

Impact of School Feeding Programme on Access to Basic Education: The Case of South Tongu District of the Volta Region, Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of the school feeding programme on access to basic education in the South Tongu district in the Volta Region, Ghana. A convergent parallel mixed method research design was employed to conduct the study. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling procedures were used to select 213 respondents for the study. Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion were used to collect the data for the study. Data gathered through questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies while interview data analysis was done using the thematic approach. The results of the study showed that the school feeding programme has a significant impact on increased enrolment, attendance and retention of pupils in the South Tongu district. However, the implementation of the programme has put pressure on teaching and learning materials as well as increased teacher-pupil ratio. The study recommended that plans and measures should be put in place by the government, implementation ministries and agencies on how to increase existing human, physical and financial resources for the school feeding programme to be sustained.

Keywords: school feeding programme, enrolment, attendance, retention, and education

1. Introduction

Education is appreciated as a source of economic growth and development owing to the enormous expansion in the number of applications for its products and services worldwide (Ahmed & Arends-Kuenning, 2003). As a result, student enrolment is on the increase forcing the international community, governments and managers of the education system to put measures in place to manage the huge enrolment numbers without compromising quality. One of these policies implemented is the in-school feeding programme (Ahmed & Arends-Kuenning, 2003). The school feeding concept originated from the activities of the European charitable donors in the 1700s. The concept was later adopted by the United States of America and the United Kingdom in the 1930s as a social safety net to improve the health outcomes of children (Gokah, 2008).

Successive governments in Ghana have instituted programmes and policies to make education, especially at the basic level affordable and accessible to all children of school going age and to improve educational outcomes. Examples included the free education in the three northern regions, the supply of free textbooks and stationery to basic school pupils and the capitation grant to reduce the financial burden on parents towards their children's education (Osei-Fosu, 2011). Having implemented these policies over the years, several questions still remain unresolved. The Government of Ghana introduced the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) in the 2005/2006 academic year where each pupil under the scheme was covered by a feeding grant of GH¢ 0.30 a day in pursuance of the universal primary education by 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals on education (Nsawah, 2008). These interventions led to substantial progress in expanding enrolment and increasing years of schooling as well as participation in primary education.

Despite these favourable progress reports, access to quality basic education by children of school going age remains a hurdle. A 2002 study by the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group reported that more than seventy percent (70%) of such children live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Many children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, especially, those in rural areas are usually unable to progress beyond the first few years of schooling, a situation the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (2002) attribute to their disadvantaged economic circumstances.

Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) also observed that the quality of schooling in developing countries is often very low due to class repetition and high drop out at an early age, teacher absenteeism from classrooms, and the fact that many children learn much less than the learning objectives set in the official curricula. In tandem with the foregoing arguments, UNESCO asserted that while many national governments recognise universal primary school attendance as contained in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), enrolment rates continue to be low in many developing countries (UNESCO, 2007). Research suggests that there is a correlation between nutritional and health status and school attendance and academic performance of children. Weak health and poor nutrition among school-age children reduce their cognitive development either through physiological changes or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences. Consequently, nutrition-based development

programmes such as school feeding during their formative years is a critical contribution to fighting malnutrition while at the same time improving their ability to learn (Buhl, 2009).

In order to improve enrolment, the Government of Ghana has eliminated primary school fees and established programmes such as school feeding basically to provide solutions to some of these problems (Levinger, 1986). Statistics indicate that the average number of pupil enrolment in GSFP schools increased by 18% between 2005 and 2011. The programme has helped to improve attendance and reduce drop-out rates. However, the allocation of fifty (50) pesewas per child is inadequate as it has not kept pace with the economic situation in the country. This allocation, coupled with the need to pre-finance meals has become a problem to caterers, who often resort to credit facilities at high interest rates. This in many cases, has led to reduction in the quality and quantity of meals served to pupils (GSFP, 2014).

1.1 Impact of School Feeding on Attendance, Enrolment and Retention

Empirical evidence suggests that school feeding has a positive impact on school participation and attendance in areas where initial indicators of school participation and attendance are low. For example, Ahmed and Billah (1994) in a study found that school-based food distribution in Bangladesh increased enrolment by 20% as against 2% decline in non-participating schools. Similarly, the World Food Programme (1996) recorded 76% increase in enrolment while attendance increased by 95% after introducing a school feeding programme in Pakistan. To enjoy this benefit, girls were given one or two tins of oil for not missing school for 20 days or more per month. In Burkina Faso, SFP schools reported 5% increase in girls' enrolment (Kazianga, Del Walque & Alderman 2009), while in Ghana, Osei-Fosu, (2011) reported that the school feeding programme had a high positive and significant impact on school enrolment, attendance and retention. However, Adelman, Gilligan and Lehrer (2008) in a study did not find any evidence that school feeding has increased primary school attendance rates for all school-age children.

1.2 Impact of School Feeding on Academic Performance

Poor health and nutrition are known to affect children's ability to learn (Pollit 1990; Simeon & Grantham-McGregor 1989). It is therefore, important to include health and nutrition inputs as strategies to improve academic performance. Studies in Chile, the United Kingdom, and the United States between 1978 and 1995 revealed that brain functioning is sensitive to short-term variations in the availability of nutrient supplies (Pollit, 1995). Similarly, Moore and Kunze (1994) in a study reported that the success rate in national examinations were high in schools that had school feeding programmes than those schools without feeding programmes. They argued that providing children with daily breakfast or a meal at school could improve their scholastic achievement through several mechanisms such as increasing the time spent in school, improving certain cognitive functions and attention to tasks, and perhaps indirectly improving nutritional status. However, in contrast, McGregor et al. (1998) reported that in Jamaica learning outcomes deteriorated in less well-organized schools following the introduction of a school breakfast programme.

1.3 Impact of School Feeding Programme on Teaching and Learning

Availability and effective management of resources greatly influence effective teaching and learning. Research has proved that schools without adequate teachers and teaching and learning materials would not be effective (Mantey, 2012). While the school feeding programme has been hailed for its prowess to increase enrolment and retention, further measures to preserve the quality of education for beneficiaries have not been critically taken into consideration. Studies have shown that, there was a deficit of 20,000 teachers which had resulted in almost 15,000 classrooms being empty, with most classes merged for teachers to handle (Mantey, 2012). This led to the hiring of unqualified teachers to fill the gap. This can adversely affect the quality of basic school education and academic performance of children in the country. Uduku (2011) in a study submitted that there were inadequate teaching and learning materials in basic schools in Ghana and South Africa in the face of growing pupils' population. Similarly, Ampratwum et al, (2012) in their research on education resources management in public primary schools in Ghana reported that textbooks were insufficient and as a result pupils were compelled to share textbooks during lessons in the classroom and for homework. The literature implies that with the increase in school enrolment as a result of the implementation of the school feeding programme, there is the likelihood that pressure will be put on the limited education resources if supplies do not commensurate with the level of enrolment.

1.4 Perception of Community Members about the School Feeding Programme

Although several studies have assessed the quantitative outcomes of school feeding programmes, studies on the perceptions and expectations of a feeding programme using qualitative data are rare (Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine, 2003). Williams and his colleagues argued that most of the studies were focused on nutritional outcomes rather than the perceptions of the people involved in the intervention. They noted that the reluctance of stakeholders to talk to investigators about problems that exist within new school feeding programmes could be blamed for the situation. Research has also shown that stakeholders hold varied perceptions about the school feeding programme. While some stakeholders held the programme in high esteem, because their livelihoods depended on the success of the programme (Williams, McIntyre, Dayle, & Raine, 2003), other community members expected more involvement in order to improve the outcomes of the school feeding intervention (Pappas et al., 2008). In another study, community members requested for the need to high qualified cooks, increase use of locally produced foods and the attachment of school farms to existing school feeding programmes (Quaye, Essegbey, Frempong, & Ruivenkamp, 2010). Community participation is therefore critical to the sustainability of school feeding programmes. When stakeholders have a sense of ownership in a programme, they are more likely to advocate for the programme during difficult times (Quaye et al., 2010). Fowler (2012) in a study found that stakeholders perceived the school feeding programme to have contributed to improved disposable income of beneficiaries, reduced truancy and improved behaviour both at school and at home.

1.5 Challenges of the School Feeding Programme

Empirical evidence suggests that school feeding programmes in various parts of the world have faced numerous challenges, in spite of its glowing benefits. The school feeding programme has been cited to increase the cost of schooling by requiring that beneficiary communities provide fuel for cooking as well as other items such as vegetables (Masset, Edoardo and AuloGelli, 2013). According to Tomlinson (2007), in South Africa, the school feeding programme was criticised for its poor management, poor coverage, inconsistencies and high-cost. Tomlinson further argued that an increase in enrolment meant that teacher-pupil ratio would subsequently increase, thereby putting pressure on teachers as well as learning materials.

From the foregoing review, it has been observed that since the implementation of the Ghana school feeding programme in 2005, beneficiary communities have raised various concerns about the inefficiencies in its implementation as a social intervention programme that have any meaningful influence on access to basic education. It has also been observed from the literature that, eventhough, previous researchers have assessed the impact of the school feeding programme, majority of the studies reviewed so far have employed only quantitative method and relied extensively on secondary sources of data. However, it appears limited studies have been done on the impact of the school feeding programme within the Ghanaian context by using both quantitative and qualitative research design. Also, it has been observed that no research so far has been devoted to explore the impact of the school feeding programme on enrolment, attendance and retention of pupils in the South Tongu district of the Volta Region in Ghana. Hence, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How has the school feeding programme affected primary school enrolment, attendance and retention in the South Tongu district?
2. How has the school feeding programme affected pupils' academic performance?
3. How do communities in the South Tongu district perceive the school feeding programme?
4. What factors impede the implementation of the school feeding programme in the South Tongu district?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Sample

The study adopted the mixed method research design. Specifically, the convergent parallel mixed method design was employed to examine the impact of school feeding programme on access, enrolment and retention of pupils. The rationale for using the mixed method design was to obtain a variety of information in order to achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability of data and overcome the deficiencies of a single method studies (Creswell, 2014). The design, therefore, involved collecting data from selected sample through questionnaires, interviews and

focus group discussions and analysing the responses. The target population of the study consisted of schools and communities in the South Tongu District in the Volta Region of Ghana where the GSFP is being implemented. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to draw the sample for the study. On the probability side, stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were adopted while purposive sampling was used for the non-probability technique. Stratified random sampling was used to select 15 schools out of 48 schools under the school feeding programme in the district. The schools were grouped into 5 layers based on circuits and simple random sampling was used to select 3 schools from each layer. Purposive sampling was used to select 60 pupils for the focused group discussion. These pupils were in the upper primary. Again, 4 School Management Committee(SMC) members were selected by the use of purposive sampling procedure. In all, the unit of analysis was made of 60 pupils, 149 teachers and 4 SMC members. Therefore, the total sample for the study was 213.

2.2 Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion were used to solicit information from the respondents. The administration of questionnaires was supplemented by interviews and focus group discussion. A semi-structured questionnaire which involved both close-ended and open-ended questions was used to solicit information from Teachers and Head Teachers of the sampled schools. Interviews were conducted for school management committee members while for pupils, focus group discussions were used. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words. The items also enabled the researchers to obtain answers to complex questions that could not be answered in a few simple words but required more detail and discussion. The researchers used English language in both interviews and focus group discussions as both SMC and pupils were fluent in it. This allowed the researchers to gain in-depth information in the subject area. Secondary data were obtained from relevant records and documents from the sampled schools to complement the primary data.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

With regard to ethical measures considered in this study, the researchers obtained a written permission from the South Tongu District Education Office. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The participants were informed and asked to sign a consent form. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidentiality was maintained during data collection. Names of individuals were not used and numbers were assigned to participants.

2.4 Data Analysis

The retrieved questionnaires were coded and data cleaning was conducted to examine the questionnaires for duplications and missing values. Data from closed-ended items of the questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 19.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages and frequencies were determined and presented in tables. The data from open-ended items in the questionnaires

and those from the interview were analysed using the thematic approach. This approach involved sifting and sorting of data according to key issues and themes. In some cases the verbatim comments of respondents were presented for interpretation.

2.5 Results and Discussion

The study sought to examine the impact of school feeding programme on enrolment, attendance and retention of pupils. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Effects of the SFP on Enrolment and Retention of Pupils

Statement	Increased	Static	Decreased
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
How would you describe the enrolment of pupils since the SFP started in your school?	133 (91.1)	12 (8.2)	1 (0.7)
How would you describe the attendance of pupils since the SFP started?	131 (91)	13 (9.0)	0(0)
How would you describe the impact of pupils staying in school throughout the academic year?	110 (75.3)	27 (18.5)	9 (6.2)

(N = 149)

From Table 1, 91.1% of the respondents attributed increased enrolment to the introduction of the SFP, with 8.2% indicating static enrolment. This implies that majority of the respondents attributed the increase in enrolment to the introduction of SFP. Respondents gave varied reasons such as affordable education, parental responsibility and community appreciation of education among others as being the reasons for the increase in enrolment.

With regard to attendance, overwhelming majority (91%) of the respondents indicated that attendance of pupils has increased since the SFP started in the South Tongu district. The finding of the current study that the school feeding programme has significant impact on school attendance confirms the findings reported by Adelman et. al, (2008) who in their study found a strong association between participation in a school meal programme and school attendance. The result of the current study gives the impression that serving food or meal in schools especially in rural areas will increase school attendance of pupils. This finding corroborates Ahmed and Billah, (1994) argument that school-based food distribution in Bangladesh increased enrolment by 20% as against 2% decline in non-participating schools. The outcome of the current study is also in line with the findings reported by Kazianga et al., (2009) who in their study reported that school feeding programme had a high positive and significant impact on school enrolment, attendance and retention. However, the finding of this study contrasts the findings of Adelman, Gilligan and Lehrer (2008) who in a study did not find any evidence that school feeding has increased primary-school attendance rates for all school-age children.

To investigate any significant impact of school feeding programme on increased enrolment,

attendance and retention of pupils, six items were used to elicit information from respondents. The result are presented in Table 2. As Table 2 shows, 110 respondents out of 149 were of the view that the school feeding programme has significant impact on pupils staying in school throughout the academic year. This number represents 75% of the total sample. Twenty-seven respondents representing 18.5% believed there was no change while 9 (6.2%) thought the impact has decreased. The result is an indication that an overwhelming majority had the opinion that the SFP has positively impacted on retention of pupils throughout the academic year in the South Tongu District.

Table 2. SFP Increased Enrolment, Attendance and Retention of Pupils

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
The enrolment of pupils increased with the introduction of the SFP	64 (45.7)	70 (50.0)	5 (3.6)	1 (0.7)
The attendance of pupils has increased due to the SFP.	64 (44.2)	73 (50.3)	7 (4.8)	1 (0.7)
Nutritious food served will entice more pupils to attend school.	63 (44.1)	67 (46.9)	9 (6.3)	4 (2.8)
SFP does not influence pupils' retention in school throughout the academic year.	11 (7.5)	44 (30.1)	69 (47.3)	22 (15.1)
Pupils are likely to stay in school since they eat in school together.	51 (34.9)	82 (56.2)	13 (8.9)	0 (0)
Highly nutritious food served will encourage pupils to stay in school.	35 (23.8)	98 (66.7)	12 (8.2)	2 (1.4)

N = 149

As shown in Table 2, 95.7% of the respondents agreed that enrolment of pupils increased following the introduction of SFP. The total comes from a breakdown of 45.7% who “strongly agreed” and 50.0% who “agreed”. On the issue of significant impact of school feeding programme on increased in enrolment, the result of the current study gives credence the to study by Afridi (2007) that established significant impact of school feeding programme on school enrolment and attendance in India. The foregoing is also in line with the findings of Ahmed and Billah(1994) who reported that a programme of school-based food distribution increased enrolment by 20% in comparison with a 2% decline in non-participating schools.

The implication of the present study is that a significant majority of respondents in the study area believed that the SFP has contributed significantly to school enrolment and attendance, hence, there is the need to sustain the programme which is consistent with the perspectives of Osei-Fosu (2011) who noted that school feeding programme has a high positive and significant impact on school enrolment, attendance and retention of pupils. As Table 2 shows, a total of 130 respondents constituting 90.9% agreed that nutritious meals served helped to entice more pupils to attend school regularly. This is consistent with the findings reported by

Arsenault et al., (2009) that the number of days absent from school was 23% lower in public primary schools in Bogotá, Colombia that received mid-morning snack than those that did not which also underscores the results revealed in a study conducted in 32 African countries where the World Food Programme operated school feeding programmes in primary schools. The results indicated that in the first year of the intervention, average enrolment and attendance increased by twenty-two (22%) for boys and twenty-eight (28%) for girls (Gelli, Meir & Espejo (2007).

With regard to retention of pupils, as Table 2 shows, 47.3% disagreed with the statement that SFP does not influence pupils' retention while 22, representing 15.1% strongly disagreed. However, 55 respondents constituting 37.7% agreed and strongly agreed. The implication is that, majority of the respondents in the study area were of the view that the SFP has actually influenced pupils' retention throughout the academic year. It can also be seen that 91.1% were of the opinion that pupils were likely to stay in school since they eat in school together with only 8.9% of the respondents disagreeing. This implies that the SFP had a positive impact on pupils' retention in the study area because significant majority (90.5%) support the idea that when highly nutritious meals were served, pupils would be encouraged to stay in school, thereby leading to an increase in retention.

To investigate the impact of school feeding programme on academic performance of pupils in the South Tongu district, nine items measured on a 4 point Likert scale were used to elicit information from respondents. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Impact SFP on Pupils Academic Performance

Statement	Strongly Agree F (%)	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Strongly Disagree F (%)
The performance of pupils increased with the starting of the SFP.	25 (17.0)	73 (49.7)	43 (29.3)	6 (4.1)
The concentration of pupils in class has increased with the introduction of the SFP.	24 (16.3)	80 (54.4)	37 (25.2)	6 (4.1)
The performance of pupils in schools with SFP is better than the performance of pupils in schools without SFP	18 (12.3)	59 (40.4)	63 (43.2)	6 (4.1)
The SFP has created equal opportunities in schools	17 (11.9)	79 (55.2)	43 (30.1)	4 (2.8)
Pupils' academic performance is improving due to the SFP.	18 (12.5)	81 (56.2)	41 (28.5)	4 (2.8)
School feeding has influence pupils' studies in school	19 (13.1)	94 (64.8)	27 (18.6)	5 (3.4)
Pupils would concentrate on their books better due to the SFP	25 (17.4)	80 (55.6)	36 (25.0)	3 (2.1)
Pupils' participation in school activities has improved with SFP.	20 (14.0)	80 (55.9)	35 (24.5)	8 (5.6)

(N = 149)

As shown in Table 3, 66.7% of respondents alluded that the academic performance of pupils increased with the starting of the SFP. However, 29.3% of the respondents disagreed and 4.1% strongly disagreed. It can also be seen that 70.7% of the respondents were of the view that pupils' concentration in class had increased following the introduction of the SFP. Out of this, 24 respondents representing (16.3%) strongly agreed while 80 respondents representing (54.4%) agreed. Forty-three respondents disagreed which is represented by 29.3%. In support of these findings, one participant from the focus group discussion asserted that:

“When I eat, I become alert and able to concentrate. And when I eat, I become happy and able to focus on classroom activities”.

Another respondent stated that:

“When I eat, I am able to concentrate on learning and perform better but my mind stays on the food when I am hungry and I lose concentration”.

The result of the current study confirms the findings reported by Pollit (1995) studies in Chile, the United Kingdom, and the United States that brain functioning is sensitive to short-term variations in the availability of nutrient supplies, particularly for undernourished children for whom omitting breakfast alters brain function and limits their speed and accuracy of information retrieval in working memory. This is also underscored by Moore and Kunze (1994) who found in a study that the success rate on a national examination for sixth-grade pupils in Burkina Faso was higher for schools that had school feeding programmes than those schools without feeding programmes. A class six pupil who was a participant in the focus group discussions corroborated this finding as follows:

“These days, I perform better than I used to before the feeding programme because I no longer think of food in class. I’m able to concentrate”.

It must be noted that nutritional and health status are potential influences on a

child’s learning and how well a child performs in school. Weak health and poor nutrition among school-age children diminish their cognitive development either through physiological changes or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences. Temporary hunger, particularly common in children who are not fed before going to school can have adverse effect on learning. Children who are hungry, therefore, have more difficulty concentrating and performing complex tasks.

To assess the views of the community members about the school feeding programme in the South Tongu district, in-depth interviews were conducted. Data retrieved from the interviews revealed that the school feeding programme is a good social intervention programme and it is beneficial to the communities. This is because the implementation of the programme has helped to alleviate poverty in the communities by reducing the heavy burden of responsibility on parents towards their wards. This was evident when a participant during the interview indicated that:

“The programme has reduced poverty and increased enrolment because a lot of pupils now come to school, so, at least, it’s helping to reduce the burden on parents”.

Another participant stated that:

“Even parents who were previously not able to give their wards money for feeding in school now send their wards to school because they know the children will be fed in school”.

The finding of the current study on whether the implementation of the school feeding programme has helped to alleviate poverty in the South Tongu district confirms the findings reported by Fowler (2012) when he indicated that stakeholders were of the view that the school feeding programme made it possible for families to have more disposable income. The outcome of the current study is also in line with the findings reported by Anderson, Moreen, Peterson and Tobey (2005) who indicated that due to the positive perceptions of the school feeding programme and the benefits to the various communities, the communities were much involved by building kitchens and store rooms, volunteering, providing security, monitoring and oversight responsibilities.

On the other hand, some of the participants had reservations about SFP, complaining that some of the children after eating do not stay in school till closing. A participant confirmed this as follows:

“Enrolment has increased but attendance is the problem because some children run away from school after eating”.

The participants also indicated that the SFP has increased pressure on the schools’ resources. For example, a participant in one of the communities stated that:

“It is the school that buys everything including water and firewood, and this puts pressure on the little funds they generate internally.”

The study also sought to explore the factors that impede the implementation of the school feeding programme in the South Tongu district through in-depth interviews. Results of the study revealed that the most prominent factor that impede the implementation of the SFP in the study area was lack funds. According to the participants, this has led to shortage of food items, irregularity in the preparation of food, inadequate cooking facilities, sub-standard quality of the meals and inadequate cooking staff. The participants believed that inadequate funding and delay in releasing funds have consequently resulted in delay in paying the remunerations of the matrons. A school management committee member had this to say:

“When enrolment increases, it takes time for the change in enrolment to be detected and this affects the programme because funding for the increased enrolment does not come as soon as enrolment increases. This leads to shortages”.

Another participant said:

“Funds are not available so the number of cooks to employ that can serve the pupils quickly has been limited. This affects the contact hours for teaching and learning”.

Concerning how motivated and committed the cooks are, another participant lamented as follows:

“How the cooks approach their job is not all that good. And their remunerations are not enough. This affects their motivation and commitment towards their work”.

According to Kedze, (2013), salaries of caterers contracted for the Ghana School Feeding Programme had been in arrears over a six-month period. Additionally, there was the problem of inadequate school infrastructure to take care of the increased enrolments in the various schools.

Another implementation challenge identified was related to community support for the programme. A participant in the interviews revealed that:

“The community’s support and understanding has not been forthcoming. The community is not ready to help but the schools are trying to play the role of the community. For instance, the provision of water and firewood can be taken care of by the community, but everyone is looking up to the government and there’s pressure on the schools”.

In tandem with this finding, Masset, Edoardo and Aulo Gelli, (2013) argued that communities are expected to provide people who can cook the meals and maintain stores of all of the required food products, as well as provide kitchens and other logistics of meal preparation. Mismanagement was also cited as a challenge to the implementation of the programme in the South Tongu District. In support of this challenge, Tomlinson (2007) reported that although the school feeding programme contributed to an increase in enrolment and attendance, enhanced participation of beneficiaries in the classroom and generated jobs in the communities, it has come under criticism for its poor management, poor coverage, inconsistencies and high-cost. To contend with the foregoing challenges, respondents proposed an improvement in planning and supervision of the SFP in the study area to ensure its smooth running. This implies that most respondents in the study area were of the view that to have an effective running of the SFP, good planning, supervision and adequate funding should be given the needed attention. They also believed that adequate funding would be needed to improve upon benefits the SFP is offering in the study area. This, according to them, could be achieved when the cost per child is increased so as to provide more funds for the smooth running of the programme. This would help to hire additional cooks, purchase the needed quantity of food and maintain a regular programme in the schools. Provision of adequate infrastructure and improved community support were also mentioned.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it can be concluded that the school feeding programme has a significant impact on access to basic education in the South Tongu district with regard to increase in enrolment and retention of pupils in primary schools. The implementation of the programme has however, put pressure on teaching and learning materials, increased teacher-pupil ratio and increased workload on teachers in the study area.

From the findings and conclusion, it can be inferred that the school feeding programme is complex and it requires institutional capacity to run. Therefore, the study recommends that

the resources, the technical know-how, the systems, the number of staff as well as the infrastructure required should not be underestimated by ministries involved and stakeholders in its implementation. Plans and measures should be put in place by the government, the implementation ministries and agencies on how to increase the existing human, physical and financial resources.

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