
**THE IMPACT OF GHANA'S SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME ON
ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION OF PUPILS IN TALENSI DISTRICT IN UPPER
EAST REGION**

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ABSTRACT: *This research work examined the impact of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) on enrolment and retention in basic schools in Talensi District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The study examined the extent to which enrolment and retention can be influenced by the presence of School Feeding Programmes (SFPs). It focused on finding out what motivates pupils to enroll in certain basic schools and the influence of GSFP on pupils learning. The work was a survey of selected basic schools in the Talensi District which are enjoying the GSFP. Two groups of population were used for this study; pupils and teachers. The population for pupils was 2,028 out of which forty (40) pupils were randomly selected as the sample size. On the other side, eight (8) teachers were purposively selected to form part of the sample size. Questionnaire was the main research tool used whilst interview was used to back up the main research instrument. The research found out that although basic school enrolment and retention were influenced by the presence of GSFP, the quality of teachers and good academic performance of schools were other factors influencing enrolment and retention in the schools under review. The study further found out that the presence of GSFP in basic schools had a positive effect on pupils' academic performance. On the impact of the programme on basic school enrolment and retention, the conclusion drawn is that there is a direct and positive relationship between the presence of the GSFP in a school and the enrolment and retention of pupils in that school. Since the presence of the GSFP leads to increment in enrolment and retention, it will be prudent to replicate the programme in all public basic schools. This is particularly very important owing to the fact that this research has proven that the food pupils eat in schools contribute significantly to improvements in their learning. According to Del Rosso (1999) when children are fed in school, it is most likely to increase their attention, cognitive function and learning. Also, Lambers (2009) credited increased enrolment and retention of pupils to SFPs. The study concludes that the GSFP remains critical to the success of basic education and all efforts should be made to expand its structures and scope.*

KEYWORDS: Basic Education, Retention, Enrollment, Compulsory Universal Basic Education, Academic Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Society expects that children and youth of Ghana who are the future leaders of the nation mature into responsible citizens who are capable and willing to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation through various ways within their capacities. This expectation can only be realized through adequate basic education received in a good social environment during childhood. According to Hesse (1994), educated individuals are better equipped to serve themselves and their society as individual family members, workers in the economy or leaders

because education improves their intellectual skills, sense of social responsibility and an understanding of the modern world. Addae-Mensah (2000) observed that in Ghana, education has always been highly treasured and has played a crucial role in the social advancement of society. He further asserted that education is there to make people part of the society. Hence the purpose of education is to improve the living conditions of people in the society. This is particularly true because Maslow (1943) opined that humans are motivated through the provision of certain basic physiological needs like food, water and air.

The 2011 Global Hunger Index (GHI) showed some slight improvement over the 1990 GHI. However, the report maintains that global hunger remains at a level categorized as “serious”. The report further concluded that there are issues of price spikes and excessive food price volatility which have significant effects on poor and hungry people. Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992) guarantees every person the right to education, but this right can sometimes be hampered by the inability of children to find food to eat.

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) was launched in 2005 following the African Union’s New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) recommendation to use home-grown foods where possible, to feed primary and kindergarten pupils. The introduction of the programme was targeted at realizing Millennium Development Goals one and two which include the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and the achievement of universal primary education respectively (Afoakwa, 2008). The idea of the programme is to provide children in public schools with one hot nutritious meal per day, using home-grown foodstuffs. This programme, which is an initiative of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) pillar 3 of NEPAD, is grounded on three key intermediate objectives. The first objective deals with the reduction of hunger and malnutrition by providing all primary and kindergarten pupils in beneficiary school a nutritious meal each school day. Secondly, the programme sought to increase school enrolment, retention and attendance. Finally, the third objective has to do with boosting local food production by sourcing GSFP meals locally and providing a sustainable market for local food producers in the community.

Ghana is touted as one of the few African countries which have made significant gains in reducing poverty and undernourishment over the past two decades (Lambers, 2009). Despite these remarkable achievements, a proportion of the population still lives below the national poverty line. Poverty remains high in the rural areas particularly the three northern regions where a good majority of the people cannot afford three square meals a day. Going by the very objectives of the GSFP, one can infer that the programme was originally designed to focus more on the 3 northern regions but the reverse is the case, as the number of schools enjoying the programme in the 3 northern regions is proportionally less than their counterparts in the southern sector. For instance, in August 2011 the percentage of pupils that were under the GSFP in Ashanti region was 25% against 15% of pupils from all the three northern regions (Gyarko, 2011).

Social Studies as a subject is aimed at developing in citizens the willingness and ability to contribute to national development. The development of a nation hinges mainly on the wellbeing of its members. As noted by Ofose-Kusi (2006), a measure of human development is the amount of food available to an individual in a country. It is therefore revealing that the introduction of the GSFP has increased the availability and nutritional intake of food by pupils. The programme has also increased the income of some local farmers as about 80% of the foodstuffs are expected to be procured locally (Gyarko, 2011). A few other jobs have been

created for caterers, matrons and managers of the programme. Indirectly, the programme is re-orienting the pupils and for that matter Ghanaians to patronize locally produced foods.

Basic education is one of the most valuable investments in improving and developing an economy if a country is to create a literate, self-reliant and healthy society. Poor nutrition and health among school children contribute to inefficiency of the educational system. It must be noted that even short-term hunger which is common in children can have serious consequences on learning. Education is one of the most powerful instruments in shaping the human race. Education appears to equip man with some skills and abilities so that he can deal with contemporary socio-economic problems. If this assertion is to be realized, then children must enroll in school and be made to stay until completion in order that they can contribute their quota to the socio-economic development of the country. The purpose of the study is to find out the impact of GSFP on basic education in the Talensi District of the Upper East Region. The study will also similarly look at the influence of GSFP on enrolment and retention of basic school children.

Statement of the Problem

Governments in Ghana at different periods have recognized the relevance of education to the development of the nation's human capital. In pursuing this goal, numerous educational policies have been implemented by government and non-governmental agencies. Examples are the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), WFP, Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and Northern Student Scholarship. These policies are to create room for the poor, who because of their low incomes and the deprived nature of their environments find it hard to access basic education. The GSFP is one of the educational policies that were introduced by government in 2005 aimed at increasing basic school enrolment and retention, reducing malnutrition, and boosting food production. After a decade of the GSFP implementation, there are serious concerns from various stakeholders on the success of the programme and/ or the degree of achievement of its stated objectives. It is in the light of the above that this study is embarked upon. This research work is therefore focused on the GSFP and its impact on basic school enrolment and retention in the Talensi District in the Upper East Region. This is done by taking a critical study of some selected GSFP schools in the Talensi District of the Upper East Region. This situation raises questions about the depth of understanding of the impact of GSFP on basic school enrolment and its relationship on retention in the Talensi District in the Upper East Region. This is done by taking a critical study of some selected GSFP schools in the Talensi District of the Upper East Region. The pertinent questions to address, therefore, are can the enrolment of pupils in basic schools be influenced by GSFP in the Talensi District? is there any relationship between the GSFP and retention of pupils in basic schools within the Talensi District?. The present study therefore sought to identify answers to these pertinent questions in order to assist stakeholders of education to develop appropriate strategies and interventions to improve the enrollment and retention of pupils in the Talensi District.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of GSFP on enrolment of pupils in basic schools in the Talensi District?
2. What is the relationship between the GSFP and retention of pupils in basic schools within the Talensi District?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theory adapted for this study was derived from Zaney, 2011. The long-term objective of the GSFP is to contribute to poverty reduction and food security and also increase school enrolment, attendance and retention. A study conducted in Jamaica has revealed that Primary school students who were provided with breakfast have significantly increased their attendance and arithmetic scores (Simeon and Grantham-McGregor, 1989 cited in Del Rosso, 1999). According to Moore (1994), cited in Del Rosso (1999) an evaluation of school canteen in Burkina Faso found out that it is associated with increased enrolment, regular attendance, lower dropout rates and higher success rates on national exams. GSFP is not only an educational programme but as a social safety net for children living in poor and food insecure communities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this literature review is largely premised on the conceptual framework of the GSFP. The programme seeks to ultimately reduce poverty and improve food security. According to the GSFP District Operations Manual, the framework of the programme is as follows:

1. The strategy to feed school children with locally prepared food that is nutritionally adequate will focus spending on local foodstuffs thereby providing a ready market for local farm produce, leading to wealth creation for rural households.
2. With the ready market and increased household incomes the rural community will generate wealth.
3. With more incomes the community members can afford the additional food intake and other items needed to improve their nutritional status to eliminate short term hunger and malnutrition.
4. This will help to break the cycle of rural household and community poverty.
5. On the basis of the conceptual framework of the GSFP and the research topic at hand, the researchers developed a model as seen in the diagram below.

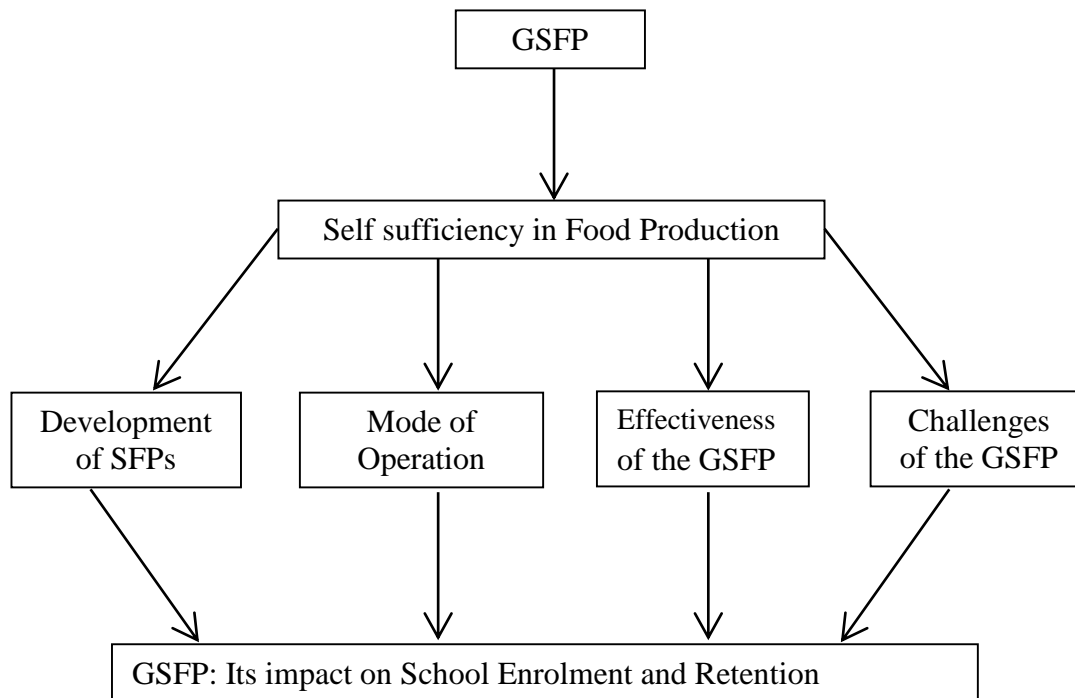


Figure 1: Model of conceptual framework

Source: Researchers Model (2013)

The concept School Feeding Programmes (SFPs)

School Feeding Programmes can be found in many parts of the world. The rationale for school Feeding Programmes is to reduce short-term hunger among pupils so that they can concentrate in class and learn better. Del Rosso (1999) identified four objectives of School Feeding Programmes. The first objective is that School Feeding Programmes can alleviate short-term hunger in malnourished or otherwise well-nourished school children. When children are fed in school, it is most likely to increase their attention and concentration thereby resulting in gains in cognitive function and learning. Also, School Feeding Programmes motivate Parents to enroll their children in schools and have them attend regularly. By making food available to pupils whilst in schools, they are compelled to avoid absenteeism and improve upon their stay in schools. This translates into improvement in some educational outcomes (performance and retention). Additionally, School Feeding Programmes address specific micronutrient deficiencies in school-age children. Deficiencies in iron and iodine are the most harmful types of malnutrition which affects cognition. According to Nokes, Van den Bosch and Bundy (1998) cited in Del Rosso (1999) “iron deficiency renders children listless, inattentive, and uninterested in learning”. The School Feeding Programmes also increase community involvement in school administration.

Organizational Structure of the GSFP

The Ghana School Feeding Programme is an initiative of the comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme pillar three, of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, which seeks to enhance food security and reduce hunger in line with the

millennium Development Goals on hunger, poverty and malnutrition. In 2005, upon the recommendation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Government of Ghana took a bold step to implement the Ghana School Feeding Programme with support from the World Food Programme. The Ghana School Feeding Programme is a strategy to increase domestic food production as well as household incomes and food security in deprived communities and to spend 80 percent of the feeding costs of school children in the local economy.

Programme Implementation and Development Partners

Gyarko (2011) contends that the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has the oversight responsibility or is the supervising ministry of the Programme at the national level. The Ghana School Feeding Programme National Secretariat works under the supervision of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Partnership with other ministries. These include Ministry of Education, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional co-operation and NEPAD and Ministry of Women and Children. At the national level also, there is a Programme Steering Committee which monitors the work of the programme at the national secretariat.

According to Gyarko (2011) the Ghana School Feeding Programme, has other lower structures actively involved in its implementation. These include the Regional level structures, the District level structures and the community / school level structures. At the Regional level, the GSFP Regional co-ordination office works closely with the Regional Co-ordinating Council (RCC) to implement the programme at that level.

Strategic Partners

The Programme has a lot of strategic partners who assist and support its activities through funding, technical support and direct school feeding. Afoakwa (2006) identifies these partners as the Netherlands Government, World Food Programme (WFP), Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Social Enterprise Development Organization (SEND), School Feeding Initiative Ghana Netherlands (SIGN), International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC), Ghana Agriculture Initiative New work (GAIN), and World Vision International (WVI). The diagram below shows the organizational structure of the GSFP.

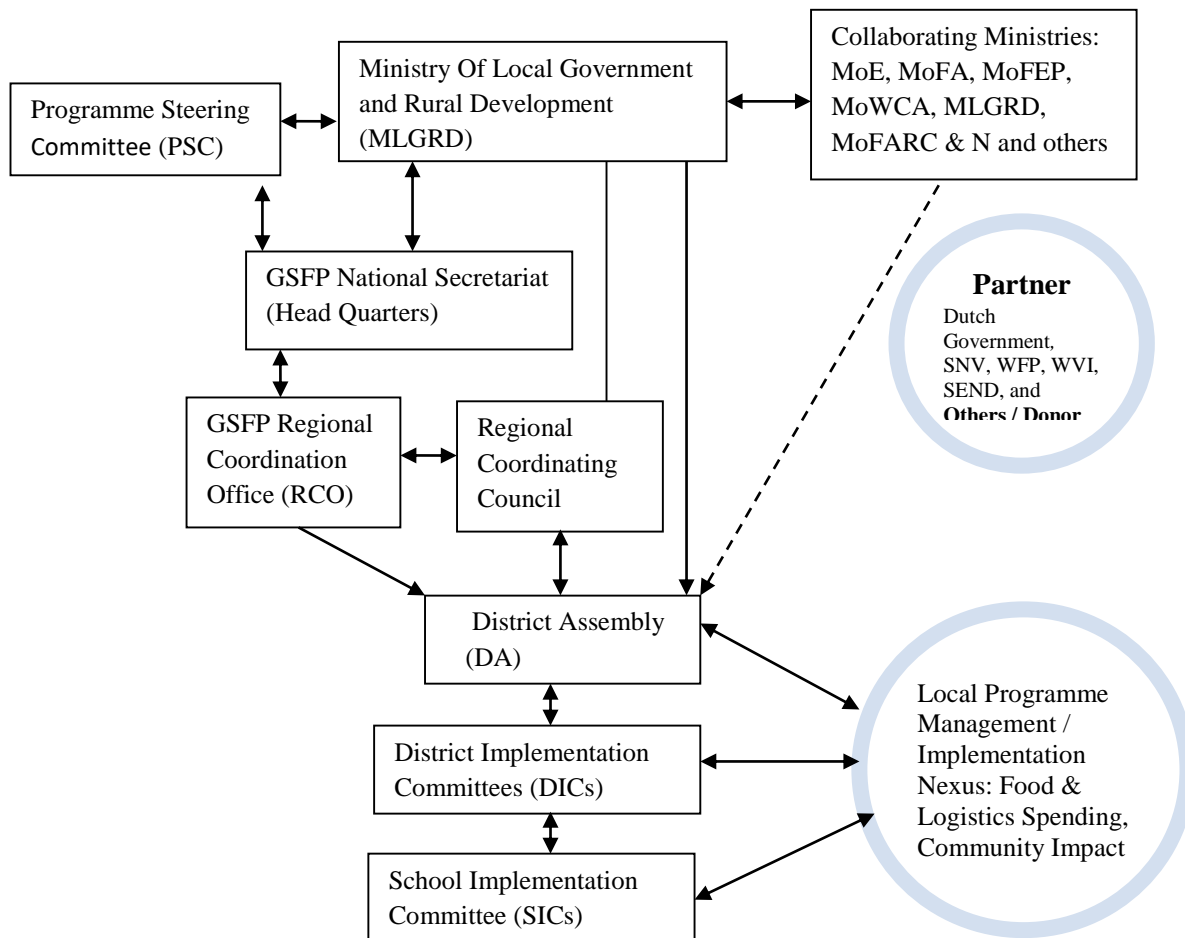


Figure 1: Organogram of the GSFP

Effectiveness of the GSFP

According to the Daily Graphic of August 22, 2008 (p16) the School Feeding Programme is helping to increase enrolment, attendance and retention. The Ghana School Feeding Programme seeks to provide children in primary schools and kindergartens in the poorest areas with one hot and nutritious meal a day, using locally grown foodstuff. The proposed plan was scaled up by the GSFP gradually to cover 1.04 million primary school and kindergarten children in most deprived communities and schools in the country by December 2010. The programme has proved to be an effective strategy for increasing enrolment, attendance, retention and even performance in schools in the country. The GSFP is part of Ghana's efforts towards the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals on hunger, poverty and primary education. It is an initiative of the comprehensive, African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Pillar 3 of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). A review of the pilot phase of the programme conducted in May / June 2006 revealed that in just over six months of its implementation, enrolment in pilot schools had risen by 20.3 percent compared to 2.8 percent in non-GSFP schools in the same districts (GSFP, 2006). By the end of 2009, Government had pumped in over GH¢ 45 million cedis for the School Feeding Programme and had extended the programme to every district in Ghana and this rapidly

increased the school enrolment because of the benefits gained from the programme (Daily Graphic, 18th December, 2009 p 25).

Implementation Challenges of the GSFP

The Ghana School Feeding Programme has wholly failed to meet its stated objectives. The programme has essentially failed to meet objective three in particular i.e. to boost domestic food production, as well as part of objective one that is to reduce malnutrition. What the programme has largely done is to reduce hunger by feeding school children. In the view of many commentators, school feeding is a welfare issue which suggests that the current location and housing of the GSFP is misplaced, thus rendering implementation of such a programme complex. The Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare which is responsible for social welfare and the Ministry of Health should have been granted the oversight responsibilities. The Ministry of Health has a specific mandate to monitor the country's health status, formulate strategies and design programmes to address health problems of the country. In addition, the Ministry also has a role to implement, monitor and evaluate all health issues in connection with the SFP. These are the areas which the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has encroached upon. The GSFP from all indications has to partner with the MoE, MoH, and MoFA if it is to succeed. However, it is obvious that effective collaboration with these technical ministries is a major challenge. A common aspect of this challenge has to do with communication on GSFP issues both within and across the three technical ministries. For instance, the District Directors of Health, Education and Agriculture have bits and pieces of information about GSFP but do not communicate this across to GSFP offices or line ministries.

Another seemingly intractable challenge has to do with the inability to link GSFP to local agriculture production. Even where linkage exists, its desired impact is nothing to write home about. It is common knowledge that most farmers and GSFP caterers are not linked hence the dream of GSFP boosting domestic food production remains a mirage. Alfa and Fyn (2011) report that

Apart from selected communities in the Ga East District and certain parts of the Northern sector of Ghana, where some positive linkages have been achieved, the status of the relationship between farmers and caterers in many beneficiary communities are not known fuelling the general belief that farmers in these communities are not linked to their local caterers and therefore do not derive direct benefits from the school feeding programme.p.7

The targeting and selection of beneficiary schools remain a major challenge to Ghana School Feeding Programme. According to GSFP official statistics released in 2011, the largest beneficiaries of the programme are Greater Accra, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions. They together command 60% of the total number of pupils who are benefiting from the programme. This problem is compounded by the fact that the cities of Accra and Kumasi alone take the largest chunk of this 60%, although they may not deserve that percentage per the selection criteria. Conversely, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions which are considered the poorest in Ghana have only 15% of the total number of pupils benefiting from the programme. Funding also remains the most difficult challenge to the GSFP. The GH ¢ 0.40 per child per meal is woefully inadequate considering the current economic conditions prevailing in the country. This amount cannot appropriately provide a balanced nutritious meal for the school going child. Even as we bemoan the feeding amount per every meal, it is true to add that these

monies are not released in good time to the caterers thereby making them to feed pupils on credit. The danger in this is that quality and quantity of the food may be compromised.

The culture of reliance on external support poses a threat to the programme. This is particularly so given that there are several existing cases/examples of withdrawal from School Feeding Programmes by external donors. Examples of countries that experience donor withdrawal include Botswana (1966-1972) Cape Verde (1979-1995) and Namibia (1991-1997)

Impact of GSFP on Enrolment and Retention

In the words of Ceci et al (1995) cited in Del Rosso (1999), “the number of days a child attends school is related to performance and cognition”. From the quote, it can be inferred that poor health and malnourishment affect enrolment and attendance. In Ghana, malnourished children are not enrolled in school at early stage or may not attend school at all and even if they are enrolled they may not complete. According to Imoru (2010), a national inventory of GSFP by SNV Ghana in 2008 revealed that the programme has positively led to an increase in initial enrolment of most schools. Overall, enrolment in the primary schools had increased by 12.8% and enrolment in the Kindergarten by 23.1%. The study further revealed that some schools especially in Northern and Upper West Regions saw an increase in enrolment over 100%.

The increase in enrolment does not translate to a corresponding increase in either number of teachers or classroom space. William Lambers in 2009 dubbed “Ending Child Hunger: School Feeding in Ghana” credited school meals with increasing enrolment, attendance and retention rates. This reflected in the GSFP record in 2006/ 2007 academic year, when national enrolment increased by 21%. Enrolment rates in WFP-assisted schools in Bolgatanga and Bongo Districts increased by 14 and 10% respectively.

There are other initiatives that have some possible and positive effects in improving enrolment and attendance as well as retention. These include the provision free school uniforms and exercise books, increasing the capitation grants of pupils, and instituting take-home rations among others. The take-home ration in particular is the single most compelling reason why parents are now willing to send their children especially girls to school. In order to qualify for take-home ration, girls have to attend school for a minimum of 80% of the month. This has led to regular attendance resulting in higher academic performance thereby qualifying more girls into high schools. Not surprisingly, several educational assessments have confirmed that food assisted programmes like the WFP take-home ration were instrumental in propelling the attainment of gender parity in primary education in Upper East and Upper West Regions. Out of the ten regions in Ghana, these two had the highest gender parity ratios in 2006/ 2007. Official statistics from the GSFP in 2011 and a national inventory of GSFP by SNV Ghana in 2008 make the situation complex. In Brong Ahafo Region, only 5% of its households have difficulty with food needs compared to 40% and 23% of households in Upper East and Upper West respectively. Conversely, Brong Ahafo has more schools enrolled on the programme than the two poor Upper Regions. The impact of the GSFP on basic education and the society as a whole can be seen in the diagram below.

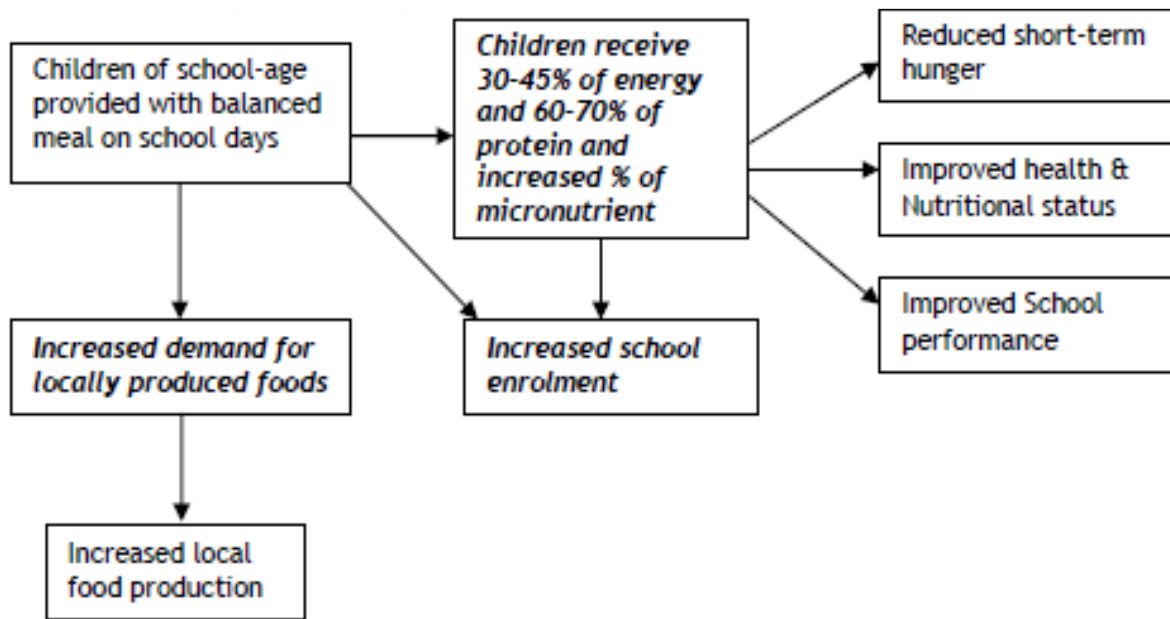


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of possible impacts of locally sourced school feeding interventions

Source: NEPAD (2005)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach to this research is a qualitative study. Hossain (2011:145) cited in Simofrosa and Rosemay (2015) asserts that qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, to identify how their experiences and behaviors are shaped by the contexts of their lives such as the social, economic, cultural and physical contexts. The research design is the descriptive type. This design is chosen because the research seeks to discover some relationships that exist between the GSFP and basic school enrolment and retention. Agyedu, Donkor and Obeng (1999) hold similar view when they said that descriptive research design “involves some type of comparison or contrast and attempts to discover relationships between existing variables. They further contend that descriptive design is concerned with hypothesis formulation and testing, the analysis of the relationships between non-manipulated variables, and the development of generalizations.

The population of the study is made up of all pupils in primary schools who are enjoying the GSFP in Talensi District. A total of sixteen (16) schools made up of 6,339 pupils form the population. Four (4) schools (Tindongo, Pwalugu, Shia and Baare Primary) were selected for the study with a sample population of 2,028 pupils. Out of this total sample population, forty (40) pupils were selected for the study. Ten (10) pupils were selected from each school; eight (8) teachers were also selected for the study. Two (2) teachers were drawn from each of the four (4) schools selected for the study. The study was purposively targeted at the GSFP schools in the Talensi District. Four (4) GSFP schools were randomly selected from any of the six (6) circuits in the district. By randomization, we mean to say that, from a population, every participant stands an equal chance of getting selected into the group to be used (Gay, 1987). Simple random sampling method was used to get the 40 pupils whilst purposive sampling was

used to get the teachers. The instruments used for the data collection of this study were structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Two main types of data were used in this study. These are primary and secondary data. The primary data included those that came from the questionnaires and interviews which formed the basis for the analysis. The secondary data involved data that were collected from the review of relevant books, journals magazines, newspapers and websites. The data collection phase focused on the impact the GSFP had on some selected primary schools in the Talensi District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The data that were gathered from the use of the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics. In descriptive statistics, a set of numbers are transformed into indices that describe or characterize the data. They are used to summarize, organize and reduce large numbers and observations. In most cases, the reduction results in a few numbers derived from mathematical formula used to represent all observations in each interest group. The responses from the interview conducted were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Enrolment Levels

All the schools under review were all enrolled into the programme in 2011/2012 academic year. Tables 1 and 2 show the enrolment figures of the GSFP schools before and after joining the programme respectively.

Table 1: Enrolment figures in 2010/2011 academic year (before the schools joined the GSFP)

Name of School	Boys	Girls	Total
Pwalugu Primary	462	403	865
Shia Primary	213	321	534
Tindongo Primary	120	130	250
Baare Primary	140	162	302
Total	935	1,016	1,951

Source: Field survey (2013)

Table 2: Enrolment figures in 2012/2013 academic year (after the schools joined the GSFP)

Name of School	Boys	Girls	Total
Pwalugu Primary	504	414	918
Shia Primary	253	327	850
Tindongo Primary	149	149	298
Baare Primary	191	177	368
Total	1,097	1,067	2,164

Source: Field survey (2013)

From Tables 1 and 2, there is a clear indication that there has been an increase in enrolment level from 1,951 in 2010/2011 academic year to 2,164 in 2012/2013 academic year. The increase in enrolment by 10.92% (213 pupils) undoubtedly is significant. However, these

figures alone cannot be used to draw any meaning conclusion because other factors such as natural population increase, school academic performance, absence of school fees payment, and nearness of school to pupils' houses could influence enrolment. Further interviews were conducted to ascertain whether the increase in enrolment was attributed to the GSFP or other factors. Out of the eight (8) teachers interviewed, five (5) of them admitted the increase in enrolment in their schools to parents commitment and awareness in education. Two (2) other teachers attributed the increase in enrolment to natural population increase whilst another two (2) said the increase in enrolment was as a result of the payment of capitation grants by government. One interesting revelation from the enrolment figures for both academic years is that, in terms of gender parity there was some level of balance.

Retention levels

Data was collected on retention of pupils for the 2010/ 2011 and 2012/ 2013 academic years. It is important to state that in 2010/ 2011 academic year, none of the schools under the study joined the GSFP whilst in 2012/ 2013 academic year; all the schools under the study had joined the GSFP. Table 3 and 4 show the retention figures of the GSFP schools before and after joining the programme respectively.

Table 3: Retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2010/ 2011 academic year

Name of School	Number of pupils at the start of year	Number of pupils at the end of year	Number of pupils who dropped out	Percentage of pupils retained at the end of year
Pwalugu Primary	865	815	50	92.2
Shia Primary	534	504	30	94.4
Tindongo Primary	250	223	27	98.2
Baare Primary	305	273	29	90.4
Total	1,951	1,815	136	93.02

Source: Field survey (2013)

Table 4: Retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2012/ 2013 academic year

Name of School	Number of pupils at the start of year	Number of pupils at the end of year	Number of pupils who dropped out	Percentage of pupils retained at the end of year
Pwalugu Primary	918	913	05	99.5
Shia Primary	580	572	08	98.6
Tindongo Primary	293	291	02	99.3
Baare Primary	368	368	00	100
Total	2,159	2,144	15	99.3

Source: Field survey (2013)

From Table 3 it can be seen that total number of students admitted at the beginning of the academic year was 1,951. The number dropped by 136 pupils to 1,815 at the end of the academic year (2010/ 2011). This resulted in 6.98% being recorded as the dropout rate against 93.02% for overall retention rate. Even though the drop out figure may seem small, it is considered significant because the ideal situation is to achieve 100% retention of pupils in schools. On the other hand, Table 4 results show that 2,159 pupils were enrolled at the beginning of the 2012/ 2013 academic year. At the end of the year, the figure dropped marginally by 15 pupils to 2,144. The dropout rate for the year was 0.7%. It is therefore clear from the table that total retention stood at 99.3%. A comparison of Tables 3 and 4 shows that retention of pupils had improved tremendously from 93.02% in 2010/ 2011 academic year to 99.3% in 2012/ 2013 academic year. The 6.28% improvement in retention within the period under review was further investigated through interviews. The interviews generally revealed that retention of pupils and the GSFP had a direct and positive correlation. This meant that the presence of the GSFP resulted in the increment in retention in the 2012/ 2013 academic year. Tables 3 and 4 are further simplified and illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 respectively.

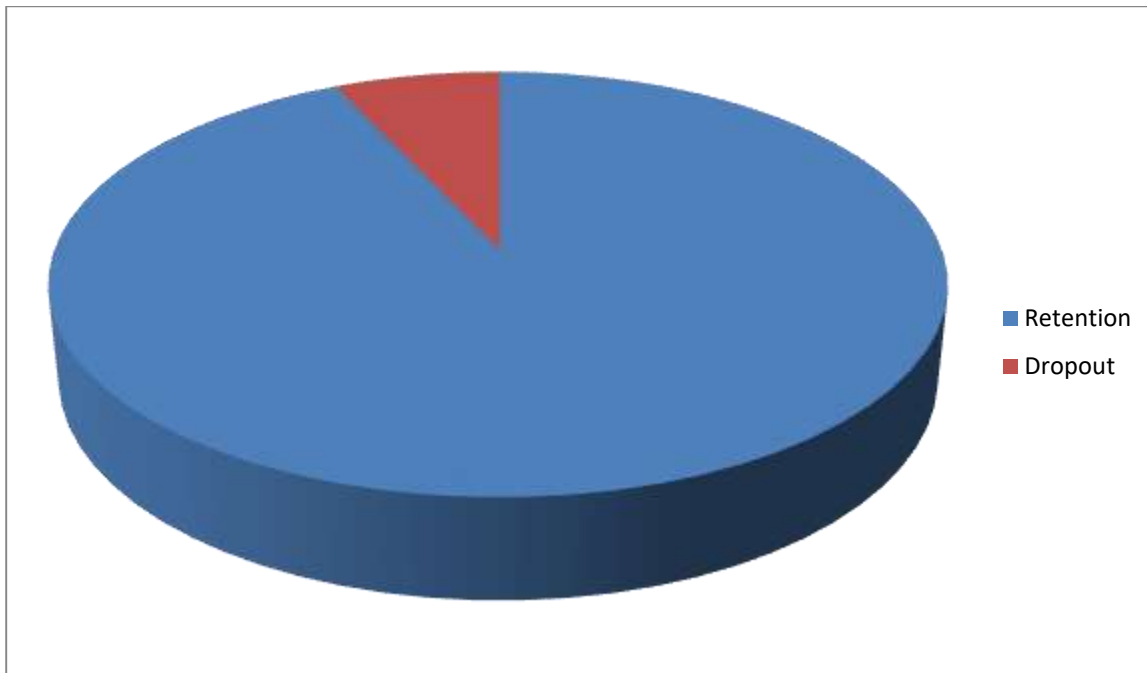


Figure 1: Pie chart showing the retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2010/ 2011 academic year. Source: Field survey (2013)

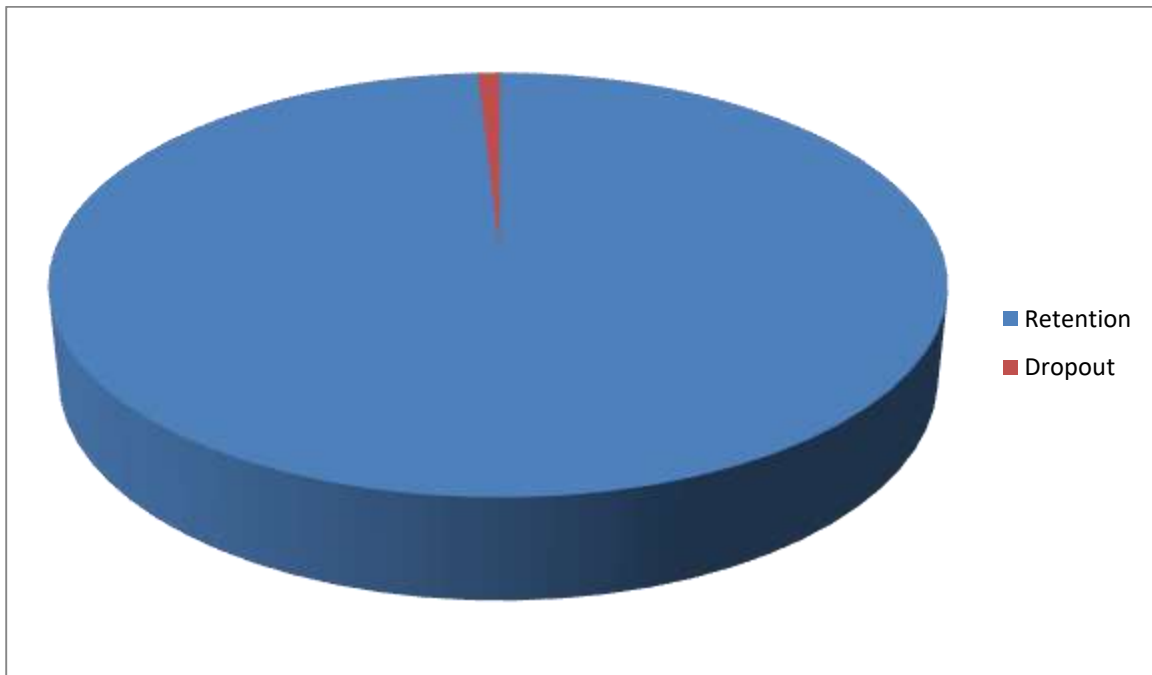


Figure 2: Pie chart showing the retention of pupils in GSFP schools in 2012/ 2013 academic year. Source: Field survey (2013)

What influences enrolment of pupils in GSFP Schools?

The research conducted showed major and different stance between the teachers and their pupils. Most teachers (75%) agreed that the presence of a free meal in schools is enough motivation for pupils to enroll in GSFP schools. Per the responses of teachers from the questionnaire, no teacher agreed that the enrolment of pupils to their schools could be attributed to good academic performance of the schools. Very few teachers attributed the enrolment of pupils to their schools to the fact that the schools were either closed to the homes of pupils or they were good teachers present in those schools. When Mr. Nicholas Akugre, the Head teacher of Shia Primary School was asked what he thinks could influence the enrolment of pupils in his school, he replied *“I think the number one reason is the presence of the GSFP although they may be other minor reasons”*. (not real name). It is also refreshing to note that these views by the teachers are not very different from the opinion of the researchers when they admitted in page 1 of this study that improving the living conditions of people should start with the availability of food. This position is supported by Maslow (1943) when he asserted that humans are motivated first through the provision of certain basic needs like food and others. A class five (5) pupil of Pwalugu Primary School confirmed the fact that he was enrolled into that school due to the presence of the GSFP when he said *“I came to this school because they are feeding us”*.

On the contrary, most pupils (83%) responded that they were enrolled in those schools primarily because either the teachers in those schools were good or the schools were performing well academically. None of the students admitted that the proximity of their houses to their schools had an influence in their choice of school per the responses on the questionnaire. It was only during the interview session that one class six pupil of Shia Primary admitted that he was enrolled in that school due to the nearness of the school to his house.

Details of respondents' views on what influences enrolment of pupils in certain schools like the GSFP schools are contained in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: What influences enrolment of pupils in GSFP Schools (Pupils' Responses)

Reason	Number of pupils
Nearness of the house to the school	00
Presence of free meal	07
Presence of good teachers	15
Good academic performance of school	18
Others	08

Source: Field survey (2013)

Table 6: What influences enrolment in GSFP Schools (Teachers' responses)

Reason	Number of pupils
Nearness of the house to the school	01
Presence of free meal	06
Presence of good teachers	01
Good academic performance of school	00
Others	00

Source: Field survey (2013)

From Table 5 and 6 it can be concluded that there is variance between the responses from teachers and that of the pupils over what influences a child's enrolment in a GSFP school. Whilst most teachers say it is due to presence of a free meal, the pupils attribute it to presence of good teachers, and good academic performance of the schools. When the responses of both pupils and teacher were put together the following results were obtained.

Table 7: General Responses on what influences Pupils enrolment in GSFP Schools

Reason	Number of pupils	Percentage (%)
Nearness of the house to the school	01	2.08
Presence of free meal	13	27.08
Presence of good teachers	16	33.33
Good academic performance of school	18	37.05
Others	00	0.00
Total	48	100.00

Source: Field survey (2013)

The figures from the Table 7 indicate that most children (pupils) got enrolled into the GSFP schools principally because they felt that those schools were performing well academically. A very good number of respondents viewed the motivation of pupils to enroll in GSFP schools to the presence of good teachers. Nobody attributed enrolment to any other factor except the reasons given above although there were other options. The study further revealed that most pupils had at least a breakfast before going to school. Of the forty (40) pupils under study, 75% (30 pupils) responded that they usually eat breakfast before going to school. In other to authenticate responses from pupils, respondents (pupils) were further asked whether they could eat 3 square meals on non-school days (vocation periods, holidays and weekends). Twenty-six (26) pupils or 65% said they always ate on non-school days whilst fourteen (14) pupils or 35%

said they sometimes ate. No pupil admitted that he/she has never eaten three times a day before. The results are illustrated on the table 8 and 9 below.

Table 8: Pupils who take Breakfast at home before going to School

Frequency	Number of pupils	Percentage (%)
Always	30	75.0
Some times	09	22.5
Not at all	01	2.5
Total	40	100.0

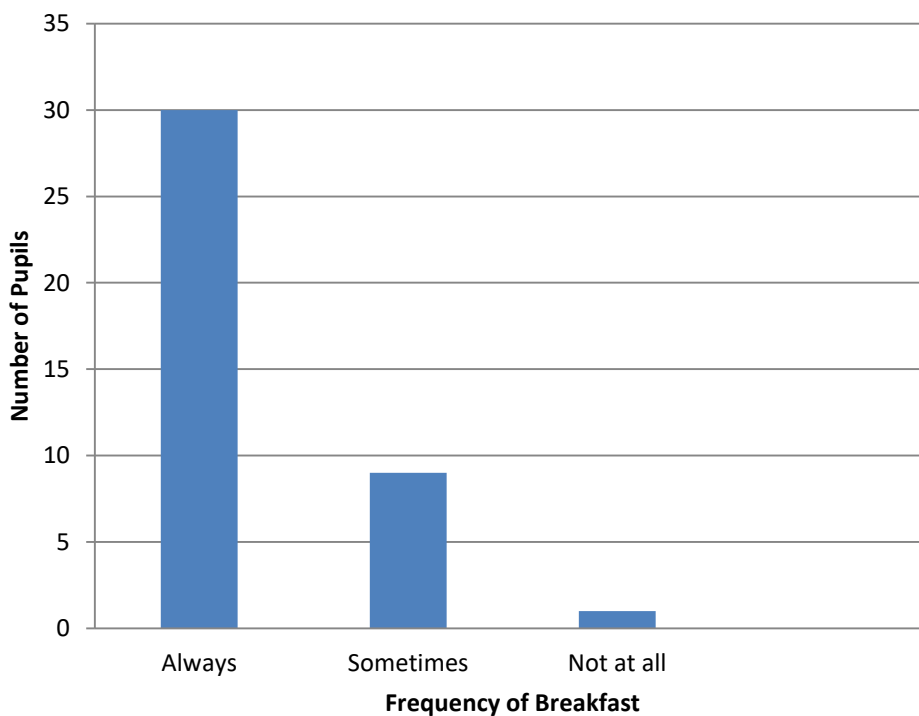
Source: Field survey (2013)

Table 9: Pupils who take three square Meals on non-school days

Frequency	Number of pupils	Percentage (%)
Always	26	65
Some times	14	35
Not at all	00	00
Total	40	100

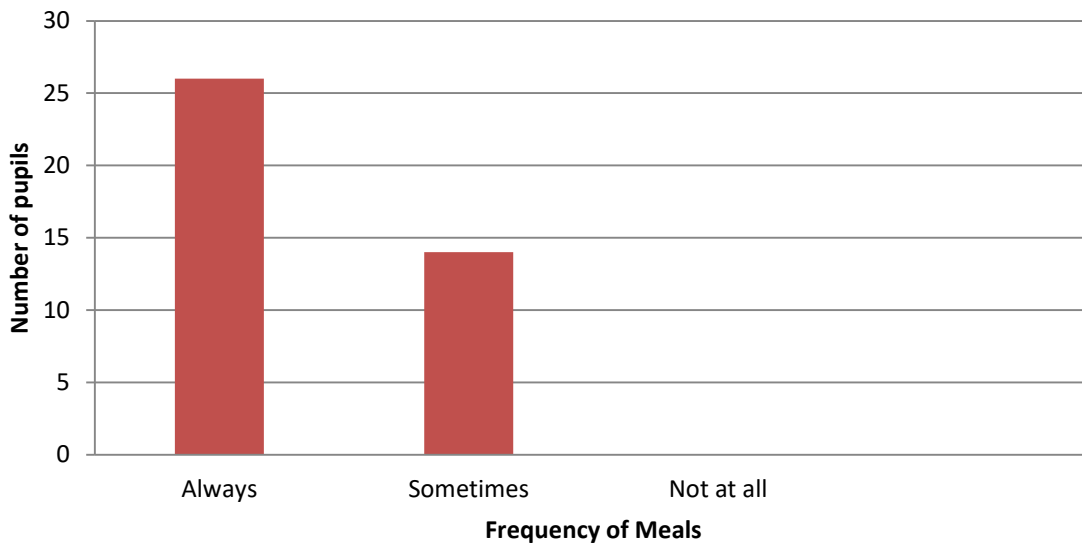
Source: Field survey (2013)

Figure 1: Simple bar chart showing number of pupils' who take breakfast at home before going to school



Source: Field survey (2013)

Figure 2: Simple bar chart showing number of pupils who eat three square meals on non-school days



Source: Field survey (2013)

From Figures 8 and 9, it can be concluded that about 28 pupils (70%) usually get food to eat with or without GSFP. Therefore the presence of GSFP in their schools may not necessarily influence the enrolment of pupils into those schools.

Impact of GSFP on Basic School Enrolment and Retention

On the impact of the GSFP in basic school enrolment and retention, Mrs. Alice Azangweo the Headmistress of Pwalugu Primary School said *“the programme has brought about improvement in enrolment and regular attendance”*. She added that when her school had not joined the GSFP, most of the pupils used to ‘run’ back to their houses to take meals during school hours, which affected their learning. Most of the teachers interviewed endorsed the views of Mrs. Alice Azangweo. On enrolment and retention, Mr. Nicholas Akugre observed that: *there was a drop in pupils’ population in his school when Catholic Relief Service (CRS), a school feeding programme pulled out in 2005. He therefore attributed the decrease in enrolment of his pupils in 2005 to the pull out of CRS. He said “the drop or increase in pupils enrolment in my school have a direct relationship with the absence or presence of GSFP”*.

The views of these respondents are in no way different from the studies that were conducted by SNV Ghana (2008) and William Lambers (2009). According to Imoru (2010), a national inventory of GSFP by SNV Ghana in 2008 revealed that the programme has positively led to an increase in initial enrolment of most schools. Overall, enrolment in the primary schools had increased by 12.8% and enrolment in the Kindergarten by 23.1%. Another study conducted by Lambers (2009) credited school meals with increasing enrolment, attendance and retention rates. This study findings reflected in the GSFP official record in 2006/ 2007 academic year, when national enrolment increased by 21%. A GSFP teacher at Baare Primary School said *“whilst I admit that the GSFP is helping to increase enrolment, it is also true to say that population increase and the fact that parents are now interested in education could lead to the increment in numbers we are seeing these days”*. The view of this teacher and others are not

significantly different from the opinion of the researchers. Details of their responses are provided in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Impact of GSFP on pupils' learning

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	41	85.42
No	06	12.50
Undetermined	01	2.08
Total	48	100.00

Source: Field survey (2013)

From the table, it is clear that over 85% of respondents said that the GSFP had some positive effect in pupils' learning whilst 12.5% of respondents said the programme had no impact in learning. Only one person did not know whether the programme had impact or not. The results presented in table 10 should not be surprising because learning depends largely on the ability of one to satisfy his/her physiological needs (food and others) first as expressed by Abraham Maslow in his theory of motivation. Del Rosso (1999) identified four objectives of SFPs among which include the fact that when children are fed in school, it is most likely to increase their attention and concentration resulting in some gains in cognitive function and learning. The impact of the GSFP on pupils' academic performance and learning is also confirmed by the conceptual framework of possible impacts of SFP by NEPAD in 2005.

Table 10: is further illustrated on a pie chart below.

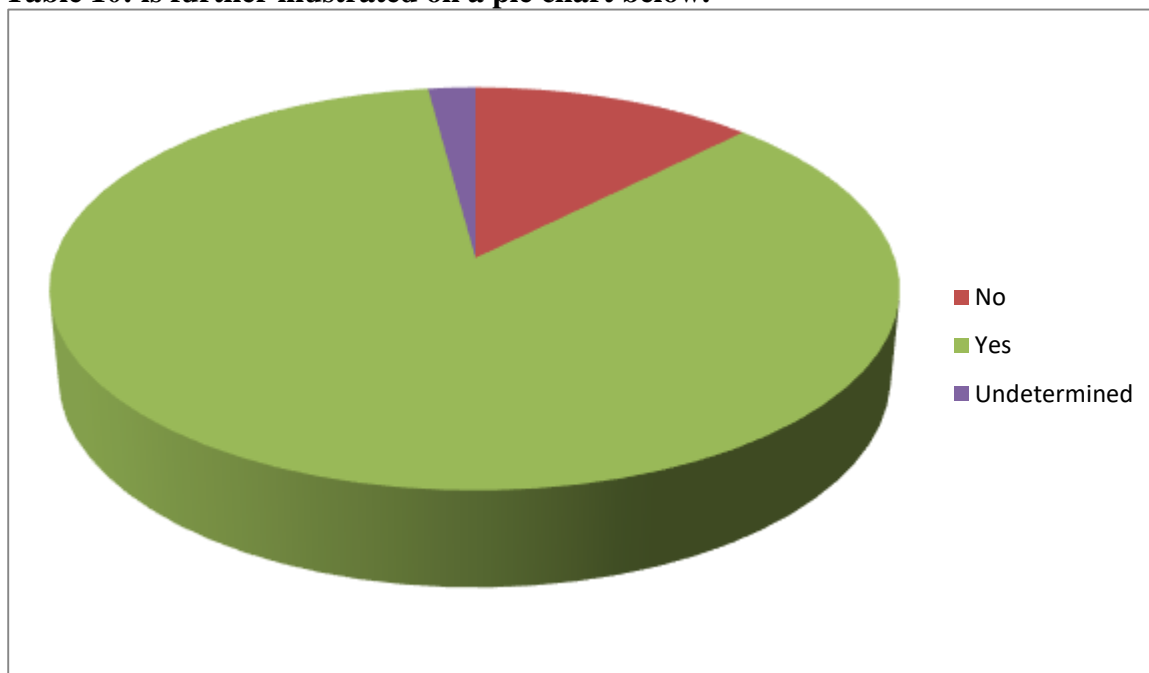


Figure 3 : Pie chart showing the impact of GSFP on pupils learning.

Source: Field survey (2013)

From the pie chart, it can be seen that majority of respondents said the programme has some impact in terms of improvement in learning. Commenting on the impact of the GSFP on learning, a class six pupil of Tindongo Primary School, Hamdia Baan said "*whenever I eat*

food in school, it helps me to listen attentively to my teachers. An interview with some respondents who were teachers also showed that the GSFP had some influence in improving learning or academic performance. All the eight (8) respondents confirmed that the programme culminated in some marginal increase in pupils performance during school performance and monitoring test.

CONCLUSION

From the study conducted, it can be concluded that what influences pupils enrolment and retention most in public schools is the presence of the GSFP. The study also revealed that the enrolment and retention of pupils could be influenced by good and quality teachers, and good academic performance of the schools. The study further revealed that most pupils get food to eat at their various houses even on non-school days, it can therefore be said that for such children, the presence of the GSFP may not necessarily influence their enrolment or stay in schools.

On the impact of the programme on basic school enrolment and retention, the conclusion drawn is that there is a direct and positive relationship between the presence of the GSFP in a school and the enrolment and retention of pupils in that school. Since the presence of the GSFP leads to increment in enrolment and retention, it will be prudent to replicate the programme in all public basic schools. This is particularly very important owing to the fact that this research has proven that the food pupils eat in schools contribute significantly to improvements in their learning.

According to Del Rosso (1999) when children are fed in school, it is most likely to increase their attention, cognitive function and learning. Also, Lambers (2009) credited increased enrolment and retention of pupils to SFPs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in order to strengthen the programme so that it achieves its desired objectives.

- i. In order that the programme is sustained, it is proposed that government should establish a legal framework institutionalizing a GSFP fund.
- ii. Targeting of the beneficiary schools should be done if the programme is to succeed in achieving its objectives. To this end, the selection criteria should be clearly spelt out and efforts made to put some mechanisms that can make the programme withstand political control or interference.
- iii. The GSFP desk officers in collaboration with Ghana Health Service (GHS) should conduct periodic medical screening on the caterers and cooks including the environment (kitchen) within which the food is prepared. This will help ensure that meals are always prepared under hygienic environments and conditions.
- iv. The GSFP monitoring officers should intensify their co-ordination and monitoring role so that all other officers and stakeholders comply strictly with all guidelines

regarding the operation of the programme. Notwithstanding the recommendation on the need to develop a national feeding guide for the GSFP, it is important that the SIC should monitor caterers to ensure strict compliance with the school menu.

- v. For the programme to succeed there is the need to remove duplication of roles under various departments and ministries, there should be clear definition in terms of powers, functions and roles for these MDAs so as to enhance smooth and effective implementation of the programme.
- vi. There should be a national nutritional guide or menu for the GSFP. This will help ensure that meals served across the length and breadth of the country is standard and balanced.
- vii. There is the urgent need to enhance community participation and collaboration in the programme to better serve schools on GSFP in their communities

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