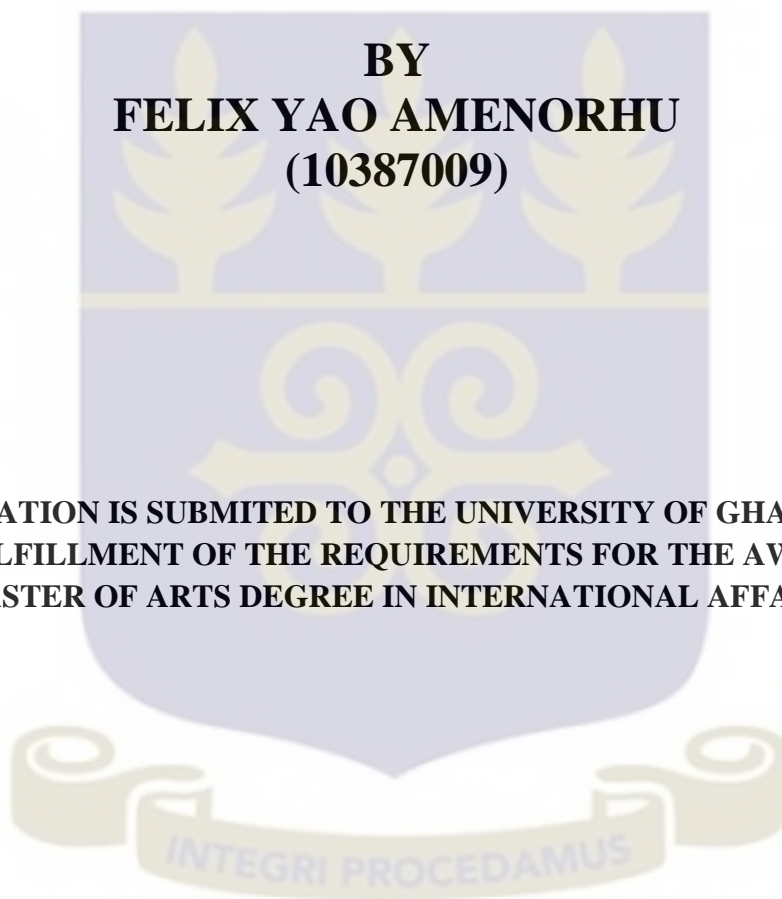


**TRANSITION FROM MDG 2 TO SDG 4: A STUDY OF
THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE 'RIGHT TO PLAY' IN
PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION IN GHANA**

**BY
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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**



LEGON

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is as a result of my own research conducted under the supervision of Dr. Afua Boatemaa Yakohene. It has not been submitted by anyone for any academic award in this university or any other. All sources used in this dissertation have been appropriately acknowledged.

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DATE.....

DATE.....

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Personal Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is my wisdom. Also to my lovely mother, Madam Gladys Adzo Agbo, whose encouragement and resources have urged me on to complete this project.

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“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 15 vs. 57. I give glory to God for making it possible for me to complete my study fruitfully.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| AfDB | - | Africa Development Bank |
| AIDS | - | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| ASDR | - | African Sustainable Development Report |
| AU | - | Africa Union |
| BECE | - | Basic Education Certificate Examination |
| CSO | - | Civil Society Organizations |
| D/A | - | District Assembly |
| ESDP | - | Education Sector Development Programme |
| FCUBE | - | Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education |
| FG | - | Figure |
| GER | - | Gross Enrolment Rate |
| GES | - | Ghana Education Service |
| GPRS | - | Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy |
| GSGDA | - | Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda |
| GNECC | - | Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition |
| HIV | - | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| ICT | - | Information and Communication Technology |
| JHS | - | Junior High School |
| MDGs | - | Millennium Development Goals |
| MoE | - | Ministry of Education |
| NDPC | - | National Development Planning Commission |
| NER | - | Net Enrolment Rate |
| NGOs | - | Non Governmental Organizations |
| OWG | - | Open Working Group |
| PCR | - | Primary Completion Rate |
| PHC | - | Population and Health Census |

| | | |
|--------|---|---|
| R/C | - | Roman Catholic |
| RTP | - | Right To Play |
| SDGs | - | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SHS | - | Senior High School |
| TMA | - | Tamale Metropolitan Assembly |
| TVET | - | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UN | - | United Nations |
| UNCG | - | UN Communications Group |
| UNDP | - | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNECF | - | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa |
| UNESCO | - | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | - | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UPE | - | Universal Primary Education |
| WASH | - | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |

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ABSTRACT

The 'Right To Play' (RTP) is a non-state actor that uses play-based approach to educate students in some countries across the world with the aim of promoting inclusive and equitable quality education and ensuring peaceful and just societies. This dissertation studied the contributions that the play-based approach of RTP made to the attainment of MDG 2 in Ghana and the contributions that the play-based approach is likely to make towards the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana. The study is hinged on the theory of Pluralism. Pluralism is chosen as the relevant theory for this study because of its ability to explain the capabilities of non-state actors, such as the RTP, which enable them to influence and contribute significantly to the educational development of several states including Ghana. The dissertation is a case study research and it adopts a qualitative approach, using both secondary and primary data. The researcher used semi-structured interview guides to collect the requisite primary data from the target population in Northern Ghana. The findings revealed that, the play-based approach contributed significantly to the attainment of the 1st and 3rd indicators of MDG 2, which respectively measured the enrolment rate in primary schools and the literacy rate of youth who fall within the age bracket of 15-24 years in Ghana. The findings of the study also show that the play-based approach is likely to make positive contributions towards the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th targets set for the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana. Apart from SDG 4, the approach will also make significant contributions towards the attainment of SDGs 5, 10 and 16. In conclusion, the study indicates that, if the Ghanaian Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service integrate the play-based approach into the complete curriculum of basic schools (KG to primary 6) in Ghana, it will be possible for many children from typically difficult-to-reach groups (which include children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups; children with disabilities; and children of nomadic people) within the rural areas of the Northern Region and other rural areas in Ghana to have access to inclusive and equitable quality education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Research Problem

In September 2000, eight goals, known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), were adopted by 189 world leaders at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations held in New York. The MDGs became the main international goals that guided development in all United Nations member states until 2015. The progress of the MDGs was measured globally on the basis of 61 indicators and against 21 targets.¹

One of the MDGs which best captured the significant needs of Ghana and other developing countries was MDG 2 which was aimed at achieving universal primary education. The target set for MDG 2 was to “ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling”.² The three main indicators used to measure MDG 2 include the net enrolment ratio in primary education, the completion rate of primary students and the youth literacy rate.³ According to the 2015 UNDP MDGs report on Ghana, the net enrolment ratio and the completion rate as of 2013/2014 were 89.3% and 97% respectively. Also, the youth literacy was 81%. Evaluating the performance of Ghana, as far as MDG 2 was concerned, the 2015 UNDP MDGs report indicated that, Ghana performed very well. The appreciable performance of Ghana was very significant in the net enrolment ratio, which moved from 45.2% in the 1990’s to 89.3% in 2013/2014 academic year.⁴

The appreciable progress made by Ghana in universal primary education through the MDGs was not only through the efforts of the government but in collaboration with other non-state actors.

This assertion is confirmed in the 2015 UNDP MDGs report on Ghana that indicated that non-state actors such as NGOs contributed immensely to the progress made by Ghana in universal primary education.⁵

The Right to Play (RTP) is an example of such NGOs. RTP is an international NGO that uses play-based approach to educate students in countries such as Pakistan, Thailand, USA, Canada, China, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Liberia, Ghana, among others. The play-based approach used by the RTP is a set of 80 games such as “I like Maths”; “Under & Over”; “Germs against Soap” and others to teach Mathematics, English, Science and other subjects to primary students. In Ghana, RTP, which began its operations in 2001 currently, works in eight (8) regions and partners with state and other non-state institutions to improve upon the quality of education. According to the Right To Play, “by 2006, RTP programmes were featured in many Ghanaian public schools, otherwise plagued by a 63% drop-out rate of children over the age of 10”.⁶

Through the efforts of state and non-state actors such as RTP some countries, including Ghana, have made substantial progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. However, the world as a whole did not achieve all the eight goals constituting the MDGs as of 2015.⁷ The successes as well as the limitations the MDGs had therefore generated a widespread feeling of concern among the world’s governments and civil society organizations. Most civil society organizations argued that, through the MDGs, significant progress against lack of primary education, poverty, hunger, and disease have been made mostly in developing countries.⁸ As a result, civil societies, governments and other actors in the international system advocated for the adoption of another set of global goals to pursue the attainment of universal and quality education as well as other MDG targets after the end of the MDGs in 2015. As a result of this advocacy, a United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was dubbed “Rio+20”, was held in Rio de

Janeiro in Brazil on 20-22 June 2012 to discuss the adoption of the post 2015 global goals. At “Rio+20”, UN member states decided to start a process leading to the development of a set of Sustainable Development Goals that will build upon the MDGs and continue the global development agenda after 2015. From 25 to 27 September 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were therefore officially adopted by leaders of all UN countries at the United Nations summit held in New York to serve as the international goals which will guide global development from 2015 to 2030.⁹

From 1st January 2016, the 17 SDGs officially came into force and will serve as the main international goals that will guide development in the world until 2030. Across the globe, the progress of the SDGs is being measured on the basis 232 official indicators and against 169 targets.¹⁰ Specifically, MDG 2 was replaced by SDG 4 which seeks to “ensure an inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030”.¹¹ The SDGs are very significant because they are comprehensive and target the achievement of some of the MDG targets that could not be achieved as of 2015.

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

In spite of the significant progress attained in the indicators of MDG 2 in Ghana, the 2015 UNDP MDGs report on Ghana stated that, the completion rate at the JHS level declined sharply from 75% in 2008/09 academic year to 69.0% in 2013/14 academic year. This rate of dropout is higher among girls compared to their male counterparts.¹² This decline in completion rate is an indication that, although there has been a surge in the enrolment of students in Ghanaian basic schools, the retention of students till their completion of the JHS level is still a challenge in Ghana.

The 2015 Africa MDGs report jointly prepared by the Africa Development Bank, Africa Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and UNDP Africa pointed out that, the poor performance in primary school completion rate in African countries is as a result of a number of factors including “the lack of relevant curricula or approach to meet the needs of traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as nomadic people, persons with disabilities, and children from disadvantaged economically homes and ethnic groups”.¹³ There is therefore a need for an additional or alternative approach to education in Ghana which will ensure that students are not only enrolled in schools but they are retained in school to successfully complete their basic education.

Also, the 2015 UNDP report on Ghana again stated that, “there are regional disparities in the quantity and quality of education outcomes in Ghana, with the northern regions and rural areas being the worst affected”.¹⁴ This assertion is an indication that, the delivery of inclusive and equitable quality education in Ghanaian basic schools still remains a challenge, particularly, in the Northern Region of Ghana as well as some rural areas across the country. While some regions enjoy the delivery of quality education which is reflective in their educational outcomes, other regions such as the Northern region still lag behind as far as the delivery of quality education is concerned. The approach to education in regions that do not have better education outcomes must therefore be modified to meet the needs of the residents of such regions and ensure the delivery of inclusive and equitable quality education.

The play-based approach is a new methodology being use to educate students in RTP interventions schools in Ghana. The play-based approach can be a solution to the above challenges constraining the delivery of inclusive and equitable quality education in Ghana.

The aim of this study therefore, is to investigate the contributions that the play-based approach used by RTP in educating students has made towards the attainment of the indicators of MDG 2 (enrolment, completion and literacy rates of students) in Ghanaian basic schools; particularly basic schools in the Northern Region of Ghana. The study also seeks to examine how the play-based approach will help Ghana; particularly the Northern Region of Ghana to attain SDG 4 which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030”.¹⁵

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To find out how the Right To Play uses play-based approach to educate students.
2. To investigate the contribution(s) that the play-based approach of the Right To Play made towards the attainment of MDG 2 in Ghana as well as the challenges encountered.
3. To discuss the contribution(s) that the play-based approach of the Right To Play is likely to make to the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana.
4. To ascertain the successes and challenges encountered by the Right To Play in the event of using the play-based approach in educating students in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How is the Right To Play using play-based approach to teach students?
2. What contribution(s) did the play-based approach of the Right To Play made towards the attainment of MDG 2 in Ghana and what were the challenges encountered?
3. What contribution(s) is the play-based approach of the Right To Play likely to make towards the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana?

4. What are the successes and challenges encountered by the Right To Play in the event of using the play-based approach in educating students in Ghana?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the contributions of the play-based approach of RTP to the Ghanaian education sector from 2001 to 2018 given that the MDGs started operation in 2001. Also, the study focuses on only some public primary schools within the Tolon District Assembly, which is located in the Northern Region of Ghana due to the fact that RTP projects focus on only public primary schools. As mentioned earlier, the UNDP office in Ghana indicated that there are regional inequalities in the “quantity and quality of education outcomes in Ghana”.¹⁶ According to UNDP office in Ghana, the Northern Region and some rural areas in Ghana are mostly affected with this inequality in the educational sector.¹⁷ This therefore justifies the selection of the Northern Region for this study.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

This study brings out the significance of a play-based approach of teaching in the enrolment, retention and completion of students at the basic school level in order to equip them with lifelong skills and experience. In addition, the findings of the study will attract the attention of the state, other NGOs and donor agencies to support the use of play-based approach in the promotion of inclusive and equitable quality education in Ghana. Finally, the findings of the study will be an addition to the existing literature on the pedagogy of basic schools in Ghana.

1.6. Hypothesis

The play-based approach used by the Right To Play in educating students will contribute positively towards the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the theory of Pluralism. The theory of Pluralism was started in the 1970s by some scholars including Robert Alan Dahl and David Bicknell Truman in their quest to find an alternative to the theory of Realism. According to Michael Cox, an Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics, Pluralism is one of the oldest theories of International Relations which focuses on the best way to create a more just and peaceful international system.¹⁸ The main tenet of Pluralism is interdependence: “a condition in which two or more international actors rely on each other for the provision of essential goods or services”.¹⁹ Pluralism therefore asserts that, the interdependence of actors in international system decreases the tendency for these actors to engage in violent conflict due to the fact that interdependency produces a harmony of interest which encourages cooperation between international actors and makes conflict less likely. As a result, Pluralism focuses on ways in which the interdependence of actors’ in the international system can result in increasing cooperation and thereby ensuring international peace and security.²⁰

Scott Burchill posits that, the theory of Pluralism has advanced the idea of limited government and scientific rationality and also champions the view that “individuals should be free from arbitrary state power, persecution and superstition”.²¹ Pluralists therefore argue for “political freedom, democracy and constitutionally guaranteed rights and privileges, the liberty of the individual and equality before the law”.²² In addition, Churchill asserts that Pluralists also argued

for “individual competition in civil society and claimed that market capitalism best promotes the welfare of all by most efficiently allocating scarce resources within society”.²³

Pluralism, as a theory, consists of different set of assumptions. The main assumption of Pluralism relevant to this study is that, non-state actors are important entities in international relations that cannot be ignored. According to the Pluralists, while the state does indeed matter in the international system, non-state actors such as multinational corporations, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (such as RTP) equally matter and influence activities in the international system.²⁴

In addition, unlike Realists who believe that the state is a unitary actor, Pluralists believe that the state is not a unitary actor but rather, the state is made up of interest groups, different bureaucracies and individual people that seek to formulate and directly or indirectly influence the domestic as well as foreign policies of the state.²⁵

Also, Pluralists challenge the assertion of Realists that the state is a rational actor. According to the Pluralists, states sometimes act irrationally and take bad decisions. The irrationality of the state usually occurs because policy formulation in the state is usually a bargain among individual actors who might propose certain policies in order to satisfy the selfish interest of their organizations or their personal gains and these policies might not be to the advantage of the state.²⁶

Another major assumption of Pluralism is that, issues in international politics have expanded and diversified to include economic and social issues such as poverty, climate change, education, among others as opposed to the Realists assumption that international politics is dominated by military and security issues.²⁷

Finally, Pluralists also assert that conflicts and wars are irrational. Pluralists explain that wars and conflicts occur because states do not communicate among themselves. As a result, a better communication between states may prevent conflict in the international system.²⁸

Pluralism has been criticized by proponents of Realism including Kenneth Waltz, Hans Morgenthau, E. H. Carr, among others. Realism is “the oldest and most frequently adopted theory of international relations”.²⁹ Realism is defined by Jack Donnelly as a theory that “emphasize the constraints on politics imposed by human selfishness (‘egoism’) and the absence of international government (‘anarchy’), which require the primacy in all political life of power and security”.³⁰ According to Donnelly, state-centrism and rationality are frequently identified as core premises of realism.

One of the relevant critiques of Realists against Pluralists is the assumption of Realism that, the international system is a state-centric system, which means states are the dominant and the primary actors in the international system.³¹ According to Realists, although non-state actors may contribute to the international system, their contributions are made with the agreement and/ or within the confinement of states.³² Right To Play, for example, is therefore mandated to operate within the laws of Rwanda, Ethiopia, Ghana and other states within which it operates. To the Realists therefore, states are still the dominant actors in the international system due to the fact that states influence the operations of non-state actors.

Despite the criticisms of Realists, Pluralism is very relevant to my study because of its ability to explain the capabilities of non-state actors, such as the RTP, which enable them to influence and contribute significantly to the educational development of several states including Ghana. From the assertions of Pluralists, although power and decision making are mostly the preserved of states, non-state actors such as NGOs use their resources to exert influence on states. To an

appreciable degree, this explains why an NGO such as the Right To Play uses its play-based approach to influence the education sector in Ghana and other countries within which it operates. Pluralism will therefore serve as the best lens with which this study will measure the contributions of the RTP as a non-state actor promoting quality education in Ghana.

1.8. Literature Review

Since the adoption of the MDGs in September 2000, there have been scholarly articles and books on the intensified global and national efforts made to achieve the 8 goals prior to the 2015 target. Post 2015, other scholarly articles and books have also emerged concerning the new global and national efforts being advanced towards the attainment of the 17 SDGs.

1.8.1. Global Assessment of the MDGs

In “How Should MDGs Success and Failure be Judged: Faster Progress or Achieving the Targets?” Fukuda-Parr, Greenstein and Stewart did a comprehensive analysis of how the success or failure of the MDGs was measured globally. Fukuda-Parr et al outline the major strengths of the MDGs to be the fact that the goals have quantitative and time bound targets. This made it easy to monitor and measure the performance of commitment that world leaders made to achieve the goals by 2015.³³

Fukuda-Parr et al, however, criticize the approach generally used in international monitoring reports to measure the success or otherwise of the MDGs. This is because the approach, which the authors described as “achieving the target method”, measures success or failure of the MDGs by whether a particular country achieved the set target or not. This is done by measuring the current achievement level for each indicator against the defined target. For example, 1990 data were usually compared to the most recent data directly to find out whether the world or a specific region or a country attained a particular target. Consequently, the countries which meet the set

target as of 2015 were judged successful and those who could not as failures. Using this approach, according to Fukuda-Parr et al, is treating the MDGs which were global goals like national planning targets. The authors explain that, the MDGs are policy instruments set by the UN through world leaders to draw attention to urgent but neglected global priorities. They were neither designed by national technocrats nor at the national level and as a result, should not be used as national planning targets.³⁴

Instead of “achieving the target method”, the authors posit that, the success or failure of the MDGs should have been determined by the faster pace of progress or otherwise made by each country in the achievement of the global goals. According to the authors, using 1990 and 2015 data, attention should be given to the level of progress made by countries to determine the success or failure of the MDGs.

Some reasons identified by the authors which made them to disagree with the use of “achieving the target method” in measuring the success of the MDGs include the following: First, the individual indicators, targets and the specific goals of the MDGs were subjectively defined. There were also flaws in data availability of these goals, targets and indicators thereby undermining their implementation by certain countries. Secondly, treating the MDGs as goals that must be met by 2015 was “bias against Africa and other countries with low starting points”.³⁵ In addition, reaching the goals by 2015 was not practically possible for many countries. Lastly, the authors criticised the MDGs for being silent on whether the targets were designed to be applicable to each country or the world as a whole. In conclusion, the authors propose an alternative method of measuring the success or otherwise of the MDGs. This method treats the MDGs as benchmarks of progress and the performance of countries are measured by

determining whether their pace of progress, with regards to the goals, has improved since the implementation of the MDGs in 2001.

Although the work of Fukuda-Parr et al pointed out the major flaws in the operations of the MDGs, the work of the authors is limited. This is because, the analysis of the actors largely focus on measuring the contributions of only state actors as far as the MDGs are concerned. The authors were very silent on analysing or measuring the contributions of non-state actors such as NGOs. Despite this limitation, the work of Fukuda-Parr et al is still relevant to my dissertation because the flaws pointed out in the general operations of the MDGs will guide me to adequately study and understand the contributions of the Right To Play in facilitating the achievement of MDG 2 and SDG 4 in Ghana.

In “Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: a literature review”, Venkatapuram, Nelson and Fehling conducted a comprehensive review of 90 multidisciplinary articles that focus on “limitations in the formulation of the MDGs, their structure, content and implementation”.³⁶ The authors explain that, they purposively selected and focused on literature that addresses intrinsic limitations of the MDGs and not those that address extrinsic limitations. According to the authors, some of the limitations identified in some of the articles point to the fact that, the MDGs were created by only few stakeholders in developed countries without sufficient involvement of those in developing countries. Other articles stated that the MDGs are “unachievable and simplistic, not adapted to national needs, do not specify accountable parties and reinforce vertical interventions”.³⁷ The authors therefore indicated that the limitations identified in the literature account for the uneven progress of the MDGs across countries. In conclusion, the authors posit that the era of the SDGs should learn from the intrinsic limitations

of MDGs so as to have a greater positive impact on the welfare of people compared to the MDGs.

The work of Fehling et al is very significant to my study because their review covers a wide range of literature from multidisciplinary fields. The limitations identified by the authors can therefore be generalised as the main intrinsic limitations of the MDGs. The work of Fehling et al therefore provides a broader perspective on limitations of the MDGs and how these limitations should be avoided as states and non-states actors collaborate to facilitate the achievement of the SDGs. It is however important to point out that the work of Fehling et al is also limited due to the fact that they provide us with only intrinsic limitations of the MDGs. Their analysis also focused much on state actors to the neglect of the non-state actors.

Unlike the work of Fukuda-Parr et al and Fehling et al which mainly point out setbacks of the MDGs, Jeffrey Sachs in his article “From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals” discuss some successes of the MDGs first before pointing out the setbacks of the MDGs. Sachs was a UN Special Advisor for the MDGs.³⁸ From his experience as a Special Advisor for the MDGs, the author indicated that there are major lessons that the SGDs stand to benefit from the successes as well as shortfalls of the MDGs.

According to the author, some major strength of the MDGs which contributed to its successes includes the following: To start with, the MDGs were “reasonably easy eight simple goals”³⁹ that fitted well on one poster and easily stuck in the mind of the public. This was easier to remember as compared to Agenda 21 which was adopted at the UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Agenda 21 runs to 351 pages. The simplicity of the MDGs, according to Sachs, has therefore

worked effectively in the case of public awareness, advocacy, continuity and mobilization of resources.

Another strength which accounted for the success of the MDGs is the fact that the MDGs were not lawfully binding on member states, but rather a set of moral and practical commitments.⁴⁰ As a result, almost every state contributed to the success of the MDGs in their own smaller ways. Compared to lawfully binding agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol, states often ignored their obligations in practice because of the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms.

Lastly, Sachs points out that the MDGs were also successful because the individual goals were made easy to be pursued. As a result, governments, business, and civil societies worldwide adopted practical and specific measures to achieve the indicators of the MDGs. The current era of SDGs can therefore glean some lessons from the above major strengths of the MDGs.

On the other hand, Sachs also stated lessons learnt from some shortfalls of the MDGs that can equally contribute to the success of the SDGs. To start with, the 15-year MDG period had no intermediate milestones or stages along the way to ensure closer feedback between policies and outcomes. The author therefore posits that the 15 years of the SDGs should therefore include intermediate objectives and milestones with clear dates. This will ensure closer feedback and evaluation of developmental efforts towards the SDG targets and indicators.

Secondly, a major shortfall of the MDGs was the fact that data on MDGs progress were often years out of date. This therefore affected advocacy, monitoring, and real-time management with regards to the implementation of the MDGs. Sachs therefore advise that the “lifblood of the SDGs should be data that are accurate, timely, and available to managers, policy makers, and the public”.⁴¹

Finally, the author stated that, the MDGs suffered some shortfalls because the private sector was not crucially engaged from the very start. The SDGs will not be achieved without the leadership of national and multinational companies, NGOs and other non-state actors. These organizations, according to Sachs, bring unique strengths such as: worldwide reach, cutting-edge technologies, and massive capacity to reach large-scale solutions, which are all crucial for the success of the MDGs as well as the current SDGs. Sachs therefore advise governmental and intergovernmental actors to engage with businesses, NGOs and other non-state actors worldwide in a cautious, active, forward-looking and intensive way so as to invest adequately in the success of the SDGs. The work of Sachs is very relevant to my dissertation because, unlike the other authors mentioned earlier, his analysis includes non-state actors. Sachs point out that, a major cause of the setbacks of the MDGs was the fact that non-state actors such as multinational companies and NGOs were not significantly engaged by state actors from the onset of the implementations of the MDGs. This therefore points to the fact that the aim of my dissertation to study the contributions of the Right To Play (a non-state actor) in facilitating the achievement of MDG 2 and the current SDG 4 in Ghana is very significant.

1.8.2. Assessment of MDG 2 in Africa

Specifically on Africa, Nishimura, Byamugisha, Chimombo, Kunje, Sifuna, Ampiah, Sawamura, Yamada and Ogawa in “A Comparative Analysis of Universal Primary Education Policy in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Uganda”, did a thorough analysis of universal primary education (UPE), which was the main target of MDG 2, in Ghana, Kenya Malawi and Uganda. In their article, the authors discussed the impact of fees abolition policy and other policies that were adopted and implemented by the four African countries as part of their efforts to promote universal primary education.⁴²

Nishimura et al stated that, the efforts of the four countries to promote Universal Primary Education (UPE) were very outstanding in the 1960's and 1970's. During the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's however, these efforts suffered political and economic setbacks. As a result, the four countries reintroduced the fees abolishing policies in primary schools to promote UPE immediately after the Education for All Conference held in Jomtien in 1990.

On Ghana, Nishimura et al indicated that the state adopted the policy of abolition of fees at the primary level as part of the country's free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) programme which was launched in 1996 with support from international donors including the World Bank. In 2005, Ghana introduced "a capitation grant" which is a fee the government pays to schools to cover educational expenses of students. This was part of the country's "Strategic Education Plan 2003-2015" towards the target of achieving UPE. This capitation grant, according to the authors, accounted for the rise in the net enrolment rate from 59.1% in 2004/05 academic year to 81.1% in 2006/07 academic year.⁴³ Nishimura et al however indicated that, the introduction of the "capitation grant" came with some challenges. Some of these challenges include worsened teacher/student ratio, worsened academic performance, shortage of teachers in rural areas and regional disparities in education.

In conclusion, the authors assert that UPE policies implemented by the four countries demonstrate the commitment of their governments towards the achievement of the universal primary school agenda, which is the main target for MDG 2. The UPE policies implemented by the countries also signifies the determination of donors and the international community to give opportunity to children who were not enrolled in primary education to be enrolled. According to the authors, the most apparent impact of the UPE policies implemented by the four countries is the increase in enrolment in their basic schools.⁴⁴

The article of Nishimura et al is very relevant to my study because the challenges of the “capitation grant” outlined by the authors reemphasise my problem statement that, there is a need for an additional or alternative approach to education in Ghana that will not only enrol students in schools but will also retain them and ensure that inclusive and equitable quality education is delivered in Ghanaian basic schools. In addition, the article enables me to appreciate the efforts made in other states, other than Ghana, in achieving the MDG 2. This understanding will guide my dissertation, which seeks to study the contribution of the ‘Right to Play’ in helping Ghana to achieve MDG 2 as well as SDG 4. However, the work of Nishimura et al, just like the work of Fukuda-Parr et al and Fehling et al, is limited because it mainly focused on analysing the contributions of states actors towards UPE to the neglect of the contributions of non-state actors such as NGOs.

1.8.3. Assessment of Ghana’s Progress towards MDG 2

In a dissertation titled Assessment of Ghana’s Progress towards the Achievement of the Targets of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals as at the Mid-point Mark in July 2007, Atta-Quayson, Cooper and Anaman wrote extensively on Ghana and the MDGs. With regards to their specific assessment of Ghana’s progress in achieving the MDG 2, the authors stated that the net enrolment ratio in primary schools decreased from 59% in 2002 to 55.6% in 2004. There was however an increase in the enrolment ratio from, 55.6% in 2004 to 59.1% in 2005 and subsequently to 68.8% in 2006.⁴⁵ The authors attributed the increase in enrolment ratio from 2005 to 2006 to the school feeding programme and capitation grant, which were some of the policies introduced by the government of Ghana to facilitate universal primary education in Ghana. This assertion of Atta-Quayson et al confirms the findings of Nishimura et al who stated that the most apparent impact of the UPE policies implemented by Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Uganda is the increase in enrolment in their basic schools. From the assessment of Atta-Quayson

et al, the authors concluded that Ghana is likely to meet the MDG 1 target as of 2015 based on the progress being made. They however assert that Ghana was less likely to meet majority of the targets that were set for the other 7 MDG goals.

The work of Atta-Quayson et al is very relevant to my dissertation because the authors were able to assess the progress made by Ghana on MDG 2 as of 2007. This will therefore guide my study to know the progress that was made afterwards. Though the work of the authors is relevant to my dissertation, it is very limited due to the fact that their analysis did not focus on the specific contributions of non-state actors that help Ghana to make the progress that it made as of July 2007.

1.8.4. Global Transition from the MDGs to the SDGs

Focusing on the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Vandemoortele and Delamonica in “Taking the MDGs Beyond 2015: Hasten Slowly” wrote on transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. According to the authors, the MDGs have been extremely successful in “galvanising political leaders, civil society organisations, private sector actors, the media and donors, in the pursuit of human development”.⁴⁶ Drawing closer to the end of the MDGs, all these actors were therefore resolute to make their contributions in shaping the SDGs. Vandemoortele and Delamonica viewed this as a positive development that could lead to sufficient discussion among various stakeholders and hence enrich the formulation of the SDGs. They however cautioned all international actors not to rush in defining the framework of the SDGs but to do some thorough evaluations prior to setting the new SDG targets.

The authors posit that the intergovernmental process for preparing the SDGs framework should necessarily take into consideration the many concerns and criticism made by non-state actors such as private sector actors, NGOs, other civil society organisations as well as observers and analysts. With regards to the final formulators of the framework of the SDGs, Vandemoortele

and Delamonica stated that they should include “representatives from the worlds of policymaking, academia, development practice, civil society and the media”.⁴⁷ The authors also advised that the intergovernmental procedure for preparing the SDGs framework should be led by the actors from developing countries. In an attempt to summarise the essentials areas that the formulators of the new development goals should focus on, the actors point to “(a) new structure; (b) new targets; (c) collective nature of global targets; (d) type of benchmarks; (e) new time horizon; and (f) disaggregated monitoring”.⁴⁸ In conclusion, Vandemoortele and Delamonica assert that the international community should endeavour to reduce disparities and ensure equity, both at the national and the global level, when implementing the new SDGs.

The work of Vandemoortele and Delamonica is relevant to my dissertation because, these scholars adequately point out that, the contributions of non-state actors such as the Right To Play are very essential in facilitating the achievement of the MDGs and more importantly, the current SDGs. However, their article did not narrow down their analysis to study the contribution that any specific NGO or other specific non-state actor made to the achievement of the MDGs and subsequently, the achievement of the SDGs. This is the gap that my dissertation seeks to fill by studying the contributions of the Right To Play, an NGO, in facilitating the achievement of both MDG 2 and SDG 4 in Ghana.

Analysing the new era of the SDGs, Costanza, Fioramonti and Kubiszewski in “The UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Dynamics of Well-Being”, posit that the 17 SDGs and the associated 169 targets represent a significant turning point in the future of humanity. This is because the goals and their targets “include the full range of factors that contribute to equitable and sustainable well-being”.⁴⁹ The authors therefore cautioned the international community not to “squander this opportunity to change the trajectory of humanity toward a more sustainable

future”⁵⁰. According to the authors, the goals as well as their targets are interconnected and they focus broadly on the interconnectivity of human and ecosystem wellbeing. As a result, practitioners, scientists, and policy makers ought to explain the interconnectivity among the goals to the public in order to facilitate the achievement of the goals.

The authors also stipulate that, there is a need for all stakeholders to build a broad public engagement and awareness for everybody to be engaged in creating the future we all want through the SDGs. For example, the authors suggested that, stakeholders should use what is known as “scenario-planning exercises” to solicit the opinion of the public about alternative ways of implementing the SDGs.

The work of Costanza, Fioramonti and Kubiszewski is very relevant to my dissertation because, the scholars emphasised the need for collaboration between state and non-state actors in achieving the SDGs.

1.8.5. Assessment of Ghana’s Progress on SDG 4

Assessing the progress Ghana is making to attain SDG 4, Stephanie Donkor in “An Assessment of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4), in Relation to the Standard of Basic Education in Ghana” studied the extent to which the implementation of various Ghanaian Educational Reforms have facilitated the resolution of the challenge of quality education in Ghanaian basic schools. According to the author, her findings revealed that the standard of quality education at the basic school level in Ghana has been decreasing from 2009 to 2017.⁵¹

Donkor also posits that although Ghana has instituted educational programmes and policies such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme (FCUBEP) in order to attain SDG 4, it is only when the implementation of these educational programmes and policies are adhered to without any political interference that the targets of SDG 4 can successfully be

achieved in Ghana.⁵² In her conclusion, the author posits that future researchers should focus on the following areas:

- ❖ “An assessment of the role of parents in the improvement of the standard or performance of wards towards the attainment of SDG Four (4) in Ghana”.
- ❖ “Ghana’s quest in the acquisition of infrastructure for basic schools: An assessment”.
- ❖ “An assessment of the efforts of basic school teachers in promoting SDG Four (4)”.
- ❖ “Educational reforms in Ghana: A setback or a boost to SDG Four (4)”.⁵³

The work of Donkor is very relevant to my study because the author was able to point out some policies and programmes that Ghana has put in place to achieve SDG 4. This will therefore guide my study. Also, the suggestions of the author for future research emphasise the problem statement of my study that there is a need for an additional or alternative approach to basic education in Ghana in order to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education. Despite its relevance to my study, the work of Donkor is limited because the author only focuses on the policies and programmes that Ghana as a State has put in place to attain SDG 4. The author did not study the contributions that non-state actors such the RTP are making to facilitate the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana.

As indicated throughout the literature review, most of the work that were done to evaluate global performance and the performance of Ghana as a country in achieving universal primary education (MDG 2) focused much on state actors. Adequate research is note done to study the contributions that non-state actors such as non-governmental organisations made to compliment the efforts of the government of Ghana in achieving MDG 2. My dissertation therefore seeks to fill this gap by studying the contribution(s) that the play-based approach used by the Right To Play (a non-state actor) made to the achievement of MDG 2 in Ghana. In addition, my study also

seeks to study the contribution(s) that the play-based approach of the Right To Play can make to facilitate the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana.

1.9 Sources of Data

The data collected for this study came from two major sources. These include primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Specifically, Primary data was collected from schools and communities located in the Northern Region of Ghana. Primary data was also solicited from the Ministry of Education in Ghana. In addition, primary data has also been collected from some staff of the Right To Play.

Secondary data, on the other hand, was collected from journal articles, published and unpublished books, dissertations, reports and internet sources. These documents were therefore reviewed to gather the relevant secondary data needed for this study.

1.10 Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach. According to Creswell, qualitative approach is a method of inquiry that enables a “researcher to make knowledge claims based primarily on the multiple meanings of individual experiences which are socially and historically constructed, with the aim of developing a theory/pattern or advocacy/participatory perspectives or the two”.⁵⁴ This means that, qualitative approach helps a researcher to gain understanding into opinions, underlying reasons, motivations and trends of thoughts of people within a social setting. With this understanding, a researcher then developed ideas, hypothesis or theories that serve as impetus for qualitative analysis.

In confirmation to the assertions of Creswell, Lindlorf and Taylor⁵⁵ also posits that qualitative approach helps a researcher to identify, explore, and explain the attitudes, actions, and perceptions of people within a social setting as well as the meanings they make of their actions (Lindlorf & Taylor, 2017). In addition, Gaba⁵⁶ also indicated that the use of qualitative approach enables a researcher to use probing and open-ended questions which makes the respondents to provide responses in their own words, rather than forcing the respondents to choose from fixed responses. Qualitative data therefore probes the respondent to provide responses that may be unanticipated by the researcher.

The above reasons therefore influenced the choice of qualitative approach for this study. I therefore collected open-ended and emerging data through semi-structured interviews with the intent of developing themes from the data for qualitative analysis.

1.10.1 Case Study Approach

This study adopts a case study approach. According to Crowe et al, a case study refers to “a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context”.⁵⁷ Mills, Durepos and Wiebe also define a case study as an approach which enables a researcher to have “an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a subject of study (the case), as well as its related contextual conditions”⁵⁸. This study therefore focuses on studying how the RTP, a non-state actor, is contributing to the educational development of Ghana through its play-based approach. The RTP was therefore selected as the case study to represent non-state actors helping Ghana to achieve SDG 4. To have an up-close examination of the play-based approach of RTP in its real-life context, the study focuses on the contributions of the play-based approach in three communities within the Tolon District Assembly in the

Northern Region of Ghana. The communities include Tolon, Nyankpala and Chanayin communities.

1.10.2 Sampling Method

The sampling method used in collecting the data needed for this study is purposive sampling. Palinkas et al define purposive sampling as a sampling technique that a researcher chooses based on who he or she thinks would be appropriate for the study.⁵⁹ Purposive sampling is therefore primarily used when the interest of the research is on a specific field or a small group of people.⁶⁰ This means that purposive sampling is usually selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study.

This dissertation seeks to study the contributions of the play-based approach of the RTP to the education sector in Ghana. As a result, purposive sampling was employed, where the target populations are selected based on the fact that they are the most useful source of data for the study.

1.10.3 Target Population

The population for the study is made up of 7 different categories of people. They include the staff of the Right To Play; head teachers in both RTP intervention schools and non-RTP interventions schools; students in RTP intervention schools within Tolon District Assembly; parents of students within Tolon District Assembly; the staff of Tolon District Assembly; the staff of Ghana Education Service at Tolon and finally, the staff of Ministry of Education in Ghana. The above categories of people are selected to constitute the population of the study based on the fact that they are the appropriate people who can help the researcher to gather the data that will be relevant to the objectives of the study.

1.10.4 Sample Size

Specifically, data was collected from a sample size of 30 respondents as outline as follows:

5 staff of the RTP were purposively selected and interviewed to help the study ascertain the main aim and achievements of the RTP in using the play-based approach to educate students in Ghana. Specifically, a Project Manager, an Education Specialist and a Mentoring and Evaluation Officer were interviewed at the headquarters of the RTP in Accra whereas the Team Leader and a Field Facilitator were interviewed in Tamale where the RTP Northern Region Program Office is located. The staff of the RTP were selected due to the fact that the RTP is the only organization that I identified in Ghana to be using the play-based approach in educating students.

Secondly, a staff of the Ministry of Education in Ghana (a Senior Planning Officer) has been interviewed to ascertain the views of the Ministry about the usefulness or otherwise of the play-based approach in educating students. The staff of the Ministry of Education in Ghana was selected due to the fact that the Ministry is responsible for policy formulation and implementation as far as education in Ghana is concerned.

Focusing specifically on the Northern Region, 1 staff member each from the Ghana Education Service Office at Tolon and the Tolon District Assembly were purposively selected and interviewed to assess their views on the contributions of the play-based approach of the RTP to education within the Tolon District. The staff of the Ghana Education Service at Tolon was selected because the Education Service is the institution responsible for the implementation of education policies as well as the supervision of the teaching and learning activities of schools within the three communities studied. Also, the staff of the Tolon District Assembly (the Director of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development) was selected because the Social Welfare Department is responsible for monitoring NGOs and their interventions, such as the play-based approach use by the RTP, within the Tolon District. Both staff from the Education Service and District Assembly at Tolon were therefore equipped to help

the study evaluate the contribution(s) of the play-based approach to education within the communities studied.

In addition to the above, a total of 3 head teachers (1 each) from three RTP intervention schools have been purposively selected and interviewed. The schools include the Tolon District Assembly (D/A) 'A' primary school; the Tolon D/A 'B' primary school and St Monica's Roman Catholic (R/C) Primary School at Nyankpala. The head teachers of these schools were interviewed to help the study find out the enrolment rates, retention rates, completion rates, and literacy rates of the schools.

On the other hand, 1 head teacher and a class teacher from Chanayin AME Zion primary school, a non-RTP intervention school, have been purposively selected and interviewed. The study aimed at interviewing a total of 3 head teachers (1 each) from three non-RTP intervention schools. However, within the three communities studied, the Chanayin AME Zion primary school was the only non-RTP school available to be studied. The head teacher and the class teacher from the non-RTP school were selected and interviewed to help the study find out the enrolment rates, retention rates, completion rates as well as the literacy rates in the non-RTP school and compare these findings to those of RTP intervention schools. This comparative data collection was done to help the study examine the effectiveness or otherwise of the play-based approach of the RTP since the only difference in all the schools studied is the play-based approach of the RTP.

Furthermore, 10 students (5 girls and 5 boys) at St Monica's R/C Primary School at Nyankpala, a RTP intervention school, were engaged in a focus group discussion in order to ascertain the impact that the play-based approach had made in their education. The students are selected because they are the main beneficiaries of the play-based approach being used by RTP. As a

result, they are the best respondents to help this study evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of the play-based approach to education.

Finally, 7 parents (5 males and 2 females) within the Tolon District were purposively selected and interviewed. The study intended to interview 5 females but only 2 females were willing to be interviewed. The parents were selected in order to solicit their views about their awareness and contributions of the play-based approach of the RTP to quality education within the Tolon District.

1.10.5 Data Collection

The method of data collection used to solicit the relevant information from the above respondents was interview sessions and focus group discussions using semi-structured interview guides as well as observation. This helped the researcher to probe issues related to the objectives of the study. The in-depth interviews were recorded electronically, after which the data was transcribed verbatim and grouped into themes based on the objectives of the research.

1.10.6 Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the transcribed data from the interviews and the focus group discussion were grouped into themes and analysed in line with the research objectives, using thematic analysis, to assess the contributions that the play-based approach of the Right To Play made to the education sector in Ghana. Braun and Clarke define thematic analysis as a method for pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns or themes within data.⁶¹ According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis is very flexible and allows for rich, detailed and complex description of data. This therefore influenced the choice of thematic analysis as a tool to analyse the data in this study.

1.10.7. Ethical Consideration

In adherence to the ethics of social research, the researcher gave respondents the option to either remain anonymous, or provide names and titles to be used for the purpose of analysis.

During the data collection process, respondents were briefed in advance and their personal consent were sought indicating their willingness to participate in the interview. With regards to the 10 students who participated in the focus group discussion at St Monica's R/C Primary School at Nyankpala, their consent as well as the consent of their head teacher was sought prior to the focus group discussion with them. This is very important due to the fact that the students are children and they are not mature to take decisions on their own. Lastly, money or any other gift was not given to any of the respondents. This was to prevent the falsification of the data collected.

1.11 Arrangement of Chapters

There are four chapters in this research.

Chapter one is the introduction to the research.

Chapter two is an overview of the Millennium Development Goal 2, the Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Play-Based Approach used by the Right To Play.

Chapter three examines the contributions of the RTP towards the achievement of MDG 2, its potential contributions to SDG 4 and the challenges that the RTP face in the use of play-based approach in teaching students.

Chapter four gives a summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 2, THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 AND THE PLAY-BASED APPROACH USED BY THE RIGHT TO PLAY (RTP) IN EDUCATING STUDENTS

2.0. Introduction

On the premise of the research problem, this chapter seeks to discuss an overview of the MDGs, its achievements and limitations as well as the efforts so far made in achieving the SDGs and the potential achievements of the SDGs. To also answer the first research question and achieve the first objective of this study, this chapter also examines the play-based approach (methodology) being used by the Right to Play (RTP) in educating students in some primary schools in Ghana. First and foremost, the chapter starts by discussing the progress made generally on the MDGs and specifically on MDG 2. The discussions focus on the progress made globally, the progress made in Africa and finally, the progress made in Ghana. Thereafter, the chapter discusses the SDGs; concentrating on the progress made on the global front, the continent of Africa and in Ghana. With regards to the play-based approach of the RTP, the chapter discusses the approach and its relevance in educating children in the classroom.

2.1. Overview of the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) originate from the Millennium Declaration, signed by 189 countries, including 147 Heads of State and Government, in September 2000.⁶² As a build-up on the United Nations global conferences held in the 1990s, the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000 represents a strong commitment to the right to sustainable

human development, to peace and security, to the eradication of the many dimensions of poverty, and to gender equality.⁶³ Ensuing from this background, 189 countries, including Ghana, endorsed the MDGs at the UN General Assembly held in September 2001.⁶⁴ The MDGs were therefore aimed at addressing some of the most critical development challenges. Specifically, the MDGs helped to put development priorities such as poverty, gender equality and others on the international agenda in a manner that was easy to comprehend and to track.

The MDGs entail eight goals, which were estimated to be achieved by 2015. Whereas the first goal aimed at eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the second aimed at attaining universal primary education, which is the focus of this study, and the third aimed at the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Goal four sought to reduce child mortality whereas goal five sought to improve maternal health. Goal six also aimed at combating malaria, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases. Goal seven sought to ensure environmental sustainability whereas goal eight, the final goal, aimed at developing a global partnership for development.⁶⁵ These goals marked a partnership between the industrialized countries and the developing countries "to create an environment - at the national and global levels alike - which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty".⁶⁶

Globally, the MDGs' progress was measured against 21 targets and 60 official indicators.⁶⁷ Specifically, MDG 2, which sought to attained universal primary education, was measured against 1 major target and 3 distinct indicators.⁶⁸

2.1.1. Global Progress of the MDG 2

The target of MDG 2 was to "ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling".⁶⁹ The three indicators that were to show the achievement of MDG 2 as at 2015 included: the "net enrolment ratio in primary

education; proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5; and the literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds”.⁷⁰

According to the UN 2015 MDGs Report, substantial progress had been made in the achievement of universal primary education in developing regions of the world.⁷¹ With regards to the 1st MGD 2 indicator for instance, the report stated that the enrolment rate of primary schools in the developing regions of the world increased from 83% in 2000 to 91% in 2015⁷². This means that there was 8% increase in primary school enrolment globally from 2000 to 2015.

With regards to the 2nd MDG 2 indicator, the UN 2015 MDG report indicated that, “the number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide has improved by almost half, to an estimated 57 million in 2015, down from 100 million in 2000”.⁷³ This also means that there has been 43% improvement in the completion rate of students from 2000 to 2015.

Measuring the global performance against the 3rd indicator of MDG 2, the UN report also stated that “the literacy rate among youth aged 15 to 24 has increased globally from 83% to 91% between 1990 and 2015”.⁷⁴ This means that the world has made 8% improvement in the literacy of youth between the ages of 15 to 24years. The above assertions according to the UN 2015 MDGs report are therefore evidence that the world, as a whole, have made a significant progress in the attainment of MDG 2.

Despite the substantial progress made in the attainment of the three indicators of MDG 2, the exact target of “children everywhere, boys and girls alike, completing a full course of primary schooling” has however been missed. According to the UN report, A threshold of at least 97% is usually used to find out whether universal enrolment has been achieved or not. Using this threshold in Eastern Asia and Northern Africa, the enrolment in primary education is found to be

universal or nearly universal. “The target is close to being reached in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa”.⁷⁵ According to Fidelis Adele, inadequate resources, such as teaching and learning materials, for the education sector is one of the factors that limited some African countries from fully achieving the MDG Goal 2.⁷⁶ Other reasons that constrained the complete attainment of MDG 2 in Africa, as indicated by the UN report, “include armed conflicts, high levels of poverty and the rapid growth of the primary-school-age population”.⁷⁷

The above statistics show that although substantial progress has been made in the net enrolment rate in primary school globally (91%), there is still much work to be done concerning the retention or completion rate in primary schools (2nd indicator of MDG 2) as well as the literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds (3rd indicator of MDG 3). For example, with regards to the 2nd and 3rd MDG 2 indicators, the UN report stated that “globally, in 2012, an estimated 33 million children of primary school age were out of school, of which 56% were girls. The number of illiterates also remains high in spite of rising literacy rates. It is estimated that 781 million adults and 126 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills; over 60% of these are women”.⁷⁸ Globally, the goal of attaining universal primary education (MDG 2) has therefore been missed despite the fact that substantial progress have been made in the net enrolment rate of primary education.

2.1.2. Continental Progress of the MDG 2

The 2015 MDG report jointly prepared by the AfDB, African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UNDP Africa stated that African countries have made education a core policy on their national developmental agenda for the 15 years of the MDG era (2000 to 2015). As a result, African countries have consistently apportioned substantial resources to advance education in their respective countries. For instance, the average amount of resources allocated to education increased from 4.2 per cent to 4.9 per cent of GDP in Africa between 2000

and 2012, compared to a decrease from 4.7 per cent to 4.6 per cent in all other developing countries.⁷⁹ This extraordinary commitment by African governments to education coupled with development assistance towards education therefore “contributed to the enrolment of over 54 million children in schools in the sub regions of Southern, East, Central and West Africa between 2000 and 2012”.⁸⁰

Measuring the progress of MDG 2 on the continental level, the UN 2015 report on MDGs also stated that “Sub-Saharan Africa had the best record of improvement in primary education of any region since the MDGs were established” (UN, 2015). According to the report, Africa attained a 20% point increase in the net enrolment rate of primary education from 2000 to 2015, compared to a gain of 8% point that was made globally. The literacy rate among youth aged 15 to 24 has also increased from 83% to 91% between 1990 and 2015. The education gap between women and men had also been narrowed in primary education from gender parity index of 0.74 in 1990 to gender parity index of 1.03 in 2015.⁸¹

Regarding the progress of the MDGs in specific regions of Africa, the 2015 MDG report jointly prepared by the AfDB, African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UNDP Africa indicated that whereas an overwhelming majority of countries within Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Western Africa have significantly made progress by enrolling students into primary education, almost one third of countries in all the specific regions remain far from meeting the MDG 2 targets.⁸² For example, “despite the continuous rise in the net enrolment rate in primary education, only 67 per cent of children starting grade 1 are likely to reach the last grade of primary education in all the regions of in Africa excluding North Africa”.⁸³ This poor performance in primary completion within the specific regions of Africa is as a result of a number of factors such as “insufficient education infrastructure, limited choice for

girls and other vulnerable social groups, inadequate consideration of the reality of traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as nomadic people, persons with disabilities, and children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups. The insufficient number of qualified teachers and the lack of relevant curricula to meet the needs of these groups are also root causes of the poor quality of education in Africa”.⁸⁴

Regarding the progress of individual African countries on the MDGs, it is very important to point out that the significant progress made on the African continent as a whole is traceable to strategic policies that most African countries adopted to mainstream the MDGs into their national developmental plans. For example, according to the 2012 Ethiopia Report on MDGs, the government of Ethiopia had launched an “Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP)” which include Education and Training Policy that was adopted to guide the advancement of education in Ethiopia for a period of 20 years.⁸⁵ To support this programme, the report indicated that the government of Ethiopia increased its national budget allocations towards the education sector. In the 2009/2010 academic year for instance, the budget of the education sector in Ethiopia was 25.9% of the total government budget. In the 2010/11 academic year, the education sector budget was 24.8% and in the 2011/12 academic year, the education sector budget was 23.9%. The effort of the Ethiopian government to launch and support the ESDP programme with increased budget allocation has therefore led to the significant increase in access to primary education in Ethiopia.⁸⁶

As stated in the Ethiopia 2012 report on the MDGs, “the number of primary schools increased from 16,513 in 2004/05 to 29,482 in 2011/12, while the number of students enrolled in primary schools rose from 3.8 million in 1995/96 to 14 million in 2006/07, and reached 16.9 million in 2011/12. The number of teachers recruited also increased steadily to 393,723 in 2011/12.”⁸⁷

Analysing the success of MDG 2 in Ethiopia, the 2012 MDG 2 report on Ethiopia indicated that “despite the fact that significant number of children, both boys and girls, are in school, attendance completion rates and quality of education are the key challenges that still need to be addressed in Ethiopia”.⁸⁸ From my perspective, the ESDP demonstrates the personal efforts that most African countries put into achieving MDG 2 in their respective countries. The individual commitments of African countries therefore culminated into the massive improvement in primary education in Africa compared to any other region of the world as stated in the UN 2015 Report on MDGs.

2.1.3. National Progress of the MDG 2

Ghana was one of the first countries to pledge its commitment to the implementations of the MDGs in September 2001.⁸⁹ To ensure its commitment; the government of Ghana mainstreamed the MDGs in key public policy and strategy documents of Ghana including the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) which was implemented from 2003 to 2005, GPRS (2006 to 2009), the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA I) from 2010 to 2013 and finally the GSGDA II from 2014-2017.⁹⁰

To effectively monitor and assess the progress of the MDGs through the above policy and strategy documents, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) of Ghana, jointly with UNDP Ghana, prepared an MDG report, every two years since 2000, to measure the progress that Ghana was making on the achievements of the MDGs.⁹¹ According to the NDPC Ghana, these biennial MDGs reports enable the government of Ghana as well as the UNDP office in Ghana to periodically know the progress being made on the achievements of the MDGs. This therefore helped the government of Ghana as well as the UNDP office in Ghana to mobilize the resources needed to fast track the achievement of the MDGs.

In all, a total of 5 special biennial MDGs reports were respectively prepared in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010. The 6th and the last of such report was the 2015 MDGs report on Ghana that was jointly prepared by the NDPC of Ghana and UNDP office in Ghana.⁹² From my perspective, the implementation of the MDGs through the above mentioned nationally adopted policy and strategy documents and the periodic assessment of the progress that Ghana was making on the MDGs through the biennial MDG reports account for the significant progress that Ghana made in the attainment of some of the MDGs. A specific and an effective assessment of Ghana's progress on MDG 2 can be made by outlining Ghana's attainment of the MDG 2 indicators as follows:

2.1.3.1. First MDG 2 Indicator: Gross Enrolment and Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education

The 1st indicator of MDG 2 was to measure the progress of net enrolment rate (NER) and gross enrolment rate (GER) of primary education.⁹³ According to the Ghana Education Service (GES), “the net primary enrolment rate (NER) in primary education is the number of children of official primary school age who are enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of the official school age population”.⁹⁴ According to this definition, the NER refers only to children of official primary school age whereas the GER includes children of any age. UNDP Ghana also defined the NER as “the measurement of the number of appropriately aged pupils enrolled in school as a percentage of the total number of children in the relevant age groups”.⁹⁵ GER on the other hand is defined by UNDP Ghana as “the measurement of the number of pupils or students at a given level of schooling, regardless of age, as a proportion of the number of children in the relevant age group”.⁹⁶

According to the 2015 joint MDG report of NDPC and UNDP Ghana, there has been significant progress made in attaining the first indicator of MDG 2 in Ghana. There had been an increase in the NER in primary education at the national level from 45.2% in the 1990s to 88.5% in 2008/09 academic year.⁹⁷ The NER, however, decreased to 77.8 % in 2010/2011 academic year and thereafter increased to 89.3% in 2013/14 academic year. The NER of primary education in Ghana therefore did not attain the 100% target as of 2015.⁹⁸ According to UNDP Ghana, inadequate infrastructure, particularly at the basic school level in rural areas is a major factor that account for the limitation of Ghana in the attainment of 100% NER.⁹⁹ UNDP Ghana explains that most rural schools do not have adequate classrooms for effective teaching and learning. As a result, the children of official primary school age do not get enrolled in schools as the available spaces are usually occupy by children who are mature than the official primary school age.

With regards to the national GER, the joint report indicated that, there was an increase from 72% in 1990 to 94.9% in 2009/2010 academic years. Unlike the national NER, the GER further increased to 107.3% in 2013/2014 academic years. On the national level therefore, Ghana exceeded the 100% target of GER as of 2015.¹⁰⁰ The joint report, however, stated that there were some variations in GER across the regions of Ghana.

For example, out of the 10 regions of Ghana, the GER of primary education in the Northern and Greater Accra regions did not attained the 100% target as of 2015. Concerning the regional NER, the report outlined some regional disparities as well. For example, whereas the Western Region recorded the highest NER (97.9%) in 2012/2013 academic year, followed by the Central Region (87.0%), the Greater Accra Region lagged behind with 77.5% in the same academic year.¹⁰¹ This regional disparity is as result of inadequate infrastructure, particularly at the basic school level in

rural areas of the Northern and Greater Accra regions coupled with reluctance of teachers to accept postings to such regions which are mostly made up of rural areas.¹⁰²

2.1.3.2. Second MDG 2 Indicator: Proportion of Pupils Starting Grade 1 who Reach Last Grade of Primary

The 2nd MDG 2 indicator was to measure “the percentage of pupils starting grade 1 and successfully completes their primary education”.¹⁰³ This indicator is also referred to as the survival rate, which means the proportion of pupils or students that stay and complete school after their enrolment.¹⁰⁴ Another term use to describe the 2nd MDG indicator is the primary completion rate.¹⁰⁵

According to the UNDP, the primary completion rate (PCR) refers to the measurement of the gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education. The PCR is calculated by “taking the total number of students in the last grade of primary school, minus the number of repeaters in that grade, divided by the total number of children of official graduation age” UNDP Ghana, 2015). According to the joint 2015 MDG report, if the PCR is above 100%, it is a “symptom of late entry, grade repetition at earlier levels, or of an enrolment push at some point in the past, perhaps as a consequence of a school enrolment campaign”.¹⁰⁶

Ghana’s PCR rate increased from 86.3% in 2008/09 to 112.4% in 2012/13 academic year. However, the PCR decreased to 97.5% in 2013/14 academic year and as a result, Ghana’s PCR was 2.5% points away from the target of 100% as of 2015.¹⁰⁷ From my perspective, the decrease in Ghana’s PCR may be as a result of the lack of relevant curricula or approach to meet the needs of “traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as nomadic people, persons with disabilities, and children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups” as indicated in the 2015 Africa MDG

report jointly prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Union, Africa Development Bank and UNDP Africa.¹⁰⁸

At the junior high school level, the joint report of NDPC and UNDP Ghana stated that the completion rate had a very sharp decline. The completion rate at JHS level decreased from 75% in 2008/09 academic year to 69% in 2013/14 academic year. The sharp decline in the completion rate at JHS level is largely due to a higher dropout rate among girls at the JHS level compared to their drop out in the primary level.¹⁰⁹ With regards to the attainment of the 2nd MDG 2 indicator, there were still regional disparities with the Western Region reporting the highest completion rate of 110.0% in 2013/14 whereas the Northern Region recorded the lowest rate of 80.5%. Again this may be as a result of the lack of relevant curricula or approach to meet the needs of “traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as nomadic people, persons with disabilities, and children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups” in the Northern Region of Ghana.¹¹⁰ This regional disparity is clear evidence that the issue of completion rate (retention rate) is a major challenge to primary as well as Junior High School education in the Northern Region of Ghana.

2.1.3.3. Third MDG 2 Indicator: The Literacy Rate of 15-24 Year-Olds

The 3rd indicator of MDG 2 was to measure the progress against the literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds.¹¹¹ According to the Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana has made a significant progress in the youth literacy rate since 2000. “A comparison of the 2000 and the 2010 Population and Health Census (PHC) results shows that the proportion of illiterate youth has decreased more than half, dropping from 29.3% in 2000 to 14.3% in 2010”.¹¹² This assertion made by the Ghana Statistical Service is also confirmed by the NDPC’s stance that “the youth literacy rate in Ghana has seen substantial and consistent improvement since 1991”.¹¹³ According to the joint report of the

NDPC and UNDP, the percentage of the youth who can read and write English increased from 17% in 1991/92 to 56% in 1998/99 academic year. Thereafter, the literacy rate increased to 81% in the 2013/13 academic year.¹¹⁴

There was however some disparity between the literacy rate of males as compared to their female counterparts. The males had a better literacy rate compared to females. For example, the literacy rate among young males increased from 18% in 1991/92 academic years to 84% in 2012/13 academic year. With regards to females, the literacy rate increased from 16% in 1991/92 to 77% in 2012/13 academic years.¹¹⁵

As outlined in all the 3 specific MDG 2 indicators, Ghana had made a substantial and commendable improvement in the attainment of universal primary education. This success, from my perspective, is attributable to the commitment of successive Ghanaian governments (from 2001 to 2015) in the implementation of the key public policy and strategy documents that were prepared to monitor, assess and provide resources and enabling environment for the achievement of all the MDGs in Ghana. Despite the noticeable progress made in the achievement of MDG 2 however, the quality of education remains a challenge at all levels of Ghana's education, predominantly in public basic schools rural areas due to the regional disparities in availability of academic infrastructure, favourable academic conditions, relevant and targeted curricula or approach to education and access to quality education.¹¹⁶ For example, the Northern Region of Ghana and some rural areas across the country are noted for poor performance in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and other educational outcomes largely as result of disparities in favourable conditions of teaching and learning in these rural areas compared to the urban areas.¹¹⁷ As the Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs) which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” replaced the

MDGs in 2016, it is expected that the limitations of quality education in the Northern Region of Ghana and other rural areas across the country will be overcome.

2.2. Overview of the Sustainable Development Goals

As a result of the successes as well as shortcomings of the MDGs, leaders across the globe saw the need for pursuing a global developmental agenda beyond 2015 which marked the end of the SDGs.¹¹⁸ Due to this, world leaders adopted a set of 17 goals in New York during the Sustainable Development Summit which was held from 25 to 27 September 2015 to serve as the international mechanism that will guide global development from 2015 to 2030. These new 17 goals, which constitute the international development agenda, are known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹¹⁹ According to the UNDP office in Ghana, the 17 Goals “build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities”.¹²⁰ Specifically, SDG 4, which succeeded MDG 2 “goes beyond school enrolment and looks at tackling the levels of proficiency, the availability of trained teachers and adequate school facilities as well as disparities that exist in educational outcomes”.¹²¹ According to the United Nations, the 17 goals constituting the SDGs include the following:¹²²

“Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.”¹²³

Globally, progress of the SDGs is being measured against 169 targets and 232 official indicators.

Specifically, SDG 4, which is the focus of this study, is being measured against 10 targets and 11

official indicators. According to Resolution 71/313 of the UN General Assembly passed in 2017, the targets of SDG 4 include the following.¹²⁴

“1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

8: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

9: By 2030, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

10: By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.”¹²⁵

The above 10 targets would be deemed to be achieved if the following indicators are realised by 2030:¹²⁶

“1: Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

2: Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex.

3: Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex.

4: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.

- 5: Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.
- 6: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.
- 7: Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex.
- 8: Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment.
- 9: Proportion of schools with access to (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic hand washing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions).
- 10: Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study.
- 11: Proportion of teachers in (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country.”¹²⁷

2.2.1 Global Progress

Concerning global progress so far made on the achievement of the SDGs, UN's General Secretary, António Guterres in the United Nations 2017 SDG report commented that “the rate of progress being made in many areas of the SDGs is far slower than needed to meet the targets by 2030.”¹²⁸ He therefore called on governments, civil societies, the private sector and all stakeholders to fast-track their implementation, financing and political will towards the fulfilment of the 2030 vision.

Specifically on SDG 4, the UN 2017 SDG report indicated that although early childhood is an important period for a child's cognitive development and pre-primary education is considered an essential part of a holistic and robust educational system, the proportion of children who participates in pre-primary school education in sub-Saharan Africa, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries is only 4 out of every 10 children. This is very low as compared to the rate of 9 out of every 10 children in Europe, Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean.¹²⁹ There is therefore the need to adopt strategies that will enhance early childhood development through pre-primary education in sub-Saharan Africa, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.

On the progress of primary school education, the UN 2017 SDG report indicated that, in spite of the noticeable progress made in primary school enrolment during the era of the SDGs, “more than a quarter of a billion school-aged children, adolescents and youth are not in school”.¹³⁰ Since 2008, there has been a stagnant rate of 9% of primary-school-aged children worldwide who are still out of school. This stagnation of the out of school rate in primary education since 2008 is evidence that, there is some level of exclusion and hard-to-reach populations in the delivery of primary education. The out of school rate for students at lower and upper secondary

school aged decreased in 2017 but remains higher for primary school aged due to the difficulty in retaining hard-to-reach populations such as nomadic children in schools since they usually travel from one place to the other with their parents. Out of the 263 million children, adolescents and youth that were out of school in 2014, the UN 2017 SDG report stated that, “61 million were children of primary school age, 60 million were adolescents of lower secondary school age, and 142 million were youth of upper secondary school age”.¹³¹ These out of school students largely resided in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia and as a result, the two regions of the world accounted for over 70% of the global out of school population at all level of education.¹³²

Again, the 2017 UN SDG report indicated that, although more children than ever are going to school, many do not acquire basic skills. For example, “only about half of students at the end of primary education have attained minimum proficiency levels in reading or mathematics in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean”.¹³³ Inequality in the delivery of education is said to account for the lack of proficiency among pupils in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, as stated by the 2017 SDG report of the UN, parity indices from some assessments done in most countries “revealed that children and adolescents from the richest 20% of households achieved greater proficiency in reading than those from the poorest 20% of households and urban children scored higher than rural children”.¹³⁴ The assessment also shows that proficiency level is better among girls compared to their male counterparts.

Lastly, the UN 2017 report on the SDGs also indicated that the inadequacy of trained teachers as well as inadequate educational facilities poses serious threats to the 2030 vision of quality education for all, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2.2 Continental (African) Progress

On the continental front, Africa as a continent has adopted and strategized to implement the African Union Agenda 2063 in 2013 prior to the start of the SDGs in January 2016. Agenda 2063 refers to a vision and a plan adopted by the African Union (AU) to build a more prosperous Africa within the next 50 years.¹³⁵ Due to this Agenda 2063, the implementation of the SDGs on the African continent is being done together with the implementation of Agenda 2063. According to the UNDP in Africa, the SDGs acknowledges the significance of the AU Agenda 2063 and considers it an integral part of it.¹³⁶ Unlike the SDGs which focus mainly on primary and secondary education, Agenda 2063 seeks to develop educational sector of Africa at all levels (from primary to tertiary levels). Education is therefore the second, out of the 18 goals of Agenda 2063, which seeks to achieve an Africa with “well educated citizens and a skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation” (AU Commission, 2015). To achieve this target, Agenda 2063 stated in its first 10 years implementation plan (2014 - 2023) to implement programmes and policies that will improve education and skills, training, science and ICT in Africa.¹³⁷

Specifically, on the SDGs the UNDP office in Africa stated that several countries on the African continent are currently taking steps to translate the individual goals which constitute the SDGs and integrate these goals into their national development visions and plans.¹³⁸ For example, with the help of the UN Country Team, the government of Uganda became one of the first African countries that integrated the SDGs into the country’s national and sub-national developmental plans. According to the government of Uganda, 76% of the SDGs targets are adapted and integrated into Uganda’s 2015/16–2019/20 national development plan.¹³⁹ Specifically on SDG 4

Uganda set out to measure and monitor its progress against the 11 indicators set for MDG 4 globally and categorised them as follows:¹⁴⁰

1. “Learning: Proportion of children and young people (a) in Grade 2 or 3; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.
2. Readiness for primary school: Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex.
3. Participation in Primary and secondary education: Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex.
4. Participation in TVET and Higher Education: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.
5. Skills for work: Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.
6. Policy: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.
7. Skills for Literacy and Numeracy: Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex.
8. Provision: Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed

at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.

9. Resources: (i) Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) Internet for pedagogical purposes; and (c) computers for pedagogical purposes (ii) Proportion of schools with access to: (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities (iii) Proportion of schools with access to: (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic hand washing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions).
10. Numbers: Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study.
11. Trained Teachers: Proportion of teachers in: (a) pre-primary education; (b) primary education; (c) lower secondary education; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g., pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country, by sex.”¹⁴¹

Apart from Uganda, the UNDP office in Liberia supported the Liberian government to develop comprehensive strategies for the domestication of the SDGs as well as African Union Agenda 2063 into Liberia’s next national development plan.¹⁴² The strategies entail key steps to translate the SDG and Agenda 2063 into plans, policies and programmes throughout Uganda. Specifically on SDG 4, Liberia also agreed to measure progress against the 11 global indicators set out for SDG 4.¹⁴³

Finally, the UN Country Teams together with the UNDP offices working in South Africa, Angola and Ethiopia helped the government of these countries to explain the details of the SDGs to their government officers, members of Parliaments, civil societies and private sector actors.¹⁴⁴ Much awareness has therefore been raised on the SDGs in South Africa, Angola and Ethiopia.

Specifically on the progress made on achieving SDG 4 on the African continent as whole, the 2017 African Sustainable Development Report (ASDR) which simultaneously tracked progress on the SDGs and Agenda 2063 did not provide any data regarding continental progress that had being so far made in achieving SDG 4 in Africa.

2.2.3 National Progress

Ghana was one of the 70 countries which constituted the Open Working Group (OWG) which developed all the 17 SDG goals and 169 targets before they were endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2014.¹⁴⁵ Also, the current president of Ghana, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, is the co-chairperson of the Advocacy Group of Eminent Persons also known as “SDG Advocates”.¹⁴⁶ The Advocacy Group of Eminent Persons or the “SDG Advocates” refers to a group of 17 personalities from various backgrounds appointed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to lead advocacy on the SDGs throughout the world¹⁴⁷. Due to President Akufo Addo’s co-chairmanship of the “SDG Advocates” and the fact that Ghana was one of the countries that developed the SDGs, Ghana has initiated pragmatic measures to ensure the successful implementation and achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

To facilitate, monitor and do periodic assessment of the SDGs, Nana Akufo-Addo, the President of Ghana, inaugurated a 15-member Inter-Ministerial Committee to spearhead the implementation of the SDGs in Ghana.¹⁴⁸ The committee is made up of the Ministers for Planning, Prof. Gyan Baffuor (the chairperson of the committee); Education; Health; Foreign

Affairs and Regional Integration; Gender, Children and Social Protection; Sanitation and Water Resources; Food and Agriculture; Employment and Labour Relations; Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation; Finance; Attorney General; Trade and Industry; Fisheries and Aquaculture; Local Government and Rural Development; and Monitoring and Evaluation.¹⁴⁹

This committee together with the National Development Planning Commission as well as the UNDP and UN offices in Ghana have successfully helped Ghana to integrate the SDGs into a national and local developmental plan known as the “Co-ordinated Programme for Economic and Social Development Policies”¹⁵⁰ which was launched on Wednesday, April 11th, 2018. This programme, according to President Akufo Addo, is geared “towards the realisation of the SDGs, both at the national and local levels”.¹⁵¹ Prior to the above, on Friday, June 10th, 2016, Ghana have also launched an SDG-Data-portal through which up-to-date data, statistics and reports on the progress made on the 17 goals of the SDGs are made available to those who signed onto to the portal¹⁵².

Also, to take advantage of the new technologies and other opportunities that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides for the implementation of the SDGs in Ghana, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), in collaboration with the SDGs Inter-Ministerial Implementation Committee of Ghana with support from UNDP and guidance from the UN Data Group have held a National Data Roadmap Forum from 5th to 6th April, 2018.¹⁵³ This forum was held to set a roadmap for how ICT tools, equipment, technologies and new methods of data collection will be best use to produce and make accessible “relevant user friendly data, to enable the achievement and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda”¹⁵⁴ in Ghana and in the world.

Specifically on SDG 4, Ghana has agreed to measure progress of the MDG 4 targets using the global 11 indicators set out by the UN. On the part of the government of Ghana, its commitment

to the achievement of SDG 4 is demonstrated through the increase of budgetary allocation to the education sector since 2016. In 2016, GH¢6,532million representing 64.7% of the budget of the social sector was allocated to the education sector.¹⁵⁵ In 2017, although the amount allocated was still 64% of the total budget allocated to the social sector, the amount increased to GH¢ 8,330 million.¹⁵⁶ In 2018, the current amount designated to be spend in the education sector including the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) is totalling GH¢ 10.18 billion.¹⁵⁷ The surge in the budgetary allocation to the education sector over the past two years is as a result of the implementation of the free Senior High School policy of the current Akufo Addo-led government.¹⁵⁸

Also, the government of Ghana has demonstrated its commitment to the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana through the employment of new teachers, especially, teachers from the collages of education who are usually posted to basic schools. For example, in 2016, the Ministry of Education employed and posted 16,432 teachers who graduated from both Public and Private Colleges of Education in the country.¹⁵⁹

With regards to measuring the progress made on SDG 4 in Ghana, Performance Monitoring Accountability (PMA 2020), an institution that provides data on the SDGs indicators stated that, out of their survey conducted in 2015, majority of women age 15-24 in Ghana (72.1%) have attended at least some secondary school.¹⁶⁰ Also, nearly 14% of women in the lowest wealth quintile have never attended school, whereas almost the same percentage of women in the wealthiest quintile has attended university. PMA2020 therefore posits that further progress is needed in increasing opportunities for education amongst the rural poor so as to achieve SDG 4 in Ghana.

Also, the UN Communications Group (UNCG) in Ghana and the Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Platform on SDGs in Ghana published a joint article on the SDGs in which they indicated that “in 2016, the net enrolment ratio in Ghana reached 92% at the Primary level and 50% at JHS level”.¹⁶¹ “Gender parity has also been achieved at the kindergarten, primary, and JHS levels”.¹⁶² The joint article, however, indicated that “many students in Ghana do not benefit from quality education, and girls are disproportionately disadvantaged, especially during the transition to senior secondary education. Often, the school environment is not conducive to learning: classes are overcrowded, water and sanitation facilities are lacking, and trained teachers and school books are in short supply”.¹⁶³

To mitigate the challenges hindering quality education in Ghana and fast-track achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana, the joint article of UNCG and CSO made some useful suggestions. According to article, “school proprietors should make sure to create a child friendly environment that will attract children to go to school”¹⁶⁴. Also, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should be promoted in Ghanaian schools and practical, hands-on (vocational/technical competences) activities that will connect students to workplace learning should be provided in Ghanaian schools. In addition, the article also suggested that, the people of Ghana should ask the Ghanaian government to place education as a priority in both policy and practice. Finally, the joint article suggested that, “NGOs can be important partners of youth and other groups to foster the importance of education within local communities”.¹⁶⁵ The final suggestion by the UNCG and the CSO Platform on SDGs therefore affirms the rationale of this study in seeking to examine how the play-based approach used by the Right To Play (an NGO) will ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and also promote lifelong learning opportunities for all in Ghana (SDG 4).

2.3. Overview of the Play-Based Approach Use by Right To Play in Educating Students

The Right To Play (RTP) is an international NGO that uses play-based approach to educate students in 20 countries across different continents in the world including Ghana. The RTP uses the transformative power of sports and play to promote quality education among children especially at the basic level of education. It is a generally known fact that children, by their nature, like playing. Having identified this trait in children, the RTP seeks to use what children like (that is playing) to educate them and also develop their life skills.¹⁶⁶ The RTP therefore uses a set of 80 games such as “I like Maths”; “Under & Over”; “Germs against Soap”; “Buttocks Spelling” and others to teach Mathematics, English Language, Science and other subjects to primary students. The games used by the Right To Play are not just for fun but are purposefully designed to build the three main domains of learning (cognitive domain, affective or social domain and the Psychomotor domain) in students.¹⁶⁷

As children play these games they have fun, learn and also develop their life skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork and their confidence level. As a result, the RTP deemed the games use in their play-based approach to education as purposeful since these games are purposively used to teach Mathematics, English Language and other subjects. These games are put in manuals which makes usage easy and very accessible. There are games designed for specific topics. However, each game can also be modified to suit other subjects or topics. An example is “I like Maths” which is purposively designed to teach simple addition and subtraction in maths. This game can also be modified to teach multiplication and division at higher levels of education.

The use of Right To Play game in teaching goes through five stages. These stages include: Opening Discussion; Warm Up; the Main Game; Cool Down; and finally, Reflect, Connect and Apply (RCA). The stages are explained in details as follows:¹⁶⁸

Opening Discussion: This is where the facilitator or teacher asks children questions that prepares the mind of the children towards the topic they are about to learn. At this stage, the teacher basically asks general questions about the topic in order to introduce the children to the topic.

Warm-Up: In this stage, children are engaged in an activity/ exercise that prepares their body towards the game they are about to play. The activity must be related to the topic the teacher is about to teach the children.

Main Game: In this stage, the teacher engages the children in the purposeful game. The teacher introduces the game and also demonstrates how the game is played to the children, and then leads the children to play the game.

Cool- Down: In this stage, children are engaged in a soft body exercise to bring their body to rest to pave way for the next stage (RCA).

Reflect Connect and Apply (RCA): This is the most important part of the lesson. If this is not done, teaching and learning cannot be said to have not taken place.¹⁶⁹ As the name suggest, this stage involve three different processes. The processes are outline as follows.

Reflect: This is the process in which the teacher asks questions mainly on the game played. This gives the children the opportunity to share their experiences about the game.

Connect: This refers to the process where the teacher asks children questions that will give the children the opportunity to link the knowledge they acquired in the game played with their previous experience.

Apply: This is the process in which children are given the opportunity to demonstrate how they will apply the knowledge acquired through the game. As a result, the teacher asks questions that help the teacher examine, from the perspective of the children, how the knowledge acquired by the children will be practically used in their day-to-day experiences and in the near future. As children go through all the 5 stages in playing a game, the teachers ensure that effective learning has taken place; children have fun and also develop their life skills.

The RTP engages students by first and foremost training teachers in RTP-intervention schools on how they should use the games to teach children. The teachers then use the games to teach students in RTP intervention schools. For effectiveness of the programs of the RTP, a team of field facilitators (RTP staff) and GES officials (including Circuit Supervisors) goes to RTP intervention schools to periodically monitor and evaluate how the trained teachers are using the play-based approach to educate students in the classroom.¹⁷⁰

In comparison to the play-based approach, the rote method of teaching and learning (the usual approach used in educating students in Ghana) encourages students to memorise concepts and thus “chew, poor and forget”¹⁷¹ what they learnt. Also, in the rote method of learning, the teacher takes the centre of affairs and pours out knowledge to the students.

The play-based method on the other hand uses music, games, and play-based activities in general to explain concepts to the best understanding of students. In the play-based approach, the students take the centre of affairs during lessons with only minimal supervision from teachers.

As a result, the play-based approach is very interactive and draws out knowledge from the students.¹⁷² This therefore makes the play-based approach more relevant in delivering inclusive and equitable quality education to students (especially at the basic school level) compared to the rote method of learning.¹⁷³

2.4 Conclusion

On the premise of the research problem, this chapter discussed the global, continental and national successes of the MDGs as well as their limitations. This chapter also discussed the SDGs and examined the successes so far made in achieving the SDGs and the potential achievements of the SDGs. Finally, in answering the first research question and achieving the first objective of this study, this chapter examined the relevance of the play-based approach (methodology) being used by the Right To Play (RTP) in educating students at the basic level of education in Ghana.

The successes of the MDGs, as discussed in this chapter, have demonstrated that global efforts to pursue sustainable development through global actions, such as the MDGs, are very essential to make the world a better place for us. Specifically on education, the achievement of MDG 2 has helped 91% of children to be enrolled in primary school globally as at 2015.¹⁷⁴ This success may not have been achieved without global actions such as the MDGs.

However, despite the significant progress made in enrolling children into primary education in many countries across the world and specifically in Africa, factors such as “insufficient education infrastructure, limited choice for girls and other vulnerable social groups, inadequate consideration of the reality of traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as nomadic people, persons with disabilities, and children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups”¹⁷⁵ have constrained many countries from completely achieving the targets set for MDG 2. “The

insufficient number of qualified teachers and the lack of relevant curricula to meet the needs of these groups are also root causes of the poor quality of education”¹⁷⁶ in many African countries including Ghana.

The progress being made on the SDGs, which replaced the MDGs in January 2016, indicates that many governments, NGOs and other civil societies are putting in much effort to make sure the SDGs build on the successes of the MDGs and the SDG targets are attained prior to the 2030 target. Specifically on the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana, much focus ought to be given to the problem of regional disparity in educational infrastructure, favourable academic conditions and access to inclusive and equitable quality education.

The play-based approach used by the Right To Play, an NGO in Ghana, to teach students in the classroom is very effective and relevant in enhancing quality education especially at the basic school level. The play-based approach can therefore help Ghana to address some of its challenges to quality education. The findings of this research will therefore reveal whether or not the play-based approach of RTP is contributing to the attainment of quality education (SDG 4) in Ghana.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 3

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF RIGHT TO PLAY (RTP) TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MDG 2 AND ITS POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO SDG 4

3.0. Introduction

To address the second, third and fourth research questions of this study, this chapter examines the contributions of the play-based approach of RTP towards the achievement of MDG 2 and the potential contributions of the play-based approach to the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana. It also discusses the successes and challenges of RTP in the use of play-based approach in teaching students in Ghana. This chapter therefore helps the study to achieve its second, third and fourth objectives.

3.1. Contributions of the Play-Based Approach to the Achievement of MDG 2 in Ghana.

The responses of the 30 respondents show that the play-based approach made significant contributions to help Ghana achieved MDG 2. The specific responses of the respondents, which have been analysed using, the 3 indicators of MDG 2 as themes are as follows:

3.1.1. Contributions of the Play-Based Approach to the 1st Indicator of MDG 2: Enrolment Rate of Students

Respondents were asked about the contributions that the play-based approach made to enrolment of students during the MDG era. All the 30 respondents interviewed stated categorically that, the play-based approach has significantly contributed to the enrolment rate of schools within the communities in which the play-based approach is being used.

To do a comparative study of the enrolment rates of schools within communities in which the play-based approach is being used and the schools in communities in which the approach is not

used, the head teachers of St Monica's R/C primary school at Nyankpala; Tolon D/A primary school "A" at Tolon; and Tolon D/A primary school "B" at Tolon were interviewed as the schools which use the play-based approach.

Although the study sought to get responses from 3 non-RTP intervention schools, only one non RTP school was available to be studied. There were two non-RTP schools located within communities closer to the RTP communities studied. However both teachers and students did not report to school in one of the non-RTP schools during the period that I went to the Northern Region to study the communities. As a result, the head teacher and another class teacher of Chanayin AME Zion primary school at Chanayin were the only people interviewed as respondents for schools that are not using the RTP play-based approach.

The tables on the next page illustrate the responses of the head teachers of the schools:

Tab. 3.1: Table Showing the Enrolment Rates of RTP Intervention Schools from 2006/07 Academic Year to 2017/18 Academic Year¹⁷⁷

| Schools | Tolon D/A Primary School "A" | Tolon D/A Primary School "B" | St Monica's R.C Primary School |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Enrolments in 2006/07 Academic year | Boys: 121 Girls: 144 Total = 265 | - | - |
| Enrolments in 2007/08 Academic year | - | - | - |
| Enrolments in 2008/09 Academic year | - | - | - |
| Enrolments in 2009/10 Academic year | - | - | - |
| Enrolments in 2010/11 Academic year | - | - | - |
| Enrolments in 2011/12 Academic year | - | - | Boys: 92 Girls: 79 Total: 171 |
| Enrolments in 2012/13 Academic year | Boys: 213 Girls: 214 Total: 427 | Boys: 139 Girls: 139 Total: 278 | Boys: 125 Girls: 109 Total: 234 |
| Enrolments in 2013/14 Academic year | - | Boys: 196 Girls: 199 Total: 395 | Boys: 126 Girls: 127 Total: 253 |
| Enrolments in 2014/15 Academic year | Boys: 178 Girls: 201 Total: 379 | Boys: 234 Girls: 228 Total: 462 | Boys: 208 Girls: 212 Total: 420 |
| Enrolments in 2015/16 Academic year | Boys: 182 Girls: 208 Total: 390 | Boys: 239 Girls: 248 Total: 487 | Boys: 209 Girls: 245 Total: 454 |
| Enrolments in 2016/17 Academic year | Boys: 224 Girls: 259 Total: 483 | Boys: 243 Girls: 263 Total: 506 | Boys: 221 Girls: 197 Total: 418 |
| Enrolments in 2017/18 Academic year | Boys: 215 Girls: 241 Total: 456 | Boys: 236 Girls: 250 Total: 486 | Boys: 241 Girls: 279 Total: 520 |

Tab. 3.2 : Table Showing the Enrolment Rates of a Non-RTP Intervention School from 2015/16 Academic Year to 2017/18 Academic Year¹⁷⁸

| Schools | Chanayin AME Zion Primary School |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Enrolments in 2015/16 Academic year | Boys: 93 Girls: 92 Total: 185 |
| Enrolments in 2016/17 Academic year | Boys: 104 Girls: 89 Total: 193 |
| Enrolments in 2017/18 Academic year | Boys: 106 Girls: 84 Total: 198 |

Interpretation of Tables 3.1 and 3.2:

- Due to the fact that RTP interventions in the Tolon District started in 2007/08 academic year, the enrolment data sought from the schools was to cover 2007 to 2018. However, all the schools which were studied could not provide their enrolment data from 2007/08

academic year. All the head teachers stated that, their predecessors misplaced some of the records and as a result, they do not have records for the enrolment for some of the academic years.

- The dash (-) signs in the table therefore means that the enrolment data of the schools was not available in the respective academic years.
- With regards to Chanayin AME Zion primary school, the only non-RTP school studied, the headmaster stated that he only have records from 2015/16 to 2017/18 academic years available. In his explanation, he stated that, his predecessors misplaced some enrolment data and as such, none of the enrolment data gathered from Chanayin AME Zion primary school covers the MDG era. All the data from Chanayin AME Zion primary school therefore covers only the SDG era.
- As stated above, the study sought to get responses from two additional schools which do not use the play-based approach of RTP but the teachers of Chanayin AME Zion primary school were the only non-RTP school Staff available to be interviewed.

According to Mrs. Vivian Apraku, the head teacher of St Monica's R/C primary school, although it is less than a year since she was transferred to the school, she observed that, teaching and learning (in the classrooms) is always lively because of the use of play-based activities in the delivery of lessons to students. She added that, as a result of the use of the play-based approach in her school, the attendance of students has improved and the enrolment of the school has also increased.¹⁷⁹ Explaining her assertions with statistics, the head teacher stated that, when she came to the school at the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year (current academic year) the enrolment was 418 students (made up of 241 boys and 197 girls). However, the enrolment has

increased to 520 students (made of 241 boys and 279 girls) as of Tuesday June 26, 2018 (the date the interview was conducted)¹⁸⁰ as illustrated in figure 1 above.



Figure 3.1: Felix Yao Amenorhu in an interview session with Mrs. Apraku Vivian (the head teacher of St Monica’s R.C. Primary School) at Nyankpala.

According to Mr. Tikumah Ibrahim the head teacher of Tolon D/A Primary “A”, as a result of the interventions of RTP, more girls have been enrolled in his school as compared to their male counterparts. This is demonstrated in the enrolment of the school, which is 456 students made up of 241 girls and 215 boys as of Tuesday June 26, 2018 (the date the interview was conducted)¹⁸¹ as illustrated in figure 1 above.

Just like Tolon D/A primary “A”, the most recent enrolment data of Tolon D/A primary “B” shows that more girls are enrolled in Tolon D/A primary “B” compared to their male counterparts. As illustrated in figure 1, the enrolment of Tolon D/A primary “B” as of Tuesday

June 26, 2018 (the date the interview was conducted) was 486 students made up of 236 boys and 250 girls.¹⁸² The enrolment figures in the RTP interventions schools therefore show that more girls are enrolled in school compared to their male counterparts.



Figure 3.2



Figure 3.3

Figures 2 and 3: Felix Yao Amenorhu in interview sessions with Mr. Tikumah Ibrahim (Picture 2) and Mr. Seidu Fuseni (Picture 3) (the head teachers of Tolon D/A Primary “A” and “B” respectively) at Tolon.

As illustrated in figure 2, according to Mr. Kassim Alhassan, the head teacher of Chanayin AME Zion primary, the only non-RTP school studied, the enrolment data of the school available as of Wednesday June 26, 2018 (the date the interview was conducted) covers only the SDGs era.¹⁸³ In his explanation, some enrolment data were misplaced by his predecessors. The most recent enrolment of the school (the enrolment of 2017/18 academic year) was 198 students which is made up of 106 boys and 84 girls¹⁸⁴ (as of Wednesday June 26, 2018, the date the interview was conducted).



Figure 3.4: Felix Yao Amenorhu in an interview session with Mr. Alhassan Kassim (the head teacher of Chanayin AME Zion Primary School) at Chanayin

Deducing from the comparative study, although data was not provided to cover the MDG era in the non-RTP school, it is evident that the enrolment rates of schools at Nyankpala and Tolon (RTP intervention communities) has tremendously increased compared to the enrolment rate of the school at Chanayin (a non-RTP community). Using the 2015/2016 total enrolments of the schools (the closest to the MDG era) as an example, the enrolment of St Monica's R/C primary school at Nyankpala was 454 students. The enrolment of Tolon D/A primary "A" and primary "B" at Tolon were 390 students and 487 students respectively. On the other hand, the total enrolment of Chanayin AME Zion primary (the school without the play-based approach and located in a non-RTP intervention community) was 185 students. All the communities studied (both RTP and the non-RTP communities) are located within the Tolon District, which is not far from the Tamale metropolis of the Northern Region of Ghana. All the schools studied also have the same government interventions. The only difference identified in the communities as well as the schools is the implementation of the play-based approach in the RTP communities and the absence of the play-based approach in the non-RTP community. The massive discrepancy in the enrolment figures of the RTP intervention schools and the non-RTP intervention school is therefore traced to the play-based approach of RTP.

The responses of the other respondents (apart from the head teachers) also confirm the result of the comparative study. For example, Mr. Gao Kwabena, an Education Specialist at the head office of RTP Ghana indicated that, because children naturally like to play, the introduction of the play-based approach in some RTP intervention schools across Ghana attracted many children to get enrolled in these schools.¹⁸⁵

Specifically concerning the enrolment of students within the Northern Region of Ghana, Mr. Samuel Oppong, the Team Leader of RTP Northern Region Program stated that, unlike the other

parts of Ghana where parents and guardians hurry-up to enrol their children into schools in the beginning of every academic year, some communities in the Northern Region usually have children of school going age kept at homes, engaged in cattle rearing or crop farming.¹⁸⁶ To address this challenge, RTP together with their Teacher Network (an association made up of teachers trained with the RTP play-based approach) initiated a programme known as enrolment drive. The enrolment drive is a programme that provides an avenue for teachers, GES officials and RTP staff to visit different communities to encourage parents to send their children to school.¹⁸⁷ During these community visitations, parents, teachers, GES officials and children who are already enrolled in schools are engaged in sporting activities to attract and welcome new students. Citing an example of how efficient the enrolment drive initiative is contributing to the enrolment of students within the Northern Region of Ghana, the Team Leader stated that, although RTP began the enrolment drive in the Northern from 2016, which was the SDG era, the enrolment drive initiative helped the RTP Northern Region Program Team to get 1700 students enrolled in RTP intervention schools during the 2016/2017 academic year.¹⁸⁸

Explaining the specific statistics of enrolment of students within the Savelugu Municipal as well as Tolon and Kumbungu Districts (some of the communities I studied), Mr. Farouk Alhassan, a Field Facilitator of RTP Northern Region Program explained that 139 students made up of 63 boys and 76 girls were enrolled into RTP schools within the Savelugu Municipality in the 2016/2017 academic year. 636 students made up of 281 boys and 355 girls were also enrolled in the RTP intervention schools within the Tolon District in the 2016/2017 academic year. Lastly, 708 students made up of 311 boys and 397 girls were enrolled in RTP intervention schools within the Kumbungu District in the same academic year.¹⁸⁹ Outside the communities I studied, the Field Facilitator also mentioned that RTP received a report from Mr. Haruna Alhassan, a

teacher at Pong-Tamale Experimental Primary School that, as a result of the introduction of the play-based approach, the Pong-Tamale Experimental Primary School enrolled 87 students in the 2015/2016 academic year and this shot up to 160 students in the 2016/2017 academic year. This therefore shows an improvement in enrolment rate at the Pong-Tamale Experimental Primary School.

To confirm the assertions of the Staff of RTP regarding contributions of the play-based approach to enrolment of students, 10 students (5 girls and 5 boys) from the St Monica's R/C Primary School at Nyankpala, representing the main beneficiaries of the play-based approach, were asked during a focus group discussion as to whether the play-based approach influenced them in enrolling in the school they are currently attending. 8 students (5 boys and 3 girls) out of the 10 students said they were influenced by the play-based approach in enrolling at St Monica's R/C Primary School. One of the girls stated that her mother said teachers were teaching well at St Monica's R/C primary school and that was the reason why she was enrolled in the school. The other girl also stated that, she completed a nursery school known as Ruby nursery (a non-RTP intervention school) and the parents said she should continue her education at St Monica's R/C primary school because her former school (Ruby nursery) was only nursery school.¹⁹⁰



Figure 3.5: Felix Yao Amenorhu in a focus group discussion session with 10 students (5 girls and 5 boys) of St Monica’s R.C. Primary School) at Nyankpala.

To ascertain the views of members of RTP intervention communities and investigate their observation of the contributions or otherwise of play-based approach towards enrolment of students prior to and after the intervention of RTP in their community, 7 parents (5 males and 2 females) within the Tolon community were interviewed individually. The study sought to interview 3 additional females but only two females were willing to be interviewed. All the 7 parents interviewed stated that, there has been significant increase in the number of children who were enrolled in the schools within the community since the interventions of RTP started. For example, Mr. Mahama Abdullahi, the father of Abdulai Musah Maltiti; a basic 2 Student enrolled in Tolon D/A Primary “B” stated that “we have achieved a lot from the play-based approach. In terms of enrolment, as a result of the approach, many people have been coming to me to send their children to school. For instance, there is a child who is about 4 or 5 years in my neighbourhood and the parents are telling me to send that child to school. Also, RTP approach has decreased the rate of teenage pregnancy in our community but still there are some cases of

teenage pregnancy in the community because some of our people do not easily understand the essence of education”.¹⁹¹

To find out the assertion of the Tolon Ghana Education Service office and the Tolon District Assembly concerning the contribution(s) or otherwise of the play-based approach to the enrolment of students within the Tolon community, Mr. Nelson Konlan, the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon and Mr. Albert Anamoh, the District Director for the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development at the Tolon District Assembly were interviewed. According to the Assistant Director in charge of planning, the play-based approach is gender sensitive and inclusive; in the sense that, the play-based approach motivates girls to learn and play just like their male counterparts. The approach therefore increased the enrolment of girls, especially, within the Tolon community.¹⁹² Also through the enrolment drive initiative of RTP, children who have dropped out of school are motivated and enrolled back to schools.¹⁹³

The District Director for the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development also mentioned that the play-based approach has motivated parents to enrol their wards in schools and this has “drastically reduced “kayayo” (head-porting) and other child labour activities within the community”.¹⁹⁴

Finally, to ascertain the assertion of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and investigate the national contribution(s) or otherwise of the play-based approach towards enrolment of students in Ghana, Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo, a Senior Planning Officer at the Ministry of Education at Accra was interviewed. According to the Senior Planning Officer, although the Government of Ghana has implemented many interventions, such as the Ghana School Feeding programme, to increase

enrolment in schools and as a result, it will be very difficult to quantify the national impact of the play-based approach (as a single intervention) on the national enrolment of students in Ghana, his records show that the enrolment rate of schools using the play-based approach of RTP “has tremendously increased”.¹⁹⁵

The analysis of all the responses of the respondents, as outlined above, have demonstrated that the play-based approach of RTP, a non-state actor, has made diverse and immense positive contributions to the attainment of the 1st MDG 2 indicator which sought to measure the enrolment rate in primary education in Ghana.¹⁹⁶

3.1.2. Contributions of the Play-Based Approach to the Retention Rate of Students

To successfully complete primary education, students have to be retained in school. Respondents were therefore asked how the play-based approach contributed to the retention rates in schools. According to Mr. Gao Kwabena, the Education specialist at the head office of RTP Ghana, comparing schools which use the play based approach to schools without the play-based approach, the retention rate of students in schools which use the play-based approach is very high. He explained that the relationship between students and their teachers in certain schools which do not use the play-based approach is sometimes unfriendly due to the use of corporal punishments such as canning or verbal abuse of students (shouting at students or insulting them) in an attempt to correct students. Children in such schools are therefore not motivated to go to school regularly. This therefore results into situations where some parents hold canes and match their kids to school, as it is sometimes observed in certain Ghanaian communities. “Maybe the child is not willing to go to school because the school environment is not friendly to the child. As a result, he or she prefers to be at home and play with other kids”.¹⁹⁷

The play-based approach on the other hand trains teachers in what is known as “Positive Disciplinary Approaches” to be use in correcting students instead of using corporal punishments. “Positive Disciplinary Approach” is the use of soft communication skills to discuss with a child his or her bad deed(s) and come up with solutions to such deed(s) together with the child, so that next time, the child will not repeat such negative behaviour or bad deed”.¹⁹⁸ RTP, as an organisation, frowns on the use of corporal punishments in schools. Teachers who are trained with the play-based approach of RTP therefore sign a bond to refrain from the use of corporal punishment and rather use the positive disciplinary approaches in their schools. As a result of the use of positive disciplinary measures as well as the playful activities that constitute the play-based approach, learning environment in RTP intervention schools are very friendly and this always attract students to be in school hence the increase in the rate of retention in RTP intervention schools.¹⁹⁹

Citing an example, Mr. Gao stated that in Obom-Domeabra, a community located in the Ga South Municipal Assembly of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, there was a student who was not reporting to school and a teacher that was trained with the play-based methodology followed up to check up on the child and discovered that the child was having a boil. During their interactions, the child asked the teacher if his colleagues were going to have a play-based activity the following day. The teacher answered “Yes”. The following day, the child reported to school even with the boil. This therefore explains how the play-based approach can contribute to the retention of students in schools.²⁰⁰

To find out whether or not students, who are the main beneficiaries of the play-based approached, are influenced to be retained in school as a result of the play-based approach, the 10 students from St Monica’s’ R/C primary school were asked if any of them is willing to leave St

Monica's R/C primary to a different school which does not use the play-based approach. In their response, 9 of the students stated that they will not go to a school which is not using the play-based approach while 1 of the students said she will be willing to go to a school without the play-based approach. When asked why she may want to go to a school without the play-based approach, she stated that "I want to go and help them learn how to use the play-based approach".²⁰¹ The response of the students reveals that, students who learn with the play-based approach are willing to be retained in school.

To ascertain the views of parents on retention, parents were asked how they will respond if, all of a sudden, their ward comes to tell them that he or she wants to leave the current play-based school to a non-play-based school. 6 out of the 7 parents said they will not agree to such a decision. The only respondent who differs on this question stated that "I will leave that decision to my ward and her current teacher to make. I know nothing about education; as a result, I will not make any decision for my child. She is the one enjoying the conditions of the play-based approach in the school. So if after enjoying all the privileges of the play-based approach, she still want to go to a non-play-based approach school, it is unto her".²⁰² The responses of the parents therefore indicate that the play-based approach influences their decisions with regards to the retention of their children in a particular school.

On the question of retention of students, all the head teachers interviewed stated that, since the play-based approach creates a friendly and active learning environment in their schools, it is very difficult to find a student who is enrolled in their school to be truant.

With regards to the retention of students in RTP intervention schools, Mr. Nelson Konlan, the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon stated that, as

part of the play-based approach, RTP has trained teachers in the various schools to help students with their hygiene management. This especially helps girls who sometimes absent themselves from schools for some number of days as a result of their menstruation periods. According to Mr. Konlan, UNICEF in collaboration with RTP has provided ‘changing rooms’ in most schools for the students to change their outfit whenever they want to engage in outdoor play-based activities. As a result, teachers who are trained by RTP help girls to know how to use the ‘changing rooms’ to change their dresses and take good care of themselves during their menstrual period. Also, sanitary pads are provided to girls to help them maintain good hygiene during their menstrual period. All these interventions that come along with the play-based approach help students, especially, girls to be retained in schools even if they are in their menstrual period.²⁰³

Finally, to ascertain the national contribution(s) or otherwise of the play-based approach towards the retention of students, Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo, the Senior Planning Officer at the Ministry of Education at Accra stated that, according to his records, the retention rate of students in schools using the play-based approach was high compared to the retention rate in schools without the play-based approach.²⁰⁴

3.1.3. Contributions of the Play-Based Approach to the 2nd Indicator of MDG 2: Completion Rate of Students

According to the responses of the respondents, since the play-based approach influenced students to be retained in schools, consequently, the approach motivates students to stay in school to, at least, complete their basic school education and sometimes continue their education to the higher levels.

Mr. Kwarteng Frimpong, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the head office of Right To Play at Accra for example stated that, RTP trains teachers with the play-based approach to assess

their students and place the students in groups such that those who are weak academically are placed in the same group with academically brilliant ones. As the students engage in group work, “those of them who usually get poor marks such as zero (0) will gradually improve because of the support from their friends who are academically brilliant”²⁰⁵ Once students begin to see good marks in their exercise books, they are motivated to stay in school and this encourage them to eventually complete their education.²⁰⁶

Focusing on the contributions that the play-based approach made to the completion rate of students in the Northern Region of Ghana, Mr. Samuel Oppong, the Team Leader of RTP Northern Region Program stated that once the students are retained in school, they definitely complete the primary school education and sometimes complete their JHS, SHS and tertiary education. He cited an example of some districts such as Kumbungu and Savalugu where most girls who completed from RTP intervention schools at the primary levels also continued and completed their JHS, some SHS and some are currently enrolled in tertiary schools.²⁰⁷

To find out from the students, who are the direct beneficiaries of the play-based approach, whether or not they are willing to complete their primary education, the 10 students at St Monica’s R/C primary were asked if they will want to complete their primary education and whether or not they will want to complete their education at a school that use the play-based approach. All the 10 students (8 who are in primary six, their last level of primary education, and the other two in primary 5) responded in affirmation to both questions.²⁰⁸

Parents were also as asked whether they were willing to transfer their wards to another school, which does not have the play-based approach for their wards to complete their education there. All the 7 parents interviewed at Tolon responded in the negative.

On the question of the completion rate of students, Mr. Nelson Konlan, the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon stated that because children will normally want to play and much of the studies of students in RTP intervention schools are structured to concentrate on play, learning serves as a source of entertainment for students in RTP intervention schools. This therefore influences them to stay in school to complete their primary education. Compared to non-play-based schools, “students may usually feel bored and before the teachers realized, some students are gone home and gradually from dodging to the house, such students may not be going to school regularly and then finally, they drop out of school”.²⁰⁹ The play-based approach therefore helps students to complete their primary school education.²¹⁰

Concerning the national contribution(s) of the play-based approach to the primary school completion rate in Ghana, Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo, the Senior Planning Officer at the Ministry of Education at Accra stated that, “since children and youth are very happy about the play-based method of teaching and learning, the method influenced them to be enrolled in schools, retained and also complete their primary school education”.²¹¹ The play-based approach therefore made significant contribution to the completion rate of students in schools in which the approach is being used.²¹²

The above responses from the respondents have therefore proven that the play-based methodology has made significant contributions towards the attainment of the 2nd MDG 2 indicator, which measured the completion rate of students in Ghanaian primary schools.²¹³

3.1.4. Contributions of the Play-Based Approach to the 3rd Indicator of MDG 2: Literacy Rate of Youth who are 15-24 Year-Olds

The responses of the respondents indicated that the play-based approach mostly enhanced the literacy and numeracy competence of its beneficiaries.

According to Mrs. Augustina Ayisala, a Project Officer at the head office of Right To Play at Accra, RTP has designed manuals on literacy and numeracy using the play-based approach. As a result, RTP interventions or projects in every district are implemented based on the literacy and numeracy need of the district.²¹⁴ For example, with the help of RTP, the Ga South Municipal, located within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, has introduced a reading plan in schools and as a result, books have been provided to the schools, spaces have been created for library in the schools and regular assessment of the children's' ability to read is being done by staff of the Municipal Education Office to enhance the literacy of students within the Ga-South Municipal. To make the reading plan effective and efficient, all the RTP intervention schools within the Ga-South Municipal Assembly have dedicated the first hour of every school day to reading. During this reading hour, teachers trained with the play-based approach of RTP assist students to improve their literacy. Lastly, the Project Officer mentioned that the Teacher Network Executives within the Ga-South Municipal Assembly also move from school to school with books to randomly choose children to read and this serves as a way of assessing the literacy competencies of the schools in RTP catchment area. RTP have also contracted Junior Graphic (a child News Paper Agency) to supply newspapers to RTP schools. The Junior Graphic is usually delivered to the Teacher Network Administrator who distributes it to other Teacher Network Executives within the Ga-South Municipal to be further distributed in schools.

Focusing on the contribution of the play-based approach to the literacy of students in the Northern Region of Ghana, Mr. Farouk Alhassan, the Field Facilitator of RTP Northern Region Program stated that within the Tolon and Kumbungu districts as well as the Savelugu Municipal, the focus of RTP interventions or projects is to enhance the literacy and numeracy abilities of the youth (both students and non-students). Although RTP have other interventions such as ‘WASH’, which targets water, sanitation and hygiene needs of RTP communities, the main focus of RTP within the Tolon, Kumbungu and Savelugu communities is to enhance the numeracy and literacy abilities of the youth.²¹⁵ The Field Facilitator was asked how RTP enhance the literacy of youth who are not enrolled in schools. According to the Field Facilitator, RTP achieved this through some selected people within the communities who are referred to as ‘Community Coaches’. These community coaches are mostly made up of youth who have dropped out of school or could not continue their education to higher levels. These people are identified by RTP, “given capacity building training based on the use of the play-based approach”²¹⁶ and are made community coaches. The community coaches then engage children in the communities with the play-based approach through outdoor play-based activities. Through the community coaches, the literacy of youth who are not enrolled in school or dropped out of school has therefore been enhanced with the play-based methodology.²¹⁷ The outdoor play-based approach however is not limited to enhancing the literacy of the youth but also designed to give the youth life skills such as assertiveness, discipline, team work as well as the ability to use the values of team work in ensuring peace building in the community.²¹⁸ Also, the outdoor play-based approach facilitated by the community coaches attracts some school drop out to be enrolled back to school.²¹⁹

To ascertain how the play-based approach enhances the literacy of students in the classroom, the 10 students who participated in the focus group discussion at St Monica’s R/C primary school

were asked to demonstrate their literacy skills through the play-based activity. In their response, the students demonstrated their literacy skills through three main classroom based games known as “Buttocks Spelling”; “Bingo Stop” and “Secret Director”. For instance, the game of Buttocks Spelling was demonstrated by 2 students, a boy and a girl. While one of them stood in front of the class to spell with his buttocks, the other stood at the back of the class ready to call the word to be spell. Another student (posing as the class teacher) secretly mentioned a word (Goldsmith) into the ears of the student in front of the class. After the student in front of the class was certain that he clearly heard the word to be spelt, he faced the blackboard with his backside facing the class and started spelling the individual alphabets in the word (Goldsmith) moving his buttocks to draw the alphabets. The other student who was expected to call out the word, focused on the one in front of the class and figured out the alphabet he was drawing with his buttocks. If she (the student at the back of the class) calls out the alphabet correctly, the rest of the 8 students (seated in the class) write the alphabet down and the student drawing the alphabet with his buttocks continue to the next alphabet. This continues till the entire alphabet forming the word “Goldsmith” was spelt.

Whiles demonstrating the spelling of “goldsmith” through the buttocks spelling game, I observed that, although the entire class was having fun, the two students engaged in the game were using their imaginative (critical thinking) skills to be able to spell and get the word correct whereas the rest of the 8 students were also using their imaginative (critical thinking) skills to guess what word will be spelt whenever they wrote each of the alphabet in their individual exercise books. The demonstration of the “Buttocks Spelling Game” by the students has really proven that the play-based approach is enhancing the literacy skills of its beneficiaries.

The pictures below show the students demonstrating some of the games:



Figure 3.6



Figure 3.7

Figure 6: The students taking Felix through (Secret Director), one of the games being use to teach English Language in the classroom. St Monica’s R.C. Primary School at Nyankpala.

Figure 7: Felix checking the results of students after a game called “Bingo Stop”; a game being use to teach spelling in the classroom. St Monica’s R.C. Primary School at Nyankpala.



Figure 3.8

Figure 8: Felix with the students after a focus group discussion. St Monica’s R.C. Primary School at Nyankpala.

Parents were asked whether or not they have observed any change with regards to the literacy skills of the youth in the Tolon community. 5 out of the 7 parents interviewed stated that, they usually see their wards practicing the games at home and signing alongside with the play-based activities. One of the parents stated that, compared to their school days when youth were not able to read or write English Language, many children in the Tolon community are now able to speak, read and write English. According to the last parent, “when it comes to reading and writing, my ward does it at home. But with regards to the use of the play-based activities, because my ward does not have the aides (teaching and learning materials) at home, I hardly see her engaging in the activities at home”.²²⁰

On the question of the contributions of the play-based approach to the literacy of youth within the Tolon community, Mr. Nelson Konlan, the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon Stated that, RTP has designed game manuals which include the literacy game manual and the numeracy game manual. So these two manuals are made up of games that teachers use to teach various language items and various numerical items to students. The game lessons therefore made the learning process to be controlled by the children or to be child centred. “At the end of the lesson, the children learn unconsciously through the games that teachers incorporated in the lesson. This therefore makes learning more facilitative than the usual approach of teaching and learning”.²²¹ This assertion of the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon confirms the assertion of Mrs. Augustina Ayisala, the Project Officer at the head office of Right To Play Ghana.

In addition to his earlier assertions, the planning officer at the Ghana Education Service at Tolon also stated that the play-based approach also improves the critical thinking of the children because sometimes they do not use paper and pen to write during lessons. “As a result, when the games are going on, children, individually, practise addition of numbers in their mind and everyone is usually poised to make sure that he or she does not destroy the fun by missing out on the numbers that he or she is expected to mention”.²²² This therefore improves upon the critical thinking skills of the children whiles engaging in literacy and numeracy based games.

Finally, on the national contribution of the play-based approach to the literacy of youth (15-24 year olds) in Ghana, Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo, the Senior Planning Officer at the Ministry of Education at Accra stated that, as a result of the play-based approach, illiteracy rate in Ghana has reduced since the play-based approach increased accessibility of primary education to enable out of school children (school drop outs) to have another chance of getting back to school.²²³ This

assertion of Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo has therefore confirmed the assertions made by Mr. Farouk Alhassan, the Field Facilitator of RTP Northern Region Programme at Tamale.

Deducing from the responses of the respondents, the play-based approach has contributed significantly to the attainment of each of the 3 indicators set out to measure MDG 2 in Ghana. The responses of the respondents have therefore proven that the play-based approach of Right To Play has made diverse and significant positive contributions to the attainment of MDG 2 in Ghana. This therefore answers the second research question of this study, which seeks to investigate the contribution(s) that the play-based approach of RTP made to the attainment of MDG 2 in Ghana. This also confirms the assertion of the 2015 UNDP MDGs report on Ghana, which points out that non-state actors such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) contributed immensely to the progress made by Ghana in attaining universal primary education.²²⁴

3.2. Potential Contributions of the Play-Based Approach to the Attainment of the SDG 4 in Ghana

According to the United Nations, the SDG 4 is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.”²²⁵ To achieve this goal, the progress of the SDGs is being measured against 10 targets and 11 official indicators.²²⁶ To discuss the contribution(s) that the play-based approach of RTP will make to the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana, the responses of the respondents are analyzed using the targets of SDG 4 themes. The responses are therefore analyzed to find out whether or not the play-based approach will contribute to any of the 10 targets set for the attainment of SDG 4.

“3.2.1. Target 1: By 2030, Ensure that all Girls and Boys Complete Free, Equitable and Quality Primary and Secondary Education Leading to Relevant and Effective Learning Outcomes.”²²⁷

According to Mrs. Augustina Ayisala, the Project Officer at the head office of Right To Play at Accra, currently RTP is implementing a project in all its intervention schools known as the Gender Responsive Education and Transformation (GREAT) project. This project is targeted at ensuring 50:50 Percentage value of gender balance in primary school education.²²⁸ As a result, the teachers who are trained with the play-based approach of RTP are expected to modify the games to provide equal opportunity for both boys and girls to acquire quality education.

To also ensure that all children, regardless of their mental conditions, have access to quality education, RTP has modified its play-based approach and designed lesson modules for children with down-syndrome and autism. Currently, the modified approach for such children is being used in 3 Special Schools for Children with Down-Syndrome and Autism. Two of the specialised schools are located at Dzorwulu and Madina, both in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana and the other Special School located in the Volta Region of Ghana. The assertion of Mrs. Ayisala is evidence that the play-based approach will contribute to the attainment of the 1st target set for SDG 4 in Ghana.

3.2.2. “Target 2: Ensure that all Girls and Boys have Access to Quality Early Childhood Development, Care and Pre-Primary Education so that they are ready for Primary Education By 2030.”²²⁹

According to Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo, the Senior Planning Officer at the Ministry of Education, the play-based approach is predominantly featured in the Early Childhood Education Policy review that is currently on-going to come out with a new curriculum for early childhood education in Ghana (Kindergarten to primary 3).²³⁰ This assertion has been confirmed by Mr. Gao Kwabena, an Education Specialist at the head office of Right to Play (RTP) Ghana who

stated that RTP has assisted the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to set up the indicators for the on-going early childhood education curriculum review in Ghana.²³¹ Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo indicated that the contribution of RTP is being made through some RTP staff who are part of the consultants and stakeholders that are working with the Ministry of Education to develop the new Early Childhood Education Curriculum, especially the Kindergarten Model.²³²

Since the play-based approach will be featured in the early grade educational curriculum of children from the kindergarten level to the lower primary level (primary 3), it is evidence that the play-based approach of RTP will contribute to the attainment of the 2nd target of SDG 4.

3.2.3. “Target 3: Ensure Equal Access for all Women and Men to Affordable and Quality Technical, Vocational and Tertiary Education, including University by 2030.”²³³

None of the responses from the respondents indicate that the play-based approach can contribute to achieving the 3rd target of SDG 4.

3.2.4. “Target 4: Substantially Increase the Number of Youth and Adults who have Relevant Skills, including Technical and Vocational Skills, for Employment, Decent Jobs and Entrepreneurship by 2030.”²³⁴

None of the responses from the respondents indicates that the play-based approach can contribute to achieving the 4th target of SDG 4.

3.2.5. “Target 5: Eliminate Gender Disparities in Education and Ensure Equal Access to all Levels of Education and Vocational Training for the Vulnerable, Including Persons with Disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and Children in Vulnerable Situations by 2030.”²³⁵

According to Mr. Kwarteng Frimpong, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for Right to Play, Ghana, RTP trains teachers to modify the play-based activities to suit children with disability in the classroom. For example, if a child who cannot walk is found in a class where an activity requires students to stand up to throw a ball from one person to the other, the teacher can modify

the approach by telling all the students to sit down while they throw the ball. In doing that, the disabled child who cannot walk can also participate in the play-based activity.²³⁶ “To ensure gender parity in schools, RTP also organises mix-sex tournaments for schools; where girls mix with boys to play games such as football.”²³⁷

In confirmation to the assertion of Mr. Kwarteng, when students, who are the direct beneficiaries of the play-based approach, were asked how the play-based approach can contribute to the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana, Mohammed, a primary six student stated that, the play-based approach is made up of easy games such as action games that students use their hands to play. As a result, although a dumb child cannot talk, he or she can still be educated through the action games by using his or her hands to act during the period of the game.²³⁸

Just like the above respondents, Mr. Fuseni Sayibu (the father of Abdul Ganiwu Sayibu, a basic 2 Pupil at Tolon D/A primary school “A”) also stated that, the play-based approach will promote teaching and learning because, it will solve the problem of neglecting some children. “From my perspective, the situation where students who have disabilities are sent to special schools such as the school for the blind and school for the dumb, is neglecting children with disabilities. But since the Play-based approach can help the cripples, blind, or dumb to be educated in the mainstream schools, the approach will do a lot of good to us in this community”.²³⁹

In confirmation to the assertion of Kwarteng, Mohammed and Sayibu, Mr. Albert Anamoh, the District Director for Department of Social Welfare and Community Development at the Tolon District Assembly stated that, the play-based approach can attract students with disabilities such as cripples to be educated equally with their able counterparts. This is because the classroom games can be modified to suit the condition of children who have disabilities. As a result, “the

play-based approach will ensure inclusion of disabled into the mainstream education and this will increase access to quality education for disabled children”.²⁴⁰ The District Director for the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development also stated that as a result of lack of inclusion in the delivery of quality education within the Tolon community, the district has been featured for a pilot project organized by the UNICEF to ensure inclusive education.²⁴¹

In addition to the above, Mr. Anamoh stated that, as far as the RTP play-based approach is concerned, both children who are fast-learners and those who are slow-learners are given equal opportunities when it comes to the use of the play-based approach. The approach will therefore provide equal opportunity to all learners to develop their individual capabilities. Equitable quality education is therefore ensured in the use of the play-based approach.²⁴²

According Mr. Nelson Konlan, the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon, the Play-based approach does not encourage individualism. “It promotes corporative learning and with corporative learning, two categories of people are found in the class; “we have the boy child and the girl child”.²⁴³ So immediately teachers are doing corporative learning, they are in disguise blending two sex groups to work at the same time; at the same speed; and the same page length”²⁴⁴ in order to have access to quality education. The play-based approach will therefore address the challenge of gender disparity in education.

Also, the head teacher of Tolon DA Primary “B”, Mr. Seidu Fusseni, stated that “judging from the current enrolment rate of my school where we have the number of girls to be higher than boys (Boys are 236 while girls are 250), the play-based approach will consequently address the challenge of gender disparity we have in our community where many females are not educated”.²⁴⁵

To an appreciable extent, the assertions of the above respondents lend credence to the hypothesis of this study that, the play-based approach will help Ghana to attain the SDG 4, specifically, the 5th target of SDG 4.

3.2.6. “Target 6: Ensure that all Youth and a Substantial Proportion of Adults, Both Men and Women, Achieve Literacy and Numeracy by 2030.”²⁴⁶

Deducing from the responses of respondents with regards to the contributions of the play-based approach to the literacy of the youth, the play-based approach will contribute effectively to the attainment of the 6th target of SDG 4 which targets the literacy and numeracy of all youth and substantial proportion of adults (both men and women). This assertion is further confirmed in the response of Mrs. Azaratu Hamid (the mother of Memunatu Hamid a primary 6 Pupil of Tolon D/A “B” primary school) during a personal interview session with her. According to Mrs. Hamid, “the play-based approach will help the SDGs to make headway. Headway in the sense that, the play-based activities even serve as aid to us the parents in educating us since we learn from our children at home and also through the outdoor play-based activities of community coaches”.²⁴⁷ The response of Mrs. Hamid therefore shows that the play-based approach will help substantial proportion of adults to achieve literacy and numeracy.

3.2.7. “Target 7: Ensure that all Learners Acquire the Knowledge and Skills Needed to Promote Sustainable Development, Including, among others, through Education for Sustainable Development And Sustainable Lifestyles, Human Rights, Gender Equality, Promotion of a Culture of Peace And Non-Violence, Global Citizenship And Appreciation of Cultural Diversity And Of Culture’s Contribution to Sustainable Development by 2030.”²⁴⁸

According to Mr. Nelson Konlan, the Assistant Director in charge of planning at the Ghana Education Office at Tolon, through the outdoor games that the community coaches use to educate the youth in the community, the play-based approach promotes lifelong learning

opportunities for the youth. “For example, a child or a youth who has skills and interest in any type of sports can be helped to develop such skills at a tender age till the time that he or she decides to be a footballer, volley ball player, among others”.²⁴⁹ The play-based approach will therefore help the youth to develop and pursue sustainable skills or careers from a tender age

In addition to the above, Mr. Samuel Oppong, the Team Leader of RTP Northern Program, stated that the play-based approach is designed to impart skills that will remain with the beneficiaries until their death. This is because the play-based approach does not only impact its beneficiary’s with knowledge but also impacts them with skills and behavioural change attitudes. As a result, the play-based approach enables children to be taught with a practical approach. For example, when students are engaged in washing their hands through a game like “Germs against Soap” in teaching a topic like hygiene, the behavioural attitude of washing hands (which is learn through the game) is going to remain with the students forever. The students will therefore remember to always wash their hands to avoid contact with germs.²⁵⁰

The responses of Mr. Oppong and Mr. Konlan are evidence that the play-based approach will contribute to the attainment of the 7th target of SDG 4.

3.2.8. “Target 8: Build and Upgrade Education Facilities that are Child, Disability and Gender Sensitive and Provide Safe, Non-Violent, inclusive and Effective Learning Environments for all by 2030.”²⁵¹

None of the responses from the respondents indicates that the play-based approach can contribute to achieving the 8th target of SDG 4.

3.2.9. “Target 9: Substantially Expand Globally the Number Of Scholarships Available To Developing Countries, in Particular Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States And African Countries, for Enrolment in Higher Education, Including Vocational Training And Information And Communications Technology, Technical, Engineering and Scientific Programmes, in Developed Countries and other Developing Countries by 2030.”²⁵²

None of the responses from the respondents indicates that the play-based approach can contribute to achieving the 9th target of SDG 4.

3.2.10. “Target 10: Substantially Increase the Supply of Qualified Teachers, Including Through International Cooperation for Teacher Training In Developing Countries, Especially Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States by 2030.”²⁵³

None of the responses from the respondents indicates that the play-based approach can contribute to achieving the 10th target of SDG 4.

As discussed above, the responses of the respondents have proven that the play-based approach of RTP will contribute significantly to the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana. Specifically, the responses of the respondents show that the play-based approach will contribute to the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th targets that are set for the attainment of SDG 4. The analysis of the responses of the respondents therefore lend credence to the hypothesis of this study that, the play-based approach used by the Right To Play in educating students will contribute positively towards the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana.

3.3. The Successes of RTP in the Use of Play-Based Approach in the Promotion of Quality Education in Ghana.

Through the use of the play-based approach or methodology, RTP has achieved some successes as far as its efforts to promote quality education in Ghana are concerned. The successes of RTP are outlined below:

To start with, RTP had introduced its play-based approach to schools within 54 Districts which are located across all the ten regions of Ghana. This means that play-based approach is being use in at least one school across the ten regions in Ghana.²⁵⁴ Consequently, many people located in the different regions of Ghana will become aware of the play-based approach.

Secondly, the Teacher Network established in all the 54 districts of operation of RTP serves as a sustainability mechanism for the continuation of the play-based approach in Ghana even if RTP ceases to operate in Ghana. The teacher networks refers to an association made up of teachers who are trained with the play-based approach of RTP who are joined together to discuss issues among themselves and help each other to solve specific challenges on how to integrate games in achieving curriculum objectives in the classroom. Since these teachers already know the play-based approach, they can implement it anywhere and help students across Ghana to benefit from the advantage of the play-based approach.

Another major success of RTP, which also guaranteed the sustainability of the use of play-based approach in Ghana, is the training of some Staff of Ghana Education Service Directorates as well as Circuit Supervisors in all the 54 RTP districts of operations with the play-based methodology. “The main purpose of training the GES officials and circuit supervisors is for the education directorates in the districts to be able to train other teachers, who are not trained by RTP, with the play-based methodology”.²⁵⁵

Apart from training teachers and GES officials, RTP has also trained 32 early childhood College of Education Tutors at the 8 Colleges of Education in Ghana offering early childhood education. These 8 colleges include St Theresa College of Education at Hohoe; St Louis College at Kumasi; Jasikan College of Education at Jasikan; Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) College of Education at

Cape coast; Holy Child College of Education at Takoradi; Presbyterian Women's College of Education at Aburi; SDA College of Education at Asokore-Koforidua; and Nusrat Jahan College of Education at Wa.²⁵⁶

In addition to the above, another significant achievement of RTP is the advocacy leading to the integration of the Play-Based approach into two educational curriculums in Ghana. According to Mr. Ernest Wesley-Otoo, the Senior Planning Officer at the Ministry of Education at Accra, RTP is taking an active part in the on-going processes leading to the drawing of a new policy for early grade (Kindergarten to primary 3) education in Ghana and help Ghana to set up the indicators for the early childhood education curriculum.²⁵⁷ Also, RTP is part of the stakeholders who are drawing a new "Diploma in Basic Education Curriculum for the Colleges of Education" for Ghanaian Teacher Training Colleges or Colleges of Education (soon to be called University Colleges of Education starting in September 2018).²⁵⁸ As a result, the play-based approach will be used to train teachers so that teachers from the colleges of education will be equipped with the play-based approach before coming out from the colleges.

In terms of partnerships, RTP has successfully partnered with UNICEF to implement a programme dubbed the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programme. Through this programme, RTP and UNICEF have influenced the hygienic behaviour of children with the use of play-based activities in some Ghanaian communities, including communities in the Northern Region. RTP also partners with the Regional Advisory Information and Network Systems (RAINS), a Ghanaian registered NGO, to do advocacy on child education issues in the Northern Region of Ghana. Apart from RAINS, RTP also partners with other NGOs that constitute the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) and Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC).

Focusing specifically on the successes of RTP in the Northern Region of Ghana, RTP, through its enrolment drive initiative has made massive impact in enrolment of students in the Northern region of Ghana. The play-based approach has made it possible for significant numbers of children from traditionally hard-to-reach groups (such as boys engaged in cattle rearing and children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups) to be enrolled in schools. The play-based approach is therefore a solution to the major challenge identified in the 2015 MDG report jointly prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Union, Africa Development Bank and UNDP Africa which stated that one of the causes of the poor quality of education within the specific regions of Africa is the lack of relevant curricula to meet the needs of traditionally hard-to-reach groups.²⁵⁹ In confirmation of the above assertion, Mr. Samuel Opong, the Team Leader of RTP Northern Region Program for example stated that, “many children in the Northern Region have developed interest in schools and they no longer absent themselves from school”.²⁶⁰

In addition to the above achievements, gender disparity in education have been significantly address through the use of the approach in schools and communities in the Northern Region of Ghana. In the Northern part of Ghana, many people are deep rooted in culture and religion whereby women are not expected to do things that men do. For example, “in some of the schools, students still have siting arrangements where boys and girls sit in separate rows”²⁶¹. But the play-based approach encourages both boys and girls to work together in teams so as to achieve results in the classroom. The approach therefore enables girls to be very assertive and confidence in challenging the status quo in the Northern Region.

Apart from the issue of gender disparity, RTP has promoted the Right of Children in the Northern Region of Ghana through the play-based approach. The play-based approach achieved

this through the use of positive disciplinary approaches in correcting students. RTP frowns on the use of corporal punishment to discipline students and as a result, all teachers who were trained with the play-based approach signed a bond not to use corporal punishment in their schools. Explaining the relevance of this achievement, Mr. Samuel Oppong, the Team Leader of RTP Northern Program stated that discipline is something that helps someone to learn from a mistake by correcting his or her wrong. But punishment is inflicting pain or discomfort on someone for doing something wrong. For example, “caning a student when he or she gets 2+2 to be 3 instead of 4, does not help the student to know the correct answer. It can be that the student is even hungry and that is why he or she is not concentrating in class”.²⁶² Instead of caning or insulting such a student, RTP trained-teachers signed a bond not to use canes or insults to correct students. However, in the example cited above, the teacher tries to use soft communication skills to know the cause of the child’s inability in getting the correct answer. “Some of the causes can even be instability at home. So a teacher can get in touch with parents so they both help the child. Through these types of soft skills, the child is helped to get the understanding and also correct his or her wrongs”.²⁶³

Lastly, on the achievements, on Monday 25th June, 2018, RTP had distributed 100 metal desks to some schools in the Northern Region to reduce the infrastructural challenges in the schools.²⁶⁴

3.4. The Challenges of RTP in the use of Play-Based Approach in the Promotion of Quality Education in Ghana

Although RTP has achieved successes in the use of the play-based approach in Ghana, RTP also faces certain challenges in the use of the play-based approach in educating students. These challenges are outlined as follows:

To start with, the officials of the Ministry of Education and GES were first resistant to accept the use of the approach in Ghanaian schools.²⁶⁵ “They usually ask questions such as: what is play and how does play support teaching and learning in the classroom?”²⁶⁶ Nevertheless RTP overcame this challenge in some districts by sending the GES officials to some schools to see how the teachers are using the approach in the classroom to improve teaching and learning.

Further, the attitude of some teachers is a challenge to the use of the play-based approach. While some teachers are willing and happy to use the approach others are not willing to change from the rote method of teaching after they have accepted and agreed for RTP to train them with the play-based approach. According to Mr. Farouk Alhassan, the Field Facilitator of RTP Northern Region Program, RTP Staff “have to follow up on numerous occasions before some teachers start using the approach”.²⁶⁷

Another challenge of RTP is the change in political tenure of officers in the Ghanaian ministries that RTP work with. This is limiting the integration of the play-based approach into the complete primary school education curriculum in Ghana as was done in Rwanda by President Paul Kagame.²⁶⁸ For example, when RTP starts a policy change agreement with a Minister of Education during the tenure of National Democratic Congress-led government and the New Patriotic Party-led government comes into power and the Minister of Education and Chief Directors are changed, RTP has to start the agreement process all over again with the new administration. This therefore delays integration of the play-based approach into the Ghanaian education curriculum.

Specifically on the Northern Region, a major challenge of RTP in using the play-based approach to promote quality education in the region is the unavailability of accommodation for teachers;

closer to the schools in which they teach. Some teachers reside at Tamale, the regional capital. As a result, they are usually late in reporting to the schools located in the studied communities. This results in some class hours going waste and does not encourage effective implementation of the play-based approach.

Added to the above challenge is the issue of unfriendly nature of some of the classroom for effective teaching and learning. Some of the classrooms are not child friendly and disability friendly. Some schools also have large class sizes with only a teacher. Mr. Farouk Alhassan, the Field Facilitator of RTP Northern Region Program, for instance stated that “In this part of the country, classrooms are not available; we still have what is known as “schools under trees” in some of the communities”.²⁶⁹ These conditions therefore serve as a constraint to efficient use of the play-based approach in schools.

In addition to the above challenges, teaching and learning materials and other infrastructure such as desks are very inadequate in some of the schools in the Northern Region. According to Mr. Samuel Oppong, the Team Leader of RTP Northern Program for instance, “a school of an enrolment of about 240 students has only 18 desks from primary one to primary 6”.²⁷⁰ The inadequacy of infrastructure in the schools therefore limits the impact that the play-based approach should have on education output of primary schools in the Northern Region.

Lastly, there are a lot of requests for RTP to expand their play-based approach and other activities to many districts and other schools. However, Mr. Gao Kwabena, the Education Specialist at the head office of Right to Play (RTP), stated that RTP is limited by funds since RTP activities are donor driven.

3.5. Challenges of the Study

The first challenge that this study identified is the unavailability of adequate data in all the schools that were studied. As illustrated in figures 1 and 2, although the study sought for enrolment data from 2007/08 academic year to the current 2017/2018 academic year, all the schools which were studied could not provide their enrolment data from 2007/08 academic year. The head teachers explained that, their predecessors misplaced some of the records and as a result, they do not have records of the enrolment for some of the academic years.

Another challenge of this study is unavailability of 2 other non-RTP schools to be studied. Although the study sought to get responses from 3 non-RTP intervention schools, only one non RTP school was available to be studied. There were only two non-RTP schools located within communities closer to the RTP communities studied. However, both teachers and students did not report to school in one of the non-RTP schools during the period that I went to the Northern Region to study the communities. As a result, the head teacher and another class teacher of Chanayin AME Zion primary school at Chanayin were the only people interviewed as respondents for schools that are not using the RTP play-based approach.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter examined the contributions of the play-based approach of RTP towards the achievement of MDG 2 in Ghana; the potential contributions of the play-based approach to the attainment of some specific targets of SDG 4 in Ghana and finally the successes and challenges of RTP in the use of play-based approach in educating students in Ghana. This chapter therefore answered the second, third and fourth research questions of this study and also achieved the second, third and fourth objectives of the study.

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CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses summary of the research finding and states the conclusion of the study. Based on the research findings and conclusion, this chapter also makes some recommendations to the study.

4.1 Summary of Findings

The responses from the 30 respondents interviewed in this study reveals that, the play-based approach of RTP used in educating students has contributed significantly towards the attainment of MDG 2 in Ghana. Specifically in the communities studied within the Northern Region of Ghana, the play-based approach contributed to the attainment of the 1st and 3rd indicators of MDG 2, which respectively measured the enrolment rate of students and the literacy rate of youth within the ages of 15-24 years.

Secondly, the enrolment statistics in the RTP interventions schools, as illustrated in figure 1, show that more girls are enrolled in school in RTP interventions communities compared to their male counterparts.

Furthermore, this study reveals that, the play-based approach of RTP will contribute significantly to the attainment of SDG 4 in Ghana. Specifically, the play-based approach will facilitate the achievements of the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th targets set for the achievement of SDG 4. The objective of the play-based approach is to promote inclusive and equitable quality education by enhancing the literacy and numeracy competence of students and youth. The approach also aims

at ensuring peaceful and just societies. These objectives will not directly contribute towards the achievement of the 3rd, 4th, 8th, 9th and 10th targets of SGD 4. However, the objectives will contribute directly towards the achievement of the 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 7th targets set for SDG 4. This finding therefore lend credence to the hypothesis of this study that, the play-based approach used by the Right To Play in educating students will contribute positively towards the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana.

In addition to the above, the responses of the respondents reveal that the play-based approach will not only contribute to the attainment of SDGs in Ghana, but will also contribute significantly towards the attainment of SDGs 5, 10 and 16 which respectively seek to:

“Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;”

“Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries;”

“Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.”

The play-based approach will contribute to the SDG 5 because of its focus on encouraging girls to study, work and get results in teams together with their male counterparts. The enrolment of the schools studied, as illustrated in figure 1, also indicates that, in schools in which the play-based approach is being use, there are more girls enrolled compared to their male counterparts. This shows that more girls, in the communities studied, are empowered to go to school through the play-based approach. The approach is therefore contributing to the achievement of SDG 5 in Ghana.

The play-based approach will also contribute to SDG 10 because it is a solution to the problem of regional disparities in the access to quality education in Ghana. According to the UNDP office in Ghana, rural areas in the Northern Region and rural areas in other parts of Ghana are the most affected with the problem of inequality in access to quality to education. Since RTP focuses their

interventions on schools in rural areas across Ghana, including rural areas in the Northern Region, some students in the rural areas that RTP operates will have access to inclusive and equitable quality education through the use of the play-based approach. Consequently, the play-based approach will help Ghana to resolve the challenge of inequality in access to quality education and quality education outcomes.

In addition to SDGs 5 and 10, the play-based approach will contribute to SDG 16 because the approach is not only limited to enhancing the literacy and numeracy of the youth. It is also designed to give the youth life skills such as assertiveness, discipline, team work as well as the ability to use the values of team work in ensuring peace building in their communities.

Apart from the above findings, the study also found out that the problem of disparity or inequality in quality education outcomes between the Northern Region and other regions situated in the southern part of Ghana is partly as a result of the importance attached to formal education by the people at the southern part of Ghana. Compared to those in Southern Ghana, whereas some residents of the Northern Region see education as a tool for development and are benefitting from it as such, other people in the Northern Region do not attach the importance needed to formal education. As a result, they prefer to engage their wards in traditional trades (such as dress making) and farming practices (such as cattle rearing or crop farming). This therefore deprives the Northern Region of the maximum quality educational outcomes that it should have despite the numerous interventions that NGO's have in the region.

Finally, this study also reveals that the play-based approach of RTP is a solution to one of the root causes of the poor quality of education in Africa which is identified in the 2015 Africa MDG report (jointly prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Union, Africa Development Bank and UNDP in Africa) to be the lack of relevant curricula to

meet the needs of children from typically difficult-to-reach groups which include children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups; children with disabilities; and children of nomadic people.

4.2. Conclusions of the Study

This research studies the contributions that the play-based approach, used by RTP in educating students, made to the attainment of the indicators of MDG 2 (enrolment, completion and literacy rates of students) in Ghanaian basic schools; particularly basic schools in the Northern Region of Ghana. The study also examines how the play-based approach will facilitate the attainment of SDG 4 that seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 in Ghana.

The research is a case study and it adopts a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interview guides to collect the requisite data from the target population.

The findings of the study reveal that, the play-based approach has contributed significantly to the attainment of the 1st and 3rd indicators of MDG 2. The play-based approach will also make positive contributions towards the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th targets set for the achievement of SDG 4 in Ghana.

This study therefore brings out the significance of the play-based approach in facilitating the enrollment, retention, completion rates of students as well as improving the literacy and numeracy of youth in order to enhance them with lifelong skills and experience. In addition, as a result of its findings, this study is also an addition to the existing literature on the pedagogy of basic schools in Ghana.

4.3. Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the recommendations of the study are as follows:

To start with, since the play-based contributed appreciably to the achievement of MDG 2 and it is also currently contributing the attainment of SDG 4, it is important for the Ghanaian Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service to integrate the play-based approach into the complete curriculum of basic schools (KG to primary 6) as it was done in Rwanda. This will make it possible for many children from traditionally hard-to-reach groups (such as nomadic people, persons with disabilities, and children from disadvantaged economic and ethnic groups) within the rural areas of the Northern Region and other rural areas in Ghana to have access to quality education.

Secondly, the Ghanaian Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should enforce rules and regulations that will hold head teachers accountable to keep enrolment data and other statistics about their schools through the existence of the schools. This is particular important since up-to-date data is a necessity in measuring the progress that Ghana is making in achieving international goals such the SDGs, Africa Agenda 2063 as well as Ghanaian National Developmental Goals.

To add to the above, the Ya Naa who is the traditional leader (the overlord) of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA), including the Tolon District Assembly, should consistently advise the residents of TaMA about the need and importance of formal education. With the interventions of the numerous education-oriented NGOs which operate in the TaMA, the Metropolis is likely to have maximum outcome, in terms of quality education, if all of its residents accord much importance to formal education.

In addition, other NGOs that constitute the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) should joint their resources together to implement the play-based approach in many

rural areas of Ghana since the play-based approach have proven to meet the inclusive and equitable quality educational needs of children, particularly in rural areas of Ghana.

Finally, NGO donors in Ghana and across the globe as well as donor agencies across the globe should channel their resources to support the play-based approach of RTP since there are numerous demands on RTP in Ghana to expand their interventions to other districts and schools but RTP is limited in terms of funds.

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FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH 10 STUDENTS OF ST MONICA’S R/C SCHOOL AT NYANKPALA:

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

TRANSITION FROM MDG 2 TO SDG 4: A STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE 'RIGHT TO PLAY' IN PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION IN GHANA

My name is Felix Yao Amenorhu. I am an MA Student from the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana. I am conducting a research on the above topic for the purposes of my dissertation. Kindly assist me by providing your responses to each question. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for academic research purposes only. No particular individual(s) or address will be identified in the results. Kindly respond as sincerely as possible. Thank you for your assistance. I am very grateful.

INTERVIEW GUIDE: STAFF OF RIGHT TO PLAY, GHANA

Office/ Position of respondent:

Number of years at post:

Objective 1. Find out what the play-based approach to education used by RTP is all about.

1. What is the play-based approach to education?
2. Why do you choose to use a play-based approach in educating students compared to the usual approach use in educating students in Ghana?
3. Can you please tell me how different the play-based approach is from the usual approach use in educating students in Ghana?
4. What steps are involved in using the approach in the classroom?

Objective 2. Find out the impact of the play-based approach on enrolment, retention, completion rate of students and the literacy rate of youth who are 15-24 year-olds (indicators of MDG 2).

5. How did the use of the play-based approach impacted on education outcomes? Can you please specify those education outcomes (if any)?
6. How did the play-based approach affect the enrolment of students in RTP intervention schools?
7. How did the play-based approach affect the retention of students in RTP intervention schools?
8. How did the play-based approach affect the completion rate of students in RTP intervention schools?
9. How did the play-based approach affect the literacy rate of youth (15-24 year-olds) in RTP intervention communities?

Objective 3. Assess/ascertain the impact that the play-based approach will have on SDG 4.

10. According to the UNDP, the new global target for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how will the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
11. How exactly?

Objective 4. Identify some key successes and challenges that have been encountered in the use of the play-based approach in educating students.

12. What are some main achievements of using the play-based approach in educating students?
13. Which partners did RTP work with in the use of the play-based approach and how did RTP work with such partners (if any)
14. What are some main challenges of using the play-based approach in educating students?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GHANA

Office/ Position of respondent:

Number of years at post:

1. Right To play, an NGO, which is the case study of my dissertation uses play (play-based approach) in educating students in Ghana. Please what do you know about this play-based approach to education?
2. In your opinion, how different is the play-based approach from the usual approach use in educating students in Ghana?
3. Which mechanism(s) do you have to monitor NGOs which contribute to the education sector in Ghana?
4. In your opinion, how did the use of the play-based approach impacted on education outcomes? Can you please specify those education outcomes (if any)?
5. How did the play-based approach affect the enrolment rate of students in your district?
6. How did the play-based approach affect the retention rate of students in your district?
7. How did the play-based approach affect the completion rate of students in your district?
8. How did the play-based approach affect the literacy rate of youth (15-24 year-olds) in your district?
9. According to the UNDP, the new global target for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how will the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
10. How exactly (with regards to question 9)?
11. What, in your opinion, is / are the achievement(s) of using the play-based approach in educating students in Ghana?
12. What, in your opinion, is / are some main challenge(s) of using the play-based approach in educating students in Ghana?

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW GUIDE: STUDENTS IN RTP INTERVENTION SCHOOLS

Class/ Stage of respondent:

Age of respondent:

Number of years in school (Class of student):

1. What do you know about the play-based approach that RTP uses in your school?
2. Can you please tell me how different the play-based approach is from the usual approach use for educating students in Ghana?
3. What benefits do you think a school can get from the use of the play-based approach in teaching you? Can you please specify those benefits (if any)?
4. Did the play-based approach influence you in coming to this school (enrolment)?
5. If you have the opportunity, will you leave this school to another school that does not use the play-based approach (retention)? Why?
6. Will you complete your basic education in this school (completion rate)? Is it because of the play-based approach?
7. How does the play-based approach affect the way you read and write (literacy rate)?
8. According to the UNDP, the new global target for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how will the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
9. How exactly?
10. What are the things you achieved in your studies through the play-based approach which you could not have achieved using the usual approach to education?
11. Do you find it difficult in understanding lessons taught using the play-based approach? Why?

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW GUIDE: HEAD TEACHERS IN RTP INTERVENTION SCHOOLS

Office/ Position of respondent:

Number of years at post:

1. What is the play-based approach to education?
2. Why did you adopt the use of the play-based approach in educating students in your school?
3. Can you please tell me how different the play-based approach is from the usual approach use in educating students in Ghana?
4. What steps are involved in using the approach in the classroom?
5. How did the use of the play-based approach impacted on education outcomes in your school? Can you please specify those education outcomes (if any)?
6. How did the play-based approach affect the enrolment of students in your school? Can you please specify with figures?
7. How did the play-based approach affect the retention of students in your school Can you please specify with figures?
8. How did the play-based approach affect the completion rate of students in your school? Can you please specify with figures?
9. How did the play-based approach affect the literacy rate of youth (15-24 year-olds) in this community? Can you please specify with figures?
10. According to the UNDP, the new global target set for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how will the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
11. How exactly?
12. What are some main achievements of using the play-based approach in educating students?
13. What are some main challenges of using the play-based approach in educating students?

APPENDIX V

INTERVIEW GUIDE: HEAD TEACHER(S) IN NON-RTP INTERVENTION SCHOOLS

Office/ Position of respondent:

Number of years at post:

1. Right To play, an NGO, which is the case study of my dissertation, uses a play-based approach in educating students in Ghana. Please what do you know about this play-based approach to education?
2. Why do you not adopt the play-based approach in your school?
3. In your opinion, how different is the play-based approach from the usual approach use in educating students in your school?
4. In your opinion, how can the use of the play-based approach have impact on education outcomes? Can you please specify those education outcomes (if any)?
5. What is the trend of enrolment of students in your school from 2001 to date? Can you please specify with figures?
6. What is the trend of retention of students in your school from 2001 to date? Can you please specify with figures?
7. What is the completion rate of students in your school from 2001 to date? Can you please specify with figures?
8. What is the literacy rate of students in you school, specifically within the ages of 15-24 year-olds? Can you please specify with figures?
9. According to the UNDP, the new global target for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how can the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
10. How exactly?
11. What, in your opinion, is / are the achievement(s) of using the play-based approach in educating students?
12. What, in your opinion, is / are some main challenge(s) of using the play-based approach in educating students?

APPENDIX VI

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARENTS IN RTP INTERVENTION COMMUNITIES

Class/ Stage of respondent:

Age of respondent:

1. What do you know about the play-based approach that RTP uses in your school?
2. Can you please tell me how different the play-based approach is from the usual approach use for educating students in Ghana?
3. What benefits do you get from the use of the play-based approach in this community? Can you please specify those benefits (if any)?
4. Did the play-based approach influence you in sending your child to school (enrolment)?
5. If your ward wants to leave his or current play-based approach school to a non-play-based approach school, will you agree? (retention)? Why?
6. Will your complete his or her basic education in this school (completion rate)? Is it because of the play-based approach?
7. How does the play-based approach affect the way the youth read and write in this community (literacy rate)?
8. According to the UNDP, the new global target for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how will the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
9. How exactly?
10. What are the things you achieved through the use of the play-based approach in this community?
11. Is there any challenge associated with the play-based approach?

APPENDIX VII

INTERVIEW GUIDE: GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE AND DISTRICT ASSEMBLY AT TOLON.

Office/ Position of respondent:

Number of years at post:

1. Right To play, an NGO, which is the case study of my dissertation uses play (play-based approach) in educating students in Ghana. Please what do you know about this play-based approach to education?
2. In your opinion, how different is the play-based approach from the usual approach use in educating students in Ghana?
3. Which mechanism(s) do you have to monitor NGOs which contribute to the education sector in Ghana?
4. In your opinion, how did the use of the play-based approach impacted on education outcomes? Can you please specify those education outcomes (if any)?
5. How did the play-based approach affect the enrolment rate of students in your district?
6. How did the play-based approach affect the retention rate of students in your district?
7. How did the play-based approach affect the completion rate of students in your district?
8. How did the play-based approach affect the literacy rate of youth (15-24 year-olds) in your district?
9. According to the UNDP, the new global target for the education sector is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (SDG 4). In your opinion, how will the play-based approach contribute to the attainment of this target in Ghana?
10. How exactly (with regards to question 9)?
11. What, in your opinion, is / are the achievement(s) of using the play-based approach in educating students in Ghana?
12. What, in your opinion, is / are some main challenge(s) of using the play-based approach in educating students in Ghana?