which is fishing. Some of the factors which have caused food insecurity are few people who do farming, because of the seafood crops do not grow well there and the infertile soil. Education in the Komenda,Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) municipality therefore is quite important for the school-going children however, it has been threatened by inadequate food hence, introduction of school feeding programme in the municipality. According to the Daily Nation of 17th April, 2013, the children who live in rural areas have lower school enrolment and completion rates as compared to their counterparts in major cities (Myers, 2016). According to (GES,2019) Access to pre-primary and primary school is limited due to malnutrition. The provision of food is significant in education especially to vulnerable children, even though the government has been making attempts of keeping pupils in school through free compulsory basic education which majority are failing to enroll, but instead drop out of school due to hunger (GES, 2019) parents have continued to provide support. Through the help of Parent Association (PA) kitchens and classrooms are built in the schools but pupils' participation is still going down particularly in academic performance. It was against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the influence of school feeding programme on learners' participation in relation to attendance, enrolment, academic performance and retention

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the impacts of the school feeding programme on the academic performances of Basic School learners in Komenda,Edina Eguafu Abrem(KEEA) Municipality
2. To examine the influence of school feeding programme on improving enrolment, attendance, and retention of basic school learners in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem(KEEA) Municipality
3. To examine challenges encountered by the school feeding programme in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality.

1.4. Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the impacts of the school feeding programme on the academic performances of Basic School learners in Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality?
2. What is the influence of school feeding programme on improving enrolment, attendance, and retention of Basic School learners in Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality?

3. What are the challenges encountered by the school feeding programme in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality?

1.5. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine how school feeding programme has influence on enrolment, attendance and retention of children in some basic schools in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study will inform policymakers about the benefits and challenges of the school feeding programme. It will also inform policymakers the various ways to ensure the goals of the programme is achieved and ways of addressing the challenges associated with the programme.

Additionally, the study will help policymakers to make analyses of the impact on school enrollment, attendance, completion and impacts of the programme on the academic performances of primary School pupils. Furthermore, this study will also add to the existing literature and provide additional information on the school feeding programme that will help in future research.

The findings may be beneficial to the government and education stakeholders by showing how school feeding programme assisted in guaranteeing learners' regular school attendance and active participation in school activities. It may reveal the significant role played by school feeding programme in the attainment of universal primary education on the way to realizing Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and educational vision. The study will also awaken teachers to maximize their teaching efforts as the learners are ready and motivated to learn. The study may also form a base for further studies for scholars interested in the area.

1.7. Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to cover selected primary school as well as municipal education office in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) municipality in the Central Region. The content of this research focused on how the school feeding programme has influenced on enrolment, attendance and retention of children in some basic schools in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality. Therefore, the study investigated the influence of the school feeding programme on improving enrolment, attendance, the influence of the school feeding programme on the academic performances of Basic school learners, the challenges encountered by the school feeding

programme and the factors necessary for efficient and effective implementation of the school feeding programme.

1.8. Definition of Terms

School Feeding Programme: has been defined by World Bank as a targeted social safety net that provides both educational and health benefits to the most vulnerable children, thereby increasing enrollment rates, reducing truancy, and improving food security at the household level. Beyond improvements in access to food, school feeding programmes also have a positive impact on nutrition.

Dropout refers to stopping to attend school of a learner who had been enrolled in a certain school before completing a course for example; eight years' primary course.

Enrollment refers to the number of learners registered in a school.

Learners' involvement refers to the learner's active participation in the class learning activities.

Participation refers to the learners actively and lively taking part in teaching-learning activities. This encompasses learner's enrolment, daily attendance, class learning activities and completion of the course.

Learners attendance refers to both daily going to school of a learner and being available in class to learn.

Active participation: refers to active involvement, either by a learner or groups of learners in the class and other learning activities in class.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the researcher reviews literature on the concept of pupils' participation. The section presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. It also examines the influence of school feeding programme on improving enrolment, attendance, and retention, it explored the impacts of the school feeding programme on the academic performances of primary School children, again examine the challenges encountered by the school on feeding programme, it identifies the factors necessary for efficient and effective implementation of the school feeding programme and finally summarized the whole chapter.

2.1 Introduction

The pledge made by all signatories of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security at the World Food

Summit in 1996 was to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015 (Chabite, Garrine, Ferrão, 2018). An international commitment to improving global nutrition and food security was born, and targets for reducing child and maternal malnutrition were set however not achieved. Quantifying regional nutrition status is important for identifying the burden caused by malnutrition and initiating successful interventions Chabite et al. (2018)

Malnutrition is one of the leading causes of under-five deaths especially in resource-constraint settings. Effort at addressing the high prevalence of malnutrition in most developing countries is hampered by paucity of data on its prevalence and thus most of these countries are not in harmony with the levels of malnutrition and the required urgent attention (Chabite et al., 2018). Global malnutrition is of concern to public health practitioners. There are certain factors which should alert the primary health care team to the fact that nutritional intake may be reduced and that risk of malnutrition is increased (Chabite et al., 2018).

These include disease condition, functional disabilities, inadequate or inappropriate food intake, poor dentition or difficulty swallowing, pharmaceuticals, alcoholism, depression, poor social and financial circumstances or recent discharge from hospital. The indicators used to assess the state of malnutrition and its underlying causes can be categorized into biological indicators (anthropometric, biochemical and clinical) and social determinants (Chabite et al., 2018). Nutrition research can be aimed at identifying the various social, cultural, political, and economic factors of nutrition in order to fully understand the underlying causes of malnutrition (Chabite et al., 2018)

To reduce malnutrition and improve child survival, school feeding programmes have been established in many countries of Africa to develop optimal feeding strategies and improve nutritional status of children. However, prevalence of child malnutrition remains high, especially in urban slums. Most African countries adopted school feeding programmes as a strategy for enhancing the retention and performance of students while also bringing economic benefits to farmers and local communities. At least 368 million children in the world are fed daily at school, through school meals programmes that are run in varying degrees by national governments (Chabite et al., 2018).

These school meals not only encourage children and promotes their health, they are also crucial in helping access to education as they increase school enrolment, attendance and achievement. In addition, the health and educational benefits of school meals have a lifelong impact although education level of the mother, family size and absence of a father may overrule the effect of the school feeding programme.

Chabite et al. (2018) recognized that school meals are the world's most widely-used s-social safety net, with multiple benefits for students, farmers and communities.

The systems are different among continents, with different objectives, impact and sustainability. From the 55 African countries, only 12 are considered to have a high or medium human development index (HDI) and increased number of African Governments have committed themselves to develop their own school feeding programmes, Mozambique set up a SFP in 2013 implemented in 12 schools until 2015 as a pilot experience. Currently, the programme (PRONAE) is being implemented in more than 70 schools. An agreement signed between the Mozambican government, the World Food Programme and Russia guarantees the conversion of a debt from Mozambique to Russia in funding for development programmes. As a result, PRONAE will receive investments until 2021 to expand its reach to 300 schools, linked to smallholder farming. Despite many positive aspects, several drawbacks were encountered and served for future correction namely the adjusting of farmers to legal requirements. Each school meal programme is different: beans and rice in Madagascar, spicy lentils in the north of Africa, vegetable pastries and fruit in South Africa. In some countries it may be a healthy snack, or it could include take-home food such as vitamin A-enriched oil for the whole family. Indeed, many States are learning and adapting lessons from those running school feeding programmes so as to enhance access to and retention of children in school (Chabite et al., 2018).

2.2 School feeding programmes

Chabite et al. (2018) suggest that Brazil pioneered a School Feeding Programme (SFP) established in 1953 followed by India in the 80's. The cooperation between Brazil and India is an example of partnership between two developing countries that focus their efforts in the global issue of fighting poverty. School Feeding Programmes (SFP) across the world have now been established and are seen as a social safety net for vulnerable sections of the population and as an educational intervention aimed at ensuring that children go to school and learning is improved by elimination of hunger in the classroom.¹³ United Nations produced guidelines to develop and implement school feeding programmes that improve education recognizing school feeding as a vector for social development and suggesting the allocation of resources by the World Bank to such programmes in national budgets (Chabite et al., 2018).

The Centre of Excellence against Hunger launched in Brazil in 2011 with WFP continues its partnership with African countries to assist them in moving forward in food security and achieving Zero Hunger by 2030. But is this really achievable? We believe zero hunger in the world is similar to a better world with no diseases, no poverty and no wars, which is not plausible (Chabite et al., 2018). Wars and hunger never ended for millennia and will

prevail. The aim is to minimize and avoid these constraints in every country. In each region an analysis must be made on the challenges and opportunities for governance towards a healthy, accessible, and equitable food regime at all levels, starting from implementing a reliable National Food and Nutrition Security Policy where School Feeding Programmes are included focusing on improved nutrition and nutrition education in schools (Chabite et al., 2018).

2.3 Theoretical framework

The study is guided by Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation advocated by Vroom (1964). According to this theory, the intensity of a tendency to perform in a particular manner is dependent on the intensity of an expectation that the performance will be followed by a definite outcome and on the appeal of the outcome to the individual. Tolman (1932) attributed the results of reinforcement to learning but not regarding reinforcement as a necessary condition for learning to take place. The pupils who mainly faced hunger and starvation due to floods will be motivated to continue with the learning process with the hope of receiving hunger pangs. However, in Vroom's theory, valence is the emotional orientation toward particular outcomes (rewards) or is the value the person attaches to the outcome. Therefore, it is the attractiveness or performance for a particular outcome of an individual. The school feeding programme is an incentive to attract children to school and enable them to learn. Expectancy is a momentary belief concerning the likelihood that a particular act will be followed by a particular outcome (the belief that better efforts will result to better performance). Then instrumentality that good performance will lead to valid outcome. To the pupils, expectancy is the (internal) beliefs that going to school (regularly) will enable them to acquire quality education and the education empowers them to be free from the pains of hunger and flood in future. Therefore, school feeding programme facilitates pupils to learn by solving short-term hunger and making them healthy to cope with class work.

2.4 The Concept and Origin of School Feeding Programme

School feeding is simply the provision of food to learners through schools. According to Oyefade (2014), different countries have one or a combination of the two feeding modalities in place for various objectives. However, they can be grouped into two broad categories: in-school meals and take-home rations where families are given food if their children attend school. Historically, in-school meals have been the most popular modality of school feeding interventions. The school feeding can be in turn grouped into two common categories: programme

that provides meals and programme that provides high-energy biscuits or snacks to generate greater impacts on school enrolment, retention rates, and reduce gender or social gaps (Akanbi, 2013). Uduku, (2011) contended that there are indications of a significant swing in thinking about school feeding and many elements of this new thinking are being promoted keenly under the rubric of "home grown school feeding".

Tomlinson (2007) traced the emergence of school feeding programme to the 1930s in the United Kingdom and the United States of America with a focus on improving the growth of children. In 1900 the Netherlands became the first country to move the programme to a new level of incorporating school meals into national legislation. By the 1930s, the United Kingdom and the United States had also instituted the school feeding programme as part of their national programmes. A further account indicates that school feeding initiatives have been in existence since the late 1700's and originated as projects of donors in Europe. The United States of America began the practice of initiating school feeding programmes in Austria as an act of international aid focused on combating the severe malnutrition of children in the 1940s after the Second World War. Since then, school feeding programmes have become a key part of food assistance, relief emergency and development programmes. The School Feeding Programme is a social safety net for learners and as part of the national development goals. It provides an important new opportunity to assist poor families and feed hungry children. It provides incentive for poor families to send their children to school and keep them there.

2.5 Influence of School Feeding Programme on Improving Enrolment, Attendance, and Retention

Enrollment is the number of learners who are registered and maintained in the school registers from basic one to basic nine. The School feeding programme was started to increase participation of learners in the marginalized areas of the world. According to World Food Programme (2002) in Nepal, School Feeding Programme improved enrolment rates; the gross enrolment was 39 percent higher for all children and 43 percent higher for girls compared to non-supported schools.

In 1996 in Malawi, a small pilot school feeding programme performed excellently when it improved enrolment of the participating schools by 5 percent in a period of 3 months as compared to others not participating in schools. It shows that school meals are effective in attracting children to school especially girls, orphaned and vulnerable children.

In Ghana, the Ghanaian school feeding programme which was implemented in 2007 in 975 schools marked a success in bringing more children into schools as on average schools increased enrolment by 20 percent (Netherlands' Development Organization, 2007).

The availability of subsidized in-school meals will increase school enrollment if the programme changes the household's schooling decision for some children who would not have been enrolled in school otherwise. And for these households to enroll their children, they need to be convinced that the net benefits of participating in the programme exceed the gap between direct and opportunity cost of schooling and the expected benefit of schooling (Adelman, Gilligan & Lehrer. 2008). In other words, households usually compare the size of the transfer relative to the size of the cost-benefit gap and these comparisons ultimately determine the magnitude of the increase in enrollment rates.

Another important point is about the roles that school meals play in encouraging early enrollment. Even though in-school meals are believed to affect age at entry through an income effect, i.e., by increasing household income and raising the benefit of attending school, yet this income effect should be large enough to make households send their children to school. Adelman, et al. (2008), show that school meals affect the age at entry in different ways. First, the provision of food offsets the cost of educating learners by making available additional income for households, and consequently raising the benefits of attending school. This is called income effect of school feeding. When this income effect is large, it can cause households to send their children to school at a relatively younger age thereby minimizing the possibility of late entry. Secondly, the 'neighborhood effect' resulting from School Feeding Programme may also influence the age at entry. That means the act of households to send their children to school earlier with the commencement of School Feeding Programme would create a social pressure and prompt similar action on the part of those who haven't enrolled their children yet (Adelman, et al., 2008).

12 The Challenges Encountered by the School on Feeding Programme

The School Feeding Programme is an initiative of the comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) pillar three which seeks to enhance food security and reduce hunger in line with the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals. CAADP is an initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD, 2003) that seeks to "Help African countries reach higher growth through agriculture-led development which eliminates hunger, reduces poverty and food insecurity and enables expansion of exports".

As a policy measure, the Government of Ghana in 2005 piloted the School Feeding Programme to provide food to children at school. The objective was to reduce hunger, malnutrition and increase enrolment and retention and secondly boost domestic food production in deprived communities of the country. SFP is a two-

component policy initiative which seeks to increase accessibility and quality of education at the same time boost local agricultural productivity. SFP over the years has been plagued with sustainability questions; most prominent among them is the availability of funds.

According to government, the programme is to feed 1,740,000 learners in 4,881 schools nationwide. Delayed payments, bad sanitation practices of the catering staff and the use of substandard ingredients which lack any nutritional value are been used to feed the learners, exposing them to serious health risks. On countless occasions learners had to be rushed to the hospital after eating their daily meals. This defeat's programmes focal objective is promoting good health in children and improving access and quality of learning. Since learners cannot learn with empty stomachs.

The SFP saw some successes from its inception due the small number of beneficiaries, but as the programme grew government is being overwhelmed by the increasing number of beneficiaries. By, not translating lessons learnt from the pilot project to National School Feeding Policy they have loss some control of the programme. One criterion which the programme failed to establish was how regular monitoring of beneficiary schools and caterers would be funded. Even though the DIC's have been mandated to monitor the programme in their areas, funding of their activities has been left to the District Assembly's where there is the constraint for fund allocation with other relevant projects and programmes such Schools Under Trees Programme, Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and other Infrastructural improvement programmes. This has deprived the DIC's with the needed capacity to function effectively in their Districts. Therefore, weekly, monthly and quarterly monitoring activities have been relaxed. Most monitoring activities are done when monies are to be paid to the caterers, therefore proper supervision is lacking throughout the year. Whilst PSC, National Secretariat and RCO's do not regularly monitor the DIC's to collect challenges and requirement that can ensure proper plan implementations of the programme.

They rather develop top to bottom strategies which have little effect in improving the major challenges currently being faced by the SFP, for example, the new electronic payment system. This system would rather create a fissure between DIC's, caterers, RCO's and the PSC. With this approach the caterers receive monies directly from the National Secretariat on their phones via mobile money, making DIC's power and control over the caterers less.

When one visits the schools one may realise that the number of caterers presented to the secretariat to be on the programme is lesser than the actual number of caterers in a particular school. Whilst some caterers are overseeing more than one school that is over making daily monitoring very difficult due to the poor nature of the roads in these districts as a result their employees

mismanage resources given to them. Due to serious political interference, most caterers were contracted without going through the proper procurement processes. In other cases, the wife of the DIC chair is the only caterer operating in the district. In some instances, influential party members would be contracted, whilst they have no experience in catering services. It's therefore not surprising when DIC's monitoring teams get to a school with the list presented to the secretariat and the teachers there do not know or have not heard of the names reported to be in their school register. Other times these learners had completed or left the school long ago but have their names listed as students of that particular school. This increases the number of learners on the programme. From reports of figures on monitoring done by DIC's and RCO's indicate that student population inflation for some schools under the GSFP is between 35%-45%. Government can save between GH¢47,353,379.80 - GH¢60,882,917.00 if these ghosts' names can be removed from the list. These huge amounts could be used to run the operations of the RCO's and the DIC's for years. When these savings are made more learners could be added to programme at no extra cost. Rather these amounts are being used to feed "ghost". With this information available one may ask, when this excess is paid, into whose pockets does it go? I will not say government but I can confidently say that it goes into the pockets of their cohorts and allies.

Moreover, the local agricultural development aspect of the SFP has been dormant, while people speak about financial challenges within the programme. The farmer has been neglected and who cares about the farmer. It's shocking to see caterers using imported rice, chicken, oil and fish to prepare meals for the learners. The most surprising aspect of this is that, these caterers are usually those, whose, food proves to be of good appearance, taste and nutritional value. Menus for preparation of meals lack innovation with some caterers cooking one type of food for the whole term.

Those who use local foodstuffs are most at times caught being mischievous. It does not imply that there are no good local foodstuffs in the market or that those who use local foodstuffs produce substandard meals but what has been observed is that they buy the substandard produce from malicious market women. Since local product lacks proper branding, caterers may sometimes be deceived by the market woman into buying one brand whilst they sell an inferior product to them unawares. In the long run the market woman is cheating the caterer, the caterer is cheating the programme and government is losing a huge sum of money. In, all this vicious cycle the local farmer is losing out on his share of the national cake.

The paucity of innovation from the agricultural sector has rendered them dormant in the GSFP. Even though the SFP can provide local farmers with ready market valued at over GH¢100,000,000.00 per year in direct investment. Affording farmers with the potential to grow and increase productivity. The Ministry of Food and

Agriculture is yet to tap into the vast potential the programme can provide to their farmers.

With all these challenges the SFP is failing and may not be sustainable in the future for government to operate any more. As domestic debt, budgetary deficits, GDP-to-debt ratios and balance of payments is rising each year. Government may soon take austerity measures to meet the budgetary requirements and SFP may be one of the policies to be abrogated. There is still hope, whilst the sunshine's. Ten years' implementation of SFP has provided the PSC, RCO's and DIC's with a wealth of knowledge that can be developed into proper implementation plans using the bottom-up mechanism of accountability and transparency, making the local governance structure more involved in the implementation process of the SFP.

If the National Secretariat would apply good project, programme and portfolio management principles through a well-developed and coordinated multi-sectorial policy integration implementation process, the local economic policies and National economic policies through effective decentralized structures the GSFP could become sustainable. Coupled with improved agricultural and natural resource management and increased socially inclusive development practices. This can provide the programme with strong bases in becoming a nationwide programme where all public schools can be captured under the SFP

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research design and used an exploratory method of collecting data. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative research design focuses on exploring and understanding the social phenomenon from the viewpoint of the people who experienced it. Similarly, Green (1999) also defined qualitative research design as a type that seeks to explore the human understanding of social problems. This study adopted this methodology to explore the influence of school feeding programme on pupils' enrollment, attendance and academic performance in Basic schools in KEEA municipality. According to Creswell (2012), the experiences and insights shared by the respondents in a qualitative research study provide an in-depth explanation of the research topic and the respondents involved. The qualitative research design also provides an opportunity to understand the issue from the perspectives of the respondents (Merriam, 1998).

The population for this research were the parents of learners who were enrolled in the public basic schools where the SFP is being implemented as well as teachers, school feeding coordinator and the caterers in those schools.

The sample was selected based on the subjective judgment of the researcher. Five (5) schools were sampled for the study since they were the first school in

the municipality to have enjoyed the programme. The sampled size of the study was made up of a total of twenty-one respondents who were 5 head teachers, 5 teachers in charge of the school feeding programme, 5 caterers and 5 parents and the only school feeding coordinator in the municipality.

Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) mentioned that qualitative research does not require a standardized sample size and that, the effectiveness of a qualitative research depends on the depth of information gathered during the interview and not the number of people who participated. The researcher employed the purposive techniques in this research. According to Patton (1990), purposive sampling refers to sampling techniques where the researcher uses a criterion that only allows respondents with some level of experience to participate in the research. For instance, it can be based on the level of experience, roles, status, opinion, ideas, age of the respondents as the researcher finds appropriate for the topic of interest. This researcher focused on the level of experience of the respondents and this criterion allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth information from the respondents. For example, Parents who participated in the research were the parent – association chairmen/chairpersons and have children in the schools. The researcher considers experience as adequate enough to have allowed respondents to gain quite a significant experience to share during the interview. However, one of the limitations associated with the purposive sampling method is that it excluded people who do not meet the criteria but have a potentially useful experience to take part in the research. five caterers who were affiliated each 5 public basic schools were selected since it is their duty to ensure the right meal is served for the learners at school. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the teachers in charge of feeding programme. Head teacher and teachers were purposively selected to be part of the study because of their role to ensure the smooth running of the programme. The school feeding coordinator was equally part of the studies because of her role as a coordinator who is to ensure the smooth running of the programme in the KEEA municipality.

A semi-structured interview guide was utilized for the research. The interview was done via telephone, zoom and face to face and lasted within 30minutes each. This method was selected by the researcher to allow the respondents to express themselves. The researcher probed for further explanation when there was the need to seek a better understanding of the respondents' responses. The researcher also ensured that there was no noise in the background during the interview to allow respondents to feel comfortable to participate in the research. According to Moustakas (1994), it is important to consider the environment in which an interview is conducted as that can influence how respondents contribute to the discussion. In addition to this, the researcher was also respectful of every opinion

expressed by the respondents, which according to Merriam (1998) improves response rate and participation. The researcher also reminded the respondents that the conversation would be recorded and that they could withdraw from the research at any stage without any cost or consequence.

After the interviews, the researcher listened to the recorded data and made notes from each conversation. This helps to gain a clearer understanding of the ideas and the relationships that exist in the conversation. The researcher then transcribed the data into a word document for analysis.

After the data had been transcript, cross-examination and triangulation were done to ascertain their accuracy, completeness and identify those items wrongly responded to, spelling mistakes and others. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to the themes in the research objectives.

4.0. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study was based on three main thematic areas derived from the research questions. Furthermore, subthemes surrounding different issues on the research topic were also derived and put under their respective main themes.

4.1. Research Question one: What are the impacts of the school feeding programme on the academic performances of Basic School learners in Komenda,Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality?

On academic performance, some of the respondents perceive the SFP has significant improvement in the academic performance of primary school children. This improvement according to the respondents transcends in class participation, class assignments and final exams. Two of the parents and three teachers mentioned that the school feeding programme has improved class performance.

According to a parent:

"I do not send my children to the market to sell anymore... as a result, my children now get more time to study and focus in school. This has significantly improved his class performance".

Also, one of the head teachers mentioned that:

".... the learners are now able to participate more and I feel like they are studying more. This is because, most of them do not work after school and they spend more time in school than they use to when there was no school feeding programme".

Again, a teacher mentioned that:

"The overall performance of my learners keeps improving year by year. I have two learners who sell pure water after schools. They have stopped and now coming to school"

regularly. I spoke to them and they mention to me that their mother said the pressure on their educational needs has decreased and for that matter, they should focus on school.

Their performances have improved since then".

A caterer commented that:

"... because of the school feeding programme, children do not spend all full school hours on school. They also spend most of the time in queue for food and that they come back to class very late. This sometimes distracts teachers from finishing lessons on time. That can negatively affect the performances of the kids in comparison to their peers in other schools".

Despite the overall improvement on the performance of the learners, three of the respondents also mentioned that the SFP does not allow the Basic school learners to use full school hours on school. The respondent mentioned that the children spend school hours on the programme which sometimes delays lessons being taught by the teachers.

Discussion on Academic Performance.

The findings revealed that many of the respondents agreed that the SFP improves academic performance among school learners, this study found that respondents perceived the performances of Basic school learners to have increased as a result of the introduction of the SFP.

Respondents believed that school learners are now able to participate effectively in school activities well, apply what is being taught in school to their everyday activities, and increase their performance on school exams. It can be inferred from the findings of the research that parents avoid child labour and they are able to spend more time on their studies and this increase academic performance. This finding is also consistent with Simeon and McGregor (1989) findings that the performance of school learners increases when meals are provided to them in school.

The study also found that, despite the significant contributions of the SFP to the academic and cognitive improvement of school children, the children tend to use some of the school's hours on the programme which can potentially affect their performances at the school level. This is consistent to some of the critics of the SFP by many researchers (Vermeersch and Kremer 2004; Kazianga et al. 2009). It can be concluded based on this finding that some school hours that could be used by teachers to finish a lesson could be compromised as a result of the SFP. Learners could be in a long queue for approximately 1 hour or more when waiting to receive their meals. Some of these learners if they are not able to receive their meals in time can be late to class. As a result, teachers may start lessons late and which precludes them from finishing their lessons. In an event like this, the performance of children at the school level will be relatively poorer than schools where the children use full

school hours on academics and teachers are able to finish their lessons.

4.2. Research Question Two: What is the influence of school feeding programme on improving enrolment, attendance, and retention in Komenda, Edina, Eguafu, Abrem (KEEA) Municipality?

When asked about their understanding of the influence of the school feeding programme, the respondents views varied based on several issues. These include enrollment, attendance and retention. On enrollment, most of the respondents shared the argument that the school feeding programme improved learners' enrollment in primary schools. Some of the respondents mentioned that before the introduction of the SFP, parents found it difficult to enroll their children in schools because they were not able to meet the basic needs of their children. Some of the parent indicated that because of lack of food and no money to feed the house, children were asked to either go the farm or market to do work during schooling hours. All the parents agree it affects learners' enrollment in schools. But for now, there is no need to for children to work for food since it is provided for them in the schools free. Some of the respondents mentioned that, as a result of the SFP, parents are motivated to take their wards to school because they will be provided with food.

According to a head teacher,

"...I think the school feeding programme has been very helpful to parents. It has been very helpful to parents ... for example, single parents with petty trade and cannot rise enough to support their kids' basic needs not to talk of education do bring their words to school just because they are sure their wards will be fed afternoon meal which will not be a burden on them."

Additionally, a parent mentioned that,

"Why will I aloud my children to work for food again since the government provide some food for the children free.... What my children need to do is to go to school eat and eat freely...my dear my children are now in school happily....is it no good?"

Another head teacher mentioned that,

"Enrollment keeps rising every now and then since the introduction of the school feeding programme. ...I can testify that most parents that I talk to confess that they are inspired to enroll their kids in my school because they believe they wouldn't have to stay hungry at home".

Another issue with enrollment that came up was that the feeding programme has resulted in many children who would hitherto stay home because they are too young to be enrolled in primary school level, are now being enrolled in school. As a result, increases in the enrollment rate in Basic schools can be observed.

A head teacher said:

"... little kids who you wouldn't expect to be in basic school have now come to school. They can barely talk. I believe

their parents brought them here because of the programme..., and it simply because it never used to be the case before the introduction of the school feeding programme.

Also a caterer in one of the schools mentioned that:

“... The number of learners we feed every day in the school keeps soaring every academic year. This is because, the learners come plenty in their numbers because of the school feeding programme, ... A parent told me that she would rather enroll her young child in my school as soon as she turned 4 years than to have him sit at home without any food...”

However, despite the positive responses that most of the respondents mentioned about the SFP to enrollment, some of the respondents think otherwise. They think the contribution of SFP is just the same as when it was not there. There is another respondent who thinks that even though the SFP has positive impacts on enrollment, the impact is not significant. These respondents believe that the increment in the enrollment rate is as the result of many children moving away from schools where the feeding programme is not implemented to schools where the feeding programme is implemented. As a result of this, the overall number of basic school learners who are enrolled nationally is not going to change. Some respondents think that even if there is going to be any impact, it is not significant.

For instance, a teacher mentioned that:

...I don't think the school feeding programme has any impact on the overall number of learners who are enrolled in basic schools. I think learners are rather moving from one school where the feeding programme is not there to schools where there is the feeding programme. ...My school for example has recorded new enrollment of learners from different private schools around us. They leave there to join us because of the programme. This shift has increased our enrollment at the expense of the decline in their schools. The value is the same

The study found that the respondents mentioned that the SFP has a positive impact on the enrollment of basic school learners. This finding is largely consistent with the findings of Alderman et al. (2012) and Akanpi (2011) that the SFP has a significant positive impact on the enrollment of learners in schools. The respondents identified several reasons for the improvement in enrollment in primary schools. First, the respondents mentioned that the SFP motivates parents to enroll their children in schools as parents would rather send their children to schools where they would be given free food than to be at home without food. Also, parents who find it difficult to provide their children with food at home are more inclined to enroll their children in schools because of the SFP. In addition, the findings is consistent to the findings of Kristjansson et al. (2009) that SFP addresses major challenges such as child labour and financial constraints affecting families, which are major challenges to school enrollment. The study found that the financial constraints that prevent parents from enrolling their

children in school are reduced as a result of the school feeding programme since the programme is free. The research revealed that parents who no intention of them would have involved their children in child labour to earn a source of income are motivated to enroll their children in school. This implies that most parents involve their children who are of school-going-age in child labour instead of school because they are not able to meet the basic needs of their children. As such, they rather prefer to have their children in school in so far as their basic needs such as food are met.

On the issue of attendance, the respondents professed that the school feeding programme has a positive impact on Basic school attendance. They mentioned that learners now report to school more often than they used to be. Measures are no longer needed to ensure learners attend school regular since they themselves are motivated to ensure they are in school to learn to enjoy free constant meal. These according to the respondents, has to do with the introduction of the school feeding programme. For instance, a parent mentioned, *“I always feel motivated to get my children ready for school every day. I don't even make them absent from school... hmm..... I do so because I don't want them to miss the free lunch given to them in school. Otherwise, they will stay hungry and I don't want that...”*

Furthermore, some of the respondents think learners are motivated themselves to come to school because of the school feeding programme. A parent mentioned that:

“As for me, I do not have to even tell my children to go to school.... They just wake up every morning and go to school”. This was also confirmed by another parent, who said that *“My child always praises the food served in school. He always checks his menu and feels motivated to go to school every day. I do not even have to tell him”*

The above perception is the same among head teacher, caterers, teachers and the school feeding coordinator who were interviewed for the research.

A headmistress mentioned

“I believe parents are now ensuring that their children attend school regularly. Attendance is really key in my school. Teachers do not even have to punish learners who are absent because the attendance is massive everyday”.

Moreover, a teacher also mentioned that:

“Attendance has increased ever since our school started the school feeding programme...I can tell you that it never used to be like this. I have been in this municipality for 19 years and the attendance level has never been like this in any school I taught...wow things have really change”.

A caterer also mentioned that:

“The number of learners that we serve in our school never declines. This is because learners' attendance to school is regular. I think they do so because of the school feeding programme. I know they love the food the government serve them...look my food is quality and if

you eat what I serve to the learners you would love to have a feel for the second time... hahahaha!"

The SFP coordinator affirmed saying:

"True be told, we all saw those days, how children used to sell in the streets and markets ...it is because their parents couldn't provide for them and there was no alternative for them. Look, will you sent your kids to the street to sell items...no... because you can provide...now a days children are attending school regular because they get some food to eat free...hahaha..the parents themselves will encourage the kids to go school because they can't simply provide for them in the afternoon at the time evening."

Even though almost all the respondents mentioned in their experiences that they think the school feeding programme has increased school attendance rates, one of them further explained that learners only come to school because of the food. Some of them leave as soon as they have had their food.

According to a teacher mentioned:

"...Some of the learners run away sometimes after having their lunch. It is not good. I'm not sure they do so every day, but they do so most times."

Confirming this a head teacher said:

"...it is true that some learners after the meal use to run to the house, I have rather did some little changes to the time and thing have improve for me in my school"

It was revealed that as a result of the SFP, more learners now attend school more consistently than they did in the past when the SFP was not in place. The respondents revealed that the SFP has been a motivation to the learners themselves to want to go to school regularly. However, the research also found that despite these improvements in school attendance, the SFP sometimes defeats the purpose of education as it shifts the interest of learners from education to the feeding programme which can potentially affect their academic performances.

In congruence with the findings of World Food Programme (2006) that providing a school feeding programme promotes school attendance among learners, this study found that learners attend schools more regularly than they did in the past when the SFP was not in place. Just as identified by WFP (2015), there are many factors that affect school attendance in basic schools. These include the distance between school and home, financial constraints, child labour, and provision of a meal for the children, among other factors. However, the respondents mentioned that despite these many challenges that affect attendance rate in basic schools, the implementation of the SFP has otherwise helped to positively promote school attendance among basic school learners. Based on this, it can, therefore, be inferred from the findings that all the respondents of the research view the provision of food as the most crucial need for the learners and that when satisfied could ensure that learners attend school regularly. The provision of food for school learners is also important to prevent parents from

involving their children in child labour, a factor which could jeopardize their school attendance (Edstrom et al., 2008).

On retention, most of the respondents mentioned that the SFP has influenced the ability of learners to remain in school till they complete primary schools. Most of them saw the SFP has a programme that fosters learners' interest to want to be in school, concentrate on their studies and avoid school dropout.

For instance, a parent mentioned,

"My three children are always happy to go school any time and I am very sure is because of this SFP thing. All the hunger that will stop them from going to school is no more...hmmm...it never easy for me a house wife and my husband have no decent job and feeding was challenge but for this programme things are butter now. Thanks to government for the school feeding programme".

However, most of the respondents shared a common idea during the interview that the general school dropout has minimized since the introduction of the school feeding programme. Most of the respondents credit this change to the impacts of the SFP. For instance, according to School Feeding Coordinator,

...the overall school dropout rate for some time now have declined. Most of the learners are now finishing school and doing very well in their exams ever since the government introduced the school feeding programme...go to the streets they are now empty, the children that used to sell there are now in schools". Additionally, a headmaster also affirmed, *"Yes, the school dropout rate has declined. The learners are now completing school and one big barrier which is hunger is out of their way."*

On the influence of SFP on retention, the study found out that learners are able to complete primary school as a result of the programme. This is largely consistent with the findings of Husein (2014) that basic school learners are able to stay in school and complete as a result of the programme. It can be noted from this study that, just as proposed in the Maslow's hierarchy of need, because the most basic needs of children which include food and water are met under the SFP, they are able to focus more on schooling. When there is an improvement in the performance of learners, they are able to avoid being dismissed because of poor academic performance. Also, the learners are motivated to stay in school without dropping out because they feel motivated and happy about their performance.

4.3. Research Question Three: What are the challenges encountered by the school feeding programme in the Komenda, Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality?

Here, respondents shared experiences they deemed challenging to successful implementation of the SFP. The responses of the respondents on this theme

vary on many issues ranging from lack of resources, delay of funds, and poor nutrition.

All the respondents who were interviewed mentioned the lack of resources as one of the major challenges associated with the school feeding programme. The main concern of the respondents was the lack financial resources to meet the programme expenses. Some of the respondents also highlighted lack of cooking materials, portable water system for the school and other essentials needed to carry out the programme successfully.

According to a teacher:

"erhh....my sister one major problem is the lack of resources available to the caterers to carry out the programme successful. I realized the caterers sometimes have to look for cheap ways when meeting the needs of the learners, some of these ways may not be the best for the learners. The government has to increase funding for the programme so that caterer can cook enough and healthy meals for the learners"

Similarly, a caterer mentioned:

"... there is no enough funding for the programme my dear. Making it difficult to implement the programme. We caterers do struggle anytime we are making the menu for the school learners even though we always want to make sure we meet the nutritional needs of every learner; we do not have enough money to do so. The government has to increase the funding for us to provide better for our lovely learners"

Furthermore, a headmaster of one of the schools mentioned:

I know the government has helped these learners a lot with the provision of the school feeding programme, however in order to meet the objectives of the programme, there should be enough funding for it. My caterer is a good cook and she will need enough funds to carry out their job. Sometimes the school even has to add some money to the programme in meeting some of its expenditure but may be to be pay back later. ...hmmmm.... most often the school don't get the money back from. Not Good!

The respondents who were interviewed mentioned that the delay of funds is one of the major challenges affecting the school feeding programme. These respondents mentioned that funds from the government do not come early and sometimes the schools are forced to use their own money to carry out the programme. Now this era that schools cannot generate their own income because of government policies of the free basic school. It is difficult for the school to support if the needs arise since the schools lack the capital.

For instance, a head teacher mentioned that:

...the money that the government give to the programme does not arrive on time sometime it can even take a year and only one term will be released, in fact, we are compelled by this delay to use the small money of the school to carry out the programme in the meantime until

such a point that the government brings back our money..."

Also, a head teacher in one of the schools also mentioned that:

"The learners will come to the school always expecting to have food on their tables. It is bad as a mother who is the headmistress of a school to make these learners go hungry. I tellyou most of them would drop out of school if that happens! so we use our money and then take it from the funds later when it arrives."

Furthermore, the school feeding coordinator also mentioned that:

"...as for the fund from the government, it is always late and not enough. It has never come on time from the time we started the programme in this school. We could wait several months without any feedback from the government regarding that. I have personal complained that severally on that. I hope something is done about it" Another challenge that most of the respondents raised about the school feeding programme is poor nutrition. The respondents mentioned that there is usually poor nutrition which defeats the purpose of the programme. Respondents found issues with improper menu planning, a particular diet being served every time because it is more affordable to provide by the caterers, and the inadequate very small sizes of meals served that do not usually sustain the children throughout schooling hours.

On the issue of improper menu planning, a caterer mentioned:

"... my sister the menu we design is not the best we all know, but we do so because we want to meet the needs of all the learners in the school with only limited funds provided to us by the central government. This may affect the nutrition of the school learners. They may have to eat one food more frequently than others because some food items cost less than others....hmmmm....providing the learners with gari and beans is less costly but not that nutritious enough for the health of the learners. That could affect their diet...but again I said we do our very best...it is not easy my dear."

Also, a teacher mentioned that:

"...ooooh.... hardly do my learners have fruits and vegetables...I can't even remember the last time these learners enjoy these vegetables and fruits. Even if they do, most of them are not fresh and most often rotten such that the learners can't even eat them. The whole system needs a lot of improvement by the government...if not the aim of the programme will be defeated"

Also, the growing number of learners in the school affect their ability to feed the learners with proper nutrition. This is because they had to look out for the cheaper way of meeting the needs of all the learners and which may not necessarily be nutritious.

For instance, a caterer mentioned that:

"We resort to making rice and stew almost all the time for the learners. Sometimes they consume it without any fish or meat...we try not to make some learners hungry, so we

cut down cost for some items which are consider cheap in the market....hahaha"

Finally, some of the respondents also mentioned that the food served is usually not enough to sustain the children. According to a head teacher,

"The food we give the kids are sometimes too small. But that is what we can afford at the time. We do not have enough funds to serve it abundantly."

All the respondents perceived lack of resources as one of the major challenges facing the implementation of the school feeding programme. This is very consistent with Kootz and Wierch (2001) assertion that the lack of resources is a major challenge to the implementation of the school feeding programme. The study also found that resources available are not able to meet the increasing enrollment of children in primary school. This is also similar to the WFP (2006) assertion that the lack of resources can hinder the success of the school feeding programme. Respondents emphasized financial resources more than any other resources such as materials and staff, among others, even though they agree that they are all crucial to the implementation of the programme. Respondents mentioned that occasionally the funds they receive from the central government to carry out the programme is not sufficient to meet the increasing number of learners who are enrolled in school.

Furthermore, lack of resources prevents the children from receiving adequate nutritious food which inhibits the success of the programme in meeting nutritional needs of the children and this may lead to massive school drop since most children are motivated to be in schools because of the food.

Another challenge revealed is the delay of funds that inhibit the successful implementation of the programme. This is similar to the findings of Nkethia (2011) that find the delay of government funds a major threat to the school feeding programme. Due to the delay in funds, respondents mentioned that they sometimes have to support the programme with their own school money before they are eventually refunded by the government. This, according to the respondents, delays the school's completion of other developmental projects. Furthermore, some of the respondents also mentioned that the school funding sometimes is not enough to meet the demands of the schools. This affects menu planning, the type and quantity of food served as well as the frequency which meals are served. These factors can negatively affect the implementation of the programme sometimes leading to school drop massively.

Again, a challenge identified in this research is the poor nutrition of food served under the programme. The respondents mentioned that the nutrition of the meals served under the school feeding programme is poor. They mentioned that this stems from menu planning and the absence of some basic nutritional elements needed for child growth and development.

It was revealed that schools sometimes have to resort to cheaper alternatives when deciding on the

learners' meals because of the lack of resources which consequently negatively affects the meals provided to the learners. Furthermore, respondents mentioned that basic school learners are sometimes unable to receive adequate meals to sustain them in schools. In situations where there is an inadequate food, according to respondents, it usually lacks nutritional elements needed for the growth and development. It can, therefore, be confirmed from the findings that schools are made to choose between either providing nutritious food to only a few learners or providing numerous learners with adequate non-nutritious food. Schools feel more inclined to choose the latter because they choose to partially meet the needs of all the learners in the school. This may be detrimental to the health of the learners and defeats the purpose of the programme.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three main research questions were looked at, this include; the influence of school feeding programme on academic performance, the influence of the school feeding programme on enrollment, attendance, retention; and the challenges of school feeding programme. On the issue of performance, respondents believed that the school feeding programme promote academic performance of learners. This is similar with the Maslow hierarchy of needs that when the basic needs of people are met, they are able to focus on other higher-level needs such as academic success. Learners are also able to spend more time in school and focus on their studies because they do not have to worry about food. This has improved their academic performance in school. Also, hunger and malnutrition which inhibit educational outcomes of Basic school learners were perceived to be reduced by the school feeding programme.

On the issue of enrollment, most of the respondents shared that parents are motivated by the SFP to enroll their children in schools. The research also found out that children of younger ages are now enrolled in school because of the SFP and children themselves are motivated to be in schools because of the implementation of the programme. This has increased the overall number of learners who are enrolled in Basic schools. In contrast, the research also found that few of the respondents do not think the school feeding programme has any significant contribution to the overall national enrollment rate. This is because they believed the school feeding programme encourages learners in schools without school feeding programme to move to schools with school feeding programme thereby resulting in a flat enrollment rate nationally.

On attendance, it was found that most respondents perceive that the school feeding programme helps in promoting school attendance among Basic school learners. This is because the school feeding programme

is said to motivate the children to go to school. One major issue found with attendance is that some respondents believe that children no longer go to school with the belief of learning and becoming successful people in future but instead, go to school because they believe they will be provided with food. According to some respondents, this defeats the purpose of education.

In regards to the challenges that inhibit the implementation of the school feeding programme, the research found three areas which include, the lack of resources, delay of funds and poor nutrition.

Respondents perceived lack of resources to be a major challenge in the implementation of the school feeding programme. They believed that the resources allocated by the government are not enough to meet the nutritional demands of basic school learners. Also, the respondents asserted that the delay of funds is another problem that threatens the implementation of the school feeding programme. They mentioned that the delay of government funds can be frustrating when implementing the programme and that they sometimes have to use their own money for the programme, which is later refunded by the government. This funding module creates uncertainty and uneasiness in the administration of the school feeding programme.

The final problem perceived by the respondents is poor nutrition. Some of the respondents believe that the programme does not provide adequate nutritious meals for the learners. Some of them mentioned that the same menu is used over and over, and the children are not given enough vegetables and fruits which essential nutritional elements. Other related issues that were discovered from this research include the respondents' ignorance about the school feeding programme and their desire of the government to expand the programme to all schools.

The study employed the qualitative research for data collection. Specifically, the primarily data was gathered from a semi-structured interview with 21 respondents from six selected schools in Komenda, Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality in Central region of Ghana. The questions asked during the interview explored the perceptions head teachers, teachers, caterers, parents and school feeding coordinator have about the school feeding programme and its influences on educational outcomes as well the setbacks in its implementation. The data collected were coded and the thematic network analysis was used to draw common themes that emerged from their responses. The study looked at three research objectives, which include; the impact of the school feeding programme on learners' academic performance, the influence of school feeding programme on learners' enrollment, attendance and retention and challenges of school feeding programme. The study was guided by Maslow's hierarchy theory of needs to explain human needs and the order in which they can be satisfied. The Maslow hierarchy of needs was

also used to explore the connection between human basic needs such as food and academic success.

Even though few respondents suggested that the school feeding programme did not come to impact positively in improving education, a good number of the respondent agreed the programme indeed came and improved every aspect of education in children life even with the challenges facing the programme.

There are various ways in which the implementation of the school feeding programme can be improved to meet its objectives. Some of these ways include having a sustainable source of funding for the programme, increased collaboration and partnerships with individuals, private and international organizations, periodic monitoring and evaluation, and education to the general public about the programme.

Firstly, one of the ways of promoting the implementation of the SFP is by ensuring a sustainable source of funding for the programme. The government could ensure that money allocated to the programme is included in the annual fiscal spending of the state. This will ensure that there are always funds available to be used for the project. The funds allocated for the programme must also be adequate to meet the expenses on the programme. Furthermore, the government must ensure that there is a timely distribution of funds to schools to carry out the programme in a timely manner. An adequate and timely distribution of funds would help ensure school learners are provided with adequate nutritious meals needed for child growth and development. To accomplish this, the government must put in place proper planning and all stakeholders of the programme must be involved in the decision-making process.

Secondly, the government must ensure that there are increased collaborations and partnerships for the programme. This could be done through public-private partnerships and the involvement of many international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), intergovernmental agencies, and local organizations. The government can also involve community members and local farmers to ensure the successful implementation of the programme. The involvement of many private and intergovernmental agencies could increase the scope of funding for the programme which may impact the successful implementation of the programme. Community members and local farmers can also contribute to the programme through donations, labour, and the provision of food materials. Furthermore, collaborations with other countries like Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, and United States are needed in ensuring that the challenges that inhibit the SFP are curtailed. This will help reduce hunger, mortality and malnutrition among children across the globe as well as improve conditions that will promote their educational performance in school, thereby enhancing the growth and development of the world's future generation.

Furthermore, periodic monitoring and evaluation could ensure that the objectives of the programme are met. The government must put in place measures and outcomes for the programme and these outcomes can serve as a benchmark when implementing the programme.

Also, the government can set up a committee that will periodically monitor and evaluate the implementation process and ensures that the programme is in line with its objectives. Outcomes of the programmes can also be made available to the general public to ensure transparency. The actors of the SFP must also ensure that the programme provides nutritious meals for the learners. This will help in reaching the programmes primary objectives. In doing so, there must be a proper menu planning which will include nutritious meals for the learners. Fresh vegetables and fruits can also accompany daily designed meals to help prevent chronic diseases related to malnutrition. The research found that most of the respondents are ignorant about the programme. The government should increase publicity of the programme to help residents of Ghana understand its importance.

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