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Ghana School Feeding Program: A Retrospective Review

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Abstract:
Since independence, Ghana has embraced formal education as a catalyst for its developmental agenda. As a developing country, it is confronted with myriads of challenges such as a—high rate of poverty, low school enrollment, gender disparity, environmental degradation, corruption, intermittent power supply, and a shortage of teachers, among others. As a measure to tackle these problems, especially low school enrollment, the government has put in place a number of social intervention programs which include free transportation for school children, scholarship schemes for students, free school uniforms, and capitation grant. Recently, the government introduced the school feeding program as a tool to reduce poverty, increase enrollment, and to create market for local foodstuffs. The program has increased enrollment tremendously in the pilot schools; however, its challenges and implementation pose a serious threat to its sustainability. This paper reviews the GSFP and puts forth some suggestions to help sustain the program.

Keywords: *Ghana, school feeding program, impacts, enrollment, challenges, poverty, nutrition, education system.*

1. Introduction

Ghana is located in West Africa, and many people and nations see it as a beacon of hope for Africa because it is recognized as one of the most politically and economically peaceful countries in the sub region. Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country to gain its independence from colonialism in 1957 from the British. Administratively, Ghana is divided into ten regions with 216 municipalities and districts. Despite the fact that Ghana is blessed with natural resources, it relies so much on international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and developed nations for financial as well as technical assistance (Buhl, 2012). The backbone of the country's economy is on agriculture, which employs more than half of the labor force. Ghana has made tremendous achievement by reducing poverty from 58 per cent in 1991/1992 to 28 per cent in 2005/2006 (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). Also, undernourishment has been brought under control from 64 percent in 1979 to 18 percent in 2006 (Buhl, 2012). From the report of the World Bank, Ghana's per capita income has increased in two-folds over the last 45 years (Buhl, 2012). Despite this healthy development, there is a wide socioeconomic gap between the northern and the southern parts of the country, with the three northern regions—Northern, Upper East, and Upper West experiencing high levels of poverty and food insecurity; low rates of school enrollment, and gender disparity. About 70 per cent of the nation's poor live in these regions (Morgan & Roberta, 2008; Buhl, 2012).
As a way to mitigate these problems in the country in general, and the northern regions in particular, the government has introduced a number of social intervention programs such as the capitation grants, the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Catalytic Fund (CF) which in November, 2014, made available to Ghana an amount of $ 8million dollars to assist in (i) supplying of basic school text books, (ii) a teacher initiative scheme, and (iii) monitoring and supervision (Confed Ghana, 2012, p.13). And by November, 2007, an amount of $19 million dollars was released for the project (Confed Ghana, 2012); provision of free school uniforms and free textbooks to pupils; the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) where money is disbursed to poor families; the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) initiative which aims at providing health insurance for every person in the country (Confed Ghana, 2012), and; the Ghana school feeding program (GSFP) which was introduced in 2005 to provide free meals to pupils in deprived areas.

According to the World Food Program (2009), school feeding needs is defined "as the global number of undernourished, primary school-age children enrolled in school" (p.5). Based on this definition, WFP notes that as many as 66 million children in schools in 94 third world countries were undernourished, and an estimated amount of US$3.2 billion was needed every year to provide meal for basic school pupils; and school feeding programs had reached 22.6 million children in 68 countries (WFP, 2009). In spite of this development, as many as 66 million children go to school without eating a meal every day. Out of this number, 75 million do not go to school. As noted, this paper examines the introduction of the Ghana school feeding program and suggests ways to help sustain and improve the program.

2. Methodology

Through the collection of information/data from internet sources, published articles, and policy documents, with a comprehensive document analyses, the information concerning Ghana school feeding program (GSFP), its impacts, challenges, and suggestions to sustain the program is presented in this paper.

3. Formal Education in Ghana

Formal or western-style education was introduced in Ghana by the European merchants and missionaries in the early period of 1765. The first schools were established by the Christian missionaries (Kadingdi, 2006). Since then, Ghana has not looked back and formal education has been embraced as a catalyst for development due to its enormous benefits to solve the myriads problems facing the country as a third world nation. For that matter, education has been recognized as a legal right, as confirmed by the international community to provide education for all children in the world. This commitment was demonstrated in 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was published. Article 26 (1) of the declaration states:

Education is fundamental human rights, which has many benefits for the growth of the individuals and society as a whole. Most especially, elementary education should be free and compulsory and higher education should be accessible to all children based on merit (cited in Mooko, Tabulawa, Maruatona, & Koosimile, 2009, p.6).

Ghana as a member of the international community also gave credence to the declaration by adopting it in its 1992 constitution. Article 25 (1) of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana states:

All persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realization of that right--(a) basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all, (b) secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education, and (c) higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education (p.27). This points to how the government sees the critical role of education in harnessing human capital to advance the development of the country.

The ultimate goal of education is sustainable development which developing countries like Ghana need most. The Report of the Brundtland Commission (1987) defines sustainable development as an objective that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (p.2). It must include three pillars: the economy, the environment, and social equality. In this sense, educated Ghanaians will play a pivotal role in sustaining Ghana's fledgling democracy, conserve environmental resources, and embrace peace and social cohesion. Also, education will reduce the high rates of infant mortality, poverty, crimes and inequality of all forms. Affirming the benefits of education, The G8 Education Experts Report (2009), supporting the 2008 Oslo Declaration "Acting Together," states that education is:

One of the most effective tools for achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth recovery, reducing poverty, hunger and child labor, improving health, incomes and livelihoods, for promoting peace, democracy and environmental awareness as well as a driver to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (p.5).

4. Challenges Facing the Educational System in Ghana and Social Intervention Programs

Since Ghana gained its independence in 1957, the educational system has seen numerous transformations over the last 58 years (Kadingdi, 2006). Some of the challenges facing the educational system in Ghana include gender disparity, shortage of teachers, and low enrollment rate, among others. As such, the leaders of Ghana are increasingly concerned about Ghana's competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing world. They are trying as much as possible to promote policies that bolster enrollment and students' achievement in all areas of education. The government has shown commitment to the global aspirations of Education for All (EFA) by 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to provide quality education to the citizenry. The government demonstrated this commitment by providing and improving school infrastructure—new buildings, distributed vehicles to schools, district education offices, principals of Teacher Training Institutions to facilitate movements. Also, there is a Bus System where basic school students are offered free ride to and from schools provided by the Metro Mass Transit. Again, there is provision of free school uniforms for all basic schools learners, as well as textbooks. Furthermore, the government has introduced the Capitation grants by paying GHS 4.00 per child, roughly equivalent to USD 1.22 per term to absolve all fees borne by parents, thereby making basic school education almost free in Ghana. In addition, scholarship schemes have been instituted for poor children, especially girls. More so, the government has put in place the school feeding program which is on a pilot basis to provide basic schools learners with one balanced and free meal a day.

5. Brief History of the Current School Feeding Program

The United Nations, with the aim of confronting the problems posed by globalization formulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. Much attention was focused on hunger and poverty in the formulation of the MDGs and stated its first priority as eradicating hunger and poverty; priority 2 was to achieve universal primary education for all children; and priority 3 was an attempt to ensure gender parity and the empowerment of women. Under this, UN envisages that by the year 2015, the number of people who are suffering from hunger could be reduced to half; and school feeding programs (SFPs) were identified to have the capacity to help in the realization of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) first priority (Martens, 2007; Sulemana, Ngah & Majid, 2013).

To achieve the MDGs first priority (i.e., reducing hunger and poverty), the United Nations Hunger Task Force (UNHTF) put forth seven recommendations which are enshrined in their report "Halving Hunger, It Can Be Done" (2004) (Martens, 2007). The UNHTF

identified a number of strategies to achieve this goal, and one was to implement school feeding programs (SFPs) which could use food grown locally instead of relying on imported food. Indeed, this was seen as an integration of education and agriculture, and UNHTF had the idea that school feeding programs if implemented well could increase school attendance, most especially—for girls, as well as boost the demand for locally cultivated foods (Bukari & Hajara, 2015; Martens, 2007; Sulemana et al., 2013). Thus, UNHTF recommended this type of feeding program:

Community and school-based feeding programs which included not only school feeding, but also systematic de-worming, micronutrient supplementation, take-home rations, safe cooking facilities, clean drinking water, HIV/AIDS, health, nutrition, hygiene and improved sanitation (Martens, 2007, p.8).

African leaders in realizing their own role to develop their countries and improve lives for the population came together and formed a body in 2002 known as New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as a body of the African Union (AU). NEPAD also embraced the school feeding concept formulated by the MDGs, and it focused on an integration of school feeding programs and agriculture (Martens, 2007; Sulemana et al., 2013; Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014). For that matter, NEPAD has drawn up a Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), which aims at "restoring agriculture, growth, food security, and rural development in Africa" (Martens, 2007, p.8). The third pillar of NAPAD stresses on improving food supply and reducing hunger and outlined these objectives: (a) "to reduce malnutrition in school going children through diet supplementation via a complete and adequate meal (in terms of calorie and micronutrient), and (b) to expand local demand for food products and to stimulate production by smallholder farms" (Martens, 2007, p.8; Sulemana et al., 2013; Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014).

6. Nutritional Considerations in Ghana

The food in-take of Ghanaians is mostly starchy roots (cassava, yams), fruits, and cereals (maize, rice). These provide about three quarters of food in-take energy for the people. "Malnutrition, stunting growth, vitamin, and mineral deficiencies and other diet-related diseases," among others are common problems in the country (Buhl, 2012, p.13). In Ghana, the following nutritional deficiencies have been established:

- 14% of children under five suffer from moderate to severe underweight
- 9% of children under five suffer from moderate to severe wasting
- 28% of children under five suffer from moderate to severe stunting
- Only 32% of households consume iodized salt
- Only 24% of children under five receive vitamin A supplement (Buhl, 2012, p.14).

It is estimated that over three quarters of young children and about half of women of childbearing age suffer from anemia. It has also been established that children who are malnourished do not go to school early and they tend to complete at fewer years than their counterparts who are better nourished (Buhl, 2012).

7. Background-Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP)

Basically, school feeding is providing food to school children (Sulemana et al., 2013).The Ghana school feeding program (GSFP) was implemented under the initiative of the African Agricultural Development Pillar 3 which aims to improve food security and reduce hunger in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With commitment on the part of the government of Ghana to reduce poverty, and with support from the Dutch government, the Ghana school feeding program (GSFP) was started as a pilot project in September, 2005 (Bukari & Hajara, 2015; Sulemana et al., 2013; Abu-Bakr, 2008). Contextually, "the basic concept of the GSFP is to provide children in public primary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas of the country with one hot, nutritious meal each day, prepared from locally grown food-stuffs" (Abu-Bakr, 2008, p.4; ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009). The program started with 10 pilot schools which were selected from each region in the country. By August, 2006, the number of schools were increased to 200 to cover about 69,000 students in 138 districts in the country (ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009; Afoakwa, n.d). By March, 2007, the number of pilot schools increased to 975 serving over 400,000 pupils, covering at least two schools in each district. It was envisioned that by the year 2010, the program could reach up to 2,900 schools to serve about 1.04 million students in the 138 districts at the time (Martens, 2007; ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009; Afoakwa, n.d). Currently the program is serving/providing meals to as many as 1.7 million pupils, making up 38.53 percent of pupils at the basic school level (Ghanaweb, 2014, 9 July). The feeding cost per pupil per day is GH 0.40p (approximately US$ 0.12), and the total budget estimated for the program was US$211.7 million (Sulemana et al., 2013; Hauwere, 2008).

The GSFP has some laudable educational, social, and economic implications for pupils and the country. It was estimated that about 80% of the school feeding program expenditure would be on locally produced food to reduce post-harvest loses. Not only using locally produced food to feed students, but also school gardens would be established by students to connect them with what they eat. Again, it was envisioned to incorporate agriculture and nutrition information and education into the school curricula. In addition, measures such as deworming which impacts positively on the health status of children was to be included in the school feeding program (Adamu-Issah, Elden, Forson, & Schrofer, 2007; ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009). The immediate objectives of the program as outlined in the Annual Operation Plan (AOP) are to achieve three goals: "(1) To reduce hunger and malnutrition; (2) to increase school enrollment, attendance, and retention, and; (3) to boost domestic food production" (Martens, 2007, p.9).

The long-term objective of the GSFP is to help reduce poverty and ensure food security, as well as increase school enrollment, attendance and retention. The program is to provide ready market for locally produced foodstuffs in such a way that market accessibility would be improved for poor farmers in the country. Also, it is the intention of the government to increase employment

and income level of farmers at the local and national levels. The expectation is that women in the communities where the school feeding programs are found would be employed as cooks, matrons, caterers, and suppliers. The overall expectation of the GSFP is to improve wealth creation for people in the rural and community levels (Martens, 2007; Abu-Bakr, 2008). It was envisioned that by the end of the first phase of the program in 2010, the intended impact was to increase employment at the community level by 8%, as well as an 8% real increase in income at community and national levels (Martens, 2007; Abu-Bakr, 2008).

As a measure to boost enrollment rates and ensuring that school children are well served, two kinds of feeding programs are implemented by the government of Ghana: "(1) take home rations for girls in schools in deprived communities in the three northern regions and, (2) provision of one hot meal per school day to primary school children using locally grown food products" (Buhl, 2012, p.15). As enshrined in the program document, the selection of school from the community and the district levels are based on the following criteria: (1) Poverty status based on GLSS data and NDPC poverty mapping; (2) Low school enrollment and/or attendance rate and gender parity index, (3) High school dropout rate (4) Low literacy levels, (5) Presence or planned provision/expansion of health and nutrition intervention, (6) Poor access to portable water, (7) High communal spirits and/or community management capability, (8) Willingness of the community to put up basic infrastructure (i. e., kitchen, store room, latrine) and to contribute in cash or in kind, (9) Commitment of the District Assembly towards the program and the level of readiness and interest towards sustaining the program, (10) Communities/schools not already covered by other feeding programs (Abu-Bakr, 2008, p.4). With these selection criteria, it is imperative to know the agencies/organizations that fund the feeding program.

8. Donors and Management of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP)

Generally, no feeding program can be implemented and sustained without planning and money. It requires huge sums of money to be operational. The initial major funding partners of the GSFP were the Dutch Government, the World Food Program, and the Government of Ghana contributing 17%, 5%, and 78% respectively of the annual cost based on the 2010 GSFP budget statement (Afoakwa, n.d; Buhl, 2012). The technical support partners include: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Royal Netherlands Embassy, World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is charged with the overall responsibility of overseeing the GSFP (Buhl, 2012; ECASAR/SNV Ghana, 2009). However, the Netherlands government pulled out or stopped funding the program in 2011.

To ensure the efficient management of the program, the government established governance system at the national, regional, district, and community levels. Initially, at the national level, a constituted ministerial committee made up of five different ministries—health, agriculture, education, women and children affairs, and local government was formed by the government. Unfortunately, all these ministries had strong interest in the program, and as such created a power struggle among them at the national level. As such, these ministries were dropped to foster peaceful implementation. Now the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment (MLGRDE) has the oversight responsibility of the program (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008).

The District Chief Executive (DCE), together with a member appointed by the government (government appointee) is expected to constitute a District Implementation Committee (DIC) at the district level in each of the 216 metropolitan, municipal, and districts (MMDs) in the country. The major responsibilities of the district implementation committee (DIC) are to manage the program in their respective districts, opening of bank accounts for deposition of funds, and procurement of foodstuffs (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008; Sulemana et al., 2013).

At the school level, a School Implementation Committee (SIC) is to be formed with the responsibility of hiring cooks for the selected schools, plan the menu, procure food from the local farmers and see to the cooking and feeding of children. The school implementation committee (SIC) is composed basically of local members including head teachers of the primary schools, two members (male and female) of the PTA, two members (male and female) of the school management committee (SMC), a traditional/local chief or his representative, one religious leader, one Assembly Member, two male and female opinion leaders in the community, and the senior prefects of the schools (male and female) (Sulemana et al., 2013; Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). However, this managerial set up has failed to live up to expectation. For instance, some head teachers have been left with the responsibility of taking decisions alone to make sure that the children are fed as members of the committee failed to participate in the activities of the committee (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). It is not clear whether it is as a result of apathy on the part of parents and local chiefs or they are completely not involved. If it is apathy, then this will never help to improve the program since the local people have a huge responsibility to make the program effective and sustainable. The program is supposed to be for them. Probably, educating them on their roles might help.

9. The Impacts of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP)

The introduction of the GSFP has made some successes. One major success of the Ghana school feeding program is an increase in school enrollment by 20.3 percent in the pilot schools as against 2.8 percent in the schools without the feeding program (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). For example, children between the ages of 6-11 saw an increase from 69.2 percent in 2005/2006 academic year to 81.1 percent in 2006/2007 academic year at the primary school level. Enrolments for pilot schools increased by 16 percent as compared to schools without the feeding programs, while attendance also rose to 15 percent (treatment schools) more than the control schools (Oppong-Mensah, 2009). Similarly, Bukari and Hajara (2015) in their study of the GSFP in the Garu-Tempane District in the Upper East region of Ghana report that the program has increased "gross enrolment rate by 24% among participating schools but decreased by 7% in non-participating schools" (p.301). Likewise, Oduro-Ofori and Adwoa-Yeboah (2014) and Sulemana et al. (2013)

have all reported increase in enrollment rates.

The take-home ration initiative in the three northern regions of Ghana has had positive impact on girls' enrollment. The initiative makes available take-home food for girls as a form of motivation to increase enrollment and attendance rates. With this intervention, girls' enrollment in participating schools saw a growth from 9,000 to 42,000 (Buhl, 2012).

Not only has the program increased enrollment rates tremendously, but also retention rate has increased in the pilot schools. Research has documented immense increase in school attendance rates and a reduction in dropout rates in schools with feeding programs compared to schools without them (Martens, 2007). Buhl (2012) in a study on the increase of enrollment in the three northern regions after the implementation of the take-home ration for girls indicated that retention rates increased in two-folds to 99 percent. Overall, school feeding programs assist in keeping children in school as more time is spent in school, supports their studies as short-term hunger is reduced and their health and cognitive skills are better enhanced (Buhl, 2012; Lawson, 2012). To Buhl (2012), school feeding programs "have long-term implications for national development and social protection and the growth of productivity and social capital" (p.3).

Again, research has shown a reduction in the gender gap between boys and girls and nutritional status in schools where school feeding programs have been introduced. Girls in Ghana seem to be making some gains by closing the gender gap after the implementation of the school feeding program. For instance, enrolment for girls increased a little more than that of boys by 18 % to 15.3 % (Adamu-Issa et al., 2007). Also, the Gender Parity Index (GPI), which simply assesses the rate at which girls take part in formal education, has improved tremendously for Primary Gross Enrollment from 0.93 in 2004/2005 to 0.95 in 2005/2006, after it had slowed down for some years (Adamu-Issah et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the three northern regions which have low enrollment and retention rates in the country saw some improvement. In the Upper East and Upper West regions for example, girls' enrollment surged to 31.4% and 26.1% respectively when these figures were compared with the national average of 12.8%. With respect to nutritional status, girls tend to show greater improvement in height, weight and Body Mass Index (BMI) than boys, and it appears to suggest that when girls participate in school, they enjoy substantial benefits from school feeding programs compared to boys (Martens, 2007). While there is no empirical data on GSFP on the nutritional benefits for girls, Martens stated that girls in Ghana might benefit from school feeding.

In addition, the possibility of GSFP helping to improve students' academic performance might be high. While no empirical study has been conducted to establish this, the literature on school food documents the benefits of such programs on students' achievement in school, and this is seen to be enormous than improving students health status (Weaver-Hightower & Robert, 2011). For instance, a number of studies from Jamaica, Kenya, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Uganda have indicated that there were increases in the test scores, increased attendance, and improved study skills of students (Buhl, 2012). Again, Del Rosso (1999) conducted a study in the U.S. and indicated substantial benefits of giving poor students breakfast at the primary school level. The eligible (low income) children were scoring very low in achievement test scores as compared to their counterparts who were not eligible before the start of the breakfast program. When the program got underway, the test scores of the children taking part in the program increased more than the scores of those who were not participating in the program. It would therefore be significant for studies to be conducted in this area in Ghana to either validate or otherwise of the program on students' academic performance.

More so, the school feeding in Ghana has increased punctuality and reduced absenteeism. In their study, Sulemana et al. (2013) reported that head teachers interviewed noted that the attendance rate for pupils has increased significantly, while absenteeism has dropped to its minimum level when compared with previous years when the program had not been introduced. This could possibly help increase student academic achievement. Morgan and Sonnino (2008), citing World Food Program (2004), perhaps, summarizes the benefits of the school feeding program, which Ghana is a beneficiary:

The formula is simple: food attracts hungry children to school. And education broadens their options, helping to lift them out of poverty. When we launched the campaign, we knew that serving nutritious food at school would improve attendance and school performance. What we didn't project was just how important school feeding would become a platform for launching major health initiatives (p.137).

10. The Challenges of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP)

In spite of the impacts of the school feeding program discussed thus far, it is faced with a number of challenges. First and foremost, funding is the major challenge confronting the program. At the initial stage of the program, it was to be jointly funded by the Government of Ghana and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). NEPAD could not fulfill its part of the agreement and pulled out. Despite this setback, with donor support from the Dutch government, the program was implemented thereby helping the government of Ghana to pay for the original costs of the program (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). The government of Ghana has demonstrated greater commitment to fund the program through the national budget to ensure continuity and stability of the program. However, the previous agreement with the donor support from the Dutch government ended in 2010. The government of Ghana is now funding the program alone, and from the 2012 budget statement, an amount of GHS 50 million is spent every year (Koolitoidu, n.d, p.3). The 2011 budget for the GSFP was GH¢67.1M (US$43M) (Alhassan & Alhassan, 2014). Despite this expenditure, the program is at the verge of collapse as the government is finding it difficult to secure money to continue with the program. The government is unable to release funds regularly to schools/caterers (Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014; Sulemana et al., 2013). The current Executive Director of the school feeding program, Mr. S. P. Adamu, admitted the financial difficulty of the program by noting that the government was not able to pay the caterers who provided food for children (Ghanaweb, 2014, July 9). This stems from the fact that the government is not able to release funds promptly to managers so that caterers could be paid on time. The government

owed caterers in schools for seven straight months without paying them. According to Mr. Adamu, this has compelled some caterers to plan a "boycott of the program because of the extra burden the lack of funding has put on them" (Ghanaweb, 2014, July 9, para. 5).

Second, there are different degrees of linking local farmers in food procurement. Originally, the program was designed in such a way that the school implementation committee (SIC), which is made up of local people, could work hand in hand with local farmers to ensure that foodstuffs are procured from them (local farmers). But the introduction of two other procurement models—'supplier model' and 'caterer models' have compromised the objective of creating local markets for local farmers (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). However, the supplier model of procurement has some benefits in the school system: (1) Teachers can concentrate much of their attention on teaching instead of meddling in the affairs of the food; (2) since private suppliers can easily access capital and credit without any difficulty, they could avoid delays in supplying foodstuffs, as might be the case when the government is involved with bureaucratic tendencies. The supplier model, thus, has some drawbacks: first, private suppliers purchase foodstuffs outside localities where the schools are located, thereby denying local farmers access to direct market; second, the supplier model does not respect the role of local communities since they are not involved in deciding what food should be procured and from which part of the country (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008).

The caterer model of procurement has a setback where urban caterers tend to buy more imported goods. A small percentage or no food is procured from the local communities (Sulemana et al., 2013; Hauware, 2008). All these tend to defeat one of the objectives of the program by using locally-grown food to create market for local farmers (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008; Sulemana et al., 2013). Also, there is little commitment on the part of the government with respect to putting in place policies that encourage local food production despite the fact that the program would make use of locally/homegrown food; farmers are not receiving any support in terms of credit facilities and incentives to increase food production (Sulemana et al., 2013; Hauware, 2008).

Third, the GSFP has increased enrollment. Levinger (1986) after reviewing 22 studies concluded that school feeding programs actually increase enrollment in schools, but its impacts on the academic performances of students is mixed and much depends on the prevailing local conditions. Most of the beneficiary schools in the GSFP have increased their enrollment more than the national average (Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014; Bukari & Hajara, 2015; Sulemana et al., 2013). Schools in the northern part of the country have the highest increase in enrollment. Notwithstanding, increase in enrollment has not seen any proportionate increases in the number of classrooms, teachers, textbooks, desks, notebooks and the supply of food (Lopatka, Topel, & Vasconcellos, 2008; Buhl, 2012; Sulemana et al., 2013). Therefore, there is stretch on these scarce resources of the schools. This has led to overcrowding as well as reduction in quality teaching time in these schools when teachers take part in supervising the meal time (Lawson, 2012). For instance, Sulemana and colleagues (2013) report that in Zogbeli Ahmadiya School in the Temale Metropolis, the increase in enrollment was high and therefore called for the construction of new a building to house the new nursery and primary pupils. Teacher-pupil ratio has also been affected. The teacher-pupil ratio in the school was 1:45 as against 1:35 the standard set by the Ghana Education Service. Generally, it is expected that factors such as adequately trained teachers, learning materials and physical facilities should be available to promote students learning; however, if these are not present in school feeding programs, students' academic performances would not see any improvement (Kazianga, Walque, & Aldermam, 2009). Going by the above statement, the performances of students in the pilot schools in Ghana might be affected.

Fourth, there is lack of partnerships and organizations among stakeholders at the regional, district, and school levels. A number of schools do not have effective and functional school implementation committees (Buhl, 2012; Sulemana et al., 2013). Parents, local chiefs, and other members who have roles to play have failed to involve themselves in the affairs of the program. It is not surprising that some District Chief Executives (DCEs) and head teachers take unilateral decisions to make sure that school children are provided with meals (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). Morgan and Sonnino (2008) citing the World Food Program (WEP, 2007b) captures the situation better in these words:

The program has been implemented in a way that meant that key stakeholders were not adequately prepared to play their respective roles at the beginning of the program. Before program implementation, the GSFP was supposed to launch sensitization and education programs for these stakeholders to explain to them the objectives of the program, implementation guidelines and their roles. This did not happen, and as a result, the stakeholders implementing the program have little or no understanding of what they are implementing or their respective roles. Decentralization must create opportunities for the governed to take decisions that affect their wellbeing. This is largely not happening in the implementation of the GSFP. As a result, decision-making is sometimes personalized and mostly centralized in the hands of a few. In the event, decision-making has taken a top-down approach (p.44).

Fifth, problems of kitchens, storage, dining halls/canteens, cups, plates, and spoons deepen the woes of the school feeding program. Many schools do not have kitchens to prepare food for pupils (Sulemana et al., 2013; Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014). In a study conducted in 21 districts in the country by GhanaDot (2009), the report indicated that about 61% of the schools with the feeding programs did not have well-built kitchen structures and facilities to cook food. Also, Sulemana and colleagues (2013) report that many schools cook food under trees and when it is raining, they cook in classrooms or on verandas. This has negative impact on good hygienic environment to prepare food which can have negative effect on students' health, as well as teaching and learning. Again, storage facilities are not available for schools and the tendency for food items to go bad is high. Many schools do not have good dining halls/canteens to serve their meals. As such, pupils tend to use their classrooms to enjoy their meals (Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014). This is quite disturbing as pupils soil their reading and writing materials (books) as well as making their classrooms untidy. This hampers good teaching and learning as well as posing serious health implications for pupils (Oduro-Ofori & Adwoa-Yeboah, 2014). In addition, schools do not have enough plates, cups, and spoons for pupils to use. Sulemana and colleagues (2013) report that 60% of schools studied did not have these materials, and thus allowing some pupils to eat first while others wait for their

turns. This impacts negatively on instructional time as lunch breaks are extended. The performance of pupils could be affected. Some schools even do not have plates, cups, and spoons, and students have to come to school with their own set of cutlery and plates (Sulemana et al., 2013).

Sixth, GSFP schools do not have sanitary facilities. GhanaDot (2009) reported that about 26% and 35% of schools do not have access to toilet and urinal facilities respectively; nearly 87% of schools do not have hand washing facilities. This poses a very serious health implications considering how students come into contact with poor sanitary conditions and eat with unwashed hands (GhanaDot, 2009).

Seventh, cooks employed in the GSFP schools have and continue to receive no kind of training in hygiene and nutrition. About 22% of the cooks employed in the schools do not have health certificates and have received no kind of training in nutrition and hygiene (GhanaDot, 2009). Perhaps, this might seem surprising for cooks not receiving training on their job, but all pupils in the pilot schools have received training on health education, and some teachers have also received special training on issues relating to health education (GhanaDot, 2009).

Eight, a number of schools with the feeding programs do not have access to regular and safe drinking water (GhanaDot, 2009; Sulemana et al., 2013). An estimated 43% of schools benefiting from the program do not have access to good, safe and regular supply of water. And students have to sacrifice their precious time by going long distances to fetch water to support the cooking of food (GhanaDot, 2009). This is a waste of instructional time. About 83% of schools have been provided with water tanks to store water, about 37% of tanks provided are not being used (GhanaDot, 2009). The water tanks that are available to the schools have been lying idle because they are not able to connect them to sources of water.

Ninth, the introduction of the caterer model of procurement has made it difficult to put under microscopic eyes food prepared outside the four walls of the school. This model is operational mostly in urban areas. This is due to the fact that these communities do not show interest to be part of the school-based activities. Under the model, there are laid down functions which the caterers are expected to meet before they are allowed to operate. These include procuring the food, storing it, cooking the food outside the compound of the school, bringing the food to school, and finally serving the food to the children. There is an agreement between the district assemblies and the caterers about the menus they are supposed to prepare; however, there is little or no participation of the school as well as the local people (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). In this development, it is difficult to monitor whether the caterers used the right amount of food for the day. The quantity and quality of food could therefore be compromised.

11. Suggestions/Recommendations for Improvement

(1) Sustaining the feeding program for the future seems to be the outmost concern. The government of Ghana has established two trust funds successfully—Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) and Health Care Fund/Health Insurance Fund purposely for education and health. These are through percent increase in Value Added Tax (VAT) to fund the programs. I suggest the government should establish a trust or endowment fund solely for the school feeding program to help sustain and extend the program to schools throughout the country. However, the government should exercise some caution in this direction in order not to overburden the people with payment of high taxes. With such a fund, donors, NGOs, and individuals/philanthropists could contribute cash and in kind toward it, since the cost is too high for the government of Ghana alone to bear. Some Ghanaians have expressed similar suggestion, like the former Executive Director of the GSFP, Dr Kwame Amoako Tuffour. In February 2010 during a Parliamentary workshop, the former Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Joseph Yiele Chireh noted that other ways of getting funds should be sought to ensure the sustainability of the program should donors stop funding the program again (Buhl, 2012).

Also, learning from Ecuador's experience of implementing school feeding could help sustain the program. Initially, Ecuador relied mostly on finance and management support of the World Food Program (WFP) for about 20 years before the program received national funding. The WFP started to provide school feeding (food) to children in deprived and poor communities. After two years, the government of Ecuador created an official unit within the Ministry of Education to run the program. School feeding got to as many as 667, 000 pupils in 3000 deprived communities in 1999, and 80% of the food was provided by the government. School feeding in Ecuador, by 2004, was solely funded by the government (Sulemana et al., 2013).

(2) It is critical for stakeholders of education to be informed on the aims and objectives of the feeding program and their roles and responsibilities to help improve as well as sustain the program. This could be done by running television programs on the benefits of the feeding program, national and local durbars, and radio programs in national and local languages to make the people and stakeholders aware of the program.

(3) The government and other philanthropists should move swiftly to improve or address conditions and supply the needed infrastructure and materials such as school buildings, kitchens, cutlery sets, plates, and others to help reduce congestions and health hazard to improve students' academic work.

(4) Provision of borehole, standpipe, and mechanical wells by government and philanthropists to every school with the program could help ease access to regular and portable supply of water. Schools should be encouraged to use the poly tanks that had been provided to harvest more rain water during the raining season for storage and use. Also, underground wells could be constructed in schools to harvest rain water for use. This could save children in areas or schools where they have to fetch water to support the cooking of the food valuable time for their academic work.

(5) It is envisioned that the feeding program would increase local production of foodstuffs, enhance the wealth of farmers, reduce post-harvest losses, reduce poverty in rural communities, and ensure food security in the country. For this to be realized, it is very imperative for the government of Ghana to provide credit facilities to farmers to purchase fertilizers, high quality seedlings, chemicals,

machines, and other inputs that could help increase productivity. It would also be a good idea for the government to make available to farmers extension services.
(6) There is the need for strong commitment on the part of government, community leaders, caterers, and other stakeholders to ensure that food is purchased from local farmers instead of purchasing important food to ensure regular income for farmers to continue production to sustain the program.
(7) It is recommended that there should be an increase in the feeding cost per child pay which is GHS 0.40 (US$0.12), which is woefully inadequate considering the rate of inflation in the country. The upward review would help improve both the quantity and quality of the food provided to children.
(8) There is the need for the government to provide more logistics as well as resources to help monitor and evaluate the implementation of the grogram for improvement.

12. Conclusion

Overall, the architects and visionaries behind the school feeding program in Ghana had it right to propel the country out of a third world to middle income status. The introduction and implementation of the program is a crafted policy to tackle poverty head-on in the country, and to improve primary education for all children in the country without any kind of discrimination. However, its implementation and management if not carefully examined and measures put in place to arrest the challenges of the program, it could rather overturn to be a policy to worsen the social inequalities that have existed between the north and the south for a long time, and between the rich urban districts and poor rural districts in the country. The goals of reducing poverty, increasing enrollment, providing ready market for local foodstuffs, and creating wealth for poor households might be defeated. These were the words of the government of Ghana before the implementation of the program, "This program, if properly funded, and implemented as designed, has the potential to change the hunger, education, and ultimately the food security and poverty landscape in Ghana for good" (cited in Hauware, 2008, p.349). Inferring from the above statement, it is incumbent on the part of government and other stakeholders to put their acts together to realize the full benefits of the program throughout the country without any discrimination.

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