

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

LOCALIZING AU's AGENDA 2063; AN ASSESSMENT OF GHANA'S SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME.

BY

NANA YAA AMPONSAH-DAPAAH

(22008871)

**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY
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DECLARATION

I, Nana Yaa Amponsah-Dapaah, affirm that this dissertation represents the culmination of my independent research, conducted under the guidance of Dr. Emmanuel Yeboah-Assiamah at the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana, as part of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts (MA) degree in International Studies. I also confirm that this dissertation has not been submitted, either in part or in full, for any other degree program.



.....

NANA YAA AMPONSAH-DAPAAH

(STUDENT)

DATE: 1ST MAY, 2025



DR. EMMANUEL YEBOAH - ASSIAMAH

(SUPERVISOR)

DATE: 1ST MAY, 2025



DEDICATION

To my parents, Rev. & Mrs Addai – Dapaah. You're the wind beneath my wings.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the almighty God for His grace and mercies that has brought me this far.

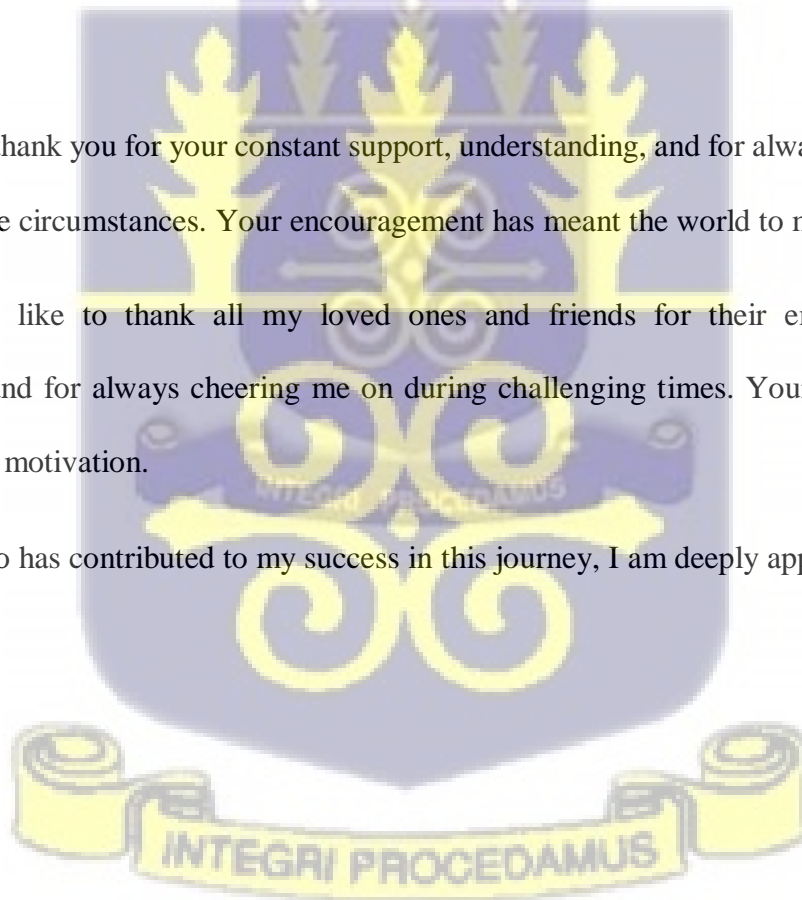
I extend my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Emmanuel Yeboah-Assiamah, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and encouragement. His expertise and constructive feedback have been essential in shaping this work and pushing me to achieve my best.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA2063	-	African Agenda 2063
AAT	-	African Agency Theory
AfCFTA	-	African Continental Free Trade Area
AU	-	African Union
BMI	-	Body Mass Index
CAADP	-	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
CESA	-	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CSO	-	Civil Society Organizations
DA	-	District Assembly
DDO	-	District Desk Officer
DESA	-	Department of Economic Social Affairs
DIC	-	District Implementation Committees
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
EU	-	European Union
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCUBE	-	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GES	-	Ghana Education Service
GES	-	Ghana Education Service
GNHR	-	Ghana National Household Register
GSFP	-	Ghana School Feeding Programme
HGSFP	-	Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
IGO	-	Inter Governmental Organization
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
IMC	-	Inter-Ministerial Committee
IOs	-	International Organizations
IR	-	International Relation



LEAP	-	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty
MDA	-	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MGCSP	-	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
NEPAD	-	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NDPC	-	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NHIS	-	National Health Insurance Scheme
OAU	-	Organisation of African Union
ODA	-	Official Development Assistance
OOSC	-	Out of School Children
PIDA	-	Programme for Infrastructural Development in Africa
PSC	-	Program Steering Committee
RCO	-	Regional Coordination Offices
RCC	-	Regional Coordinating Council
RDA	-	Recommended Daily Allowance
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SFP	-	School Feeding Programme
TVET	-	Tertiary Vocational Education and Training
UN	-	United Nations
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	-	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Fund
WFP	-	World Food Programme
WHO	-	World Health Organization
WTO	-	World Trade Organization

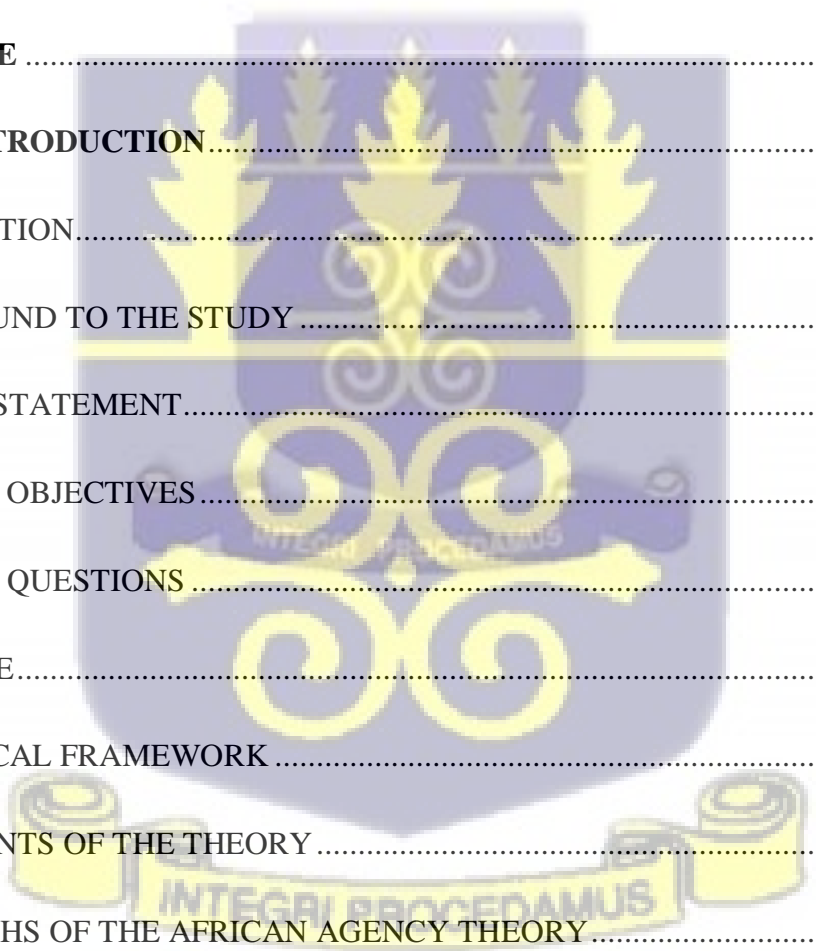
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the localization of Africa's Agenda 2063, focusing specifically on Ghana's School Feeding Programme (SFP) as a mechanism to enhance education. Africa's Agenda 2063, a strategic framework for the continent's development, emphasizes education as a key pillar for achieving sustainable growth and socio-economic transformation. Ghana, through its School Feeding Programme, has aligned its national efforts with this regional agenda by seeking to improve educational outcomes, particularly in the areas of student retention, attendance, and performance. The primary objectives of this study are to evaluate the monitoring mechanisms in place for the School Feeding Programme, assess the challenges encountered during its implementation, and examine its impact on the educational experience of children, especially in rural and underserved areas. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data from interviews with key stakeholders including education officials, teachers, and beneficiaries with quantitative data from existing programme reports and assessments. The findings of the study reveal that while Ghana's SFP has contributed positively to improving student attendance and reducing absenteeism, it faces significant challenges in terms of funding, logistical coordination, and inconsistent monitoring. These challenges hinder its full potential to contribute effectively to education improvement. The research further highlights that the programme has provided nutritional support that is crucial for students' physical well-being, which in turn has had a positive impact on their concentration and academic performance. However, gaps in implementation, including insufficient oversight and the lack of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, limit the long-term effectiveness of the programme. Additionally, the study discusses the broader implications of the School Feeding Programme in the context of the African Union's Agenda 2063, exploring how Ghana's approach can be further optimized to better align with regional development goals. Recommendations include strengthening the monitoring systems, increasing community involvement in the programme's execution, securing consistent funding, and expanding the reach of the programme to more regions across the country. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the localization of Africa's Agenda 2063 by offering a detailed case study of Ghana's SFP and its role in enhancing educational outcomes. The insights provided by this research offer valuable lessons for policymakers and practitioners seeking to strengthen educational initiatives across the continent, as well as improve the alignment of national strategies with the broader goals of regional development.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

As an essential social intervention, school feeding has gained attention for its potential to address child hunger and promote education, particularly in low-income communities. The following sections provide a detailed background of the study, outline the problem statement, present the key research objectives, and describe the research design employed to investigate the programme's effectiveness and challenges.

1.1 Background to the study

School feeding initiatives, like the Home-Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP), play a vital role in supporting education, health, and food security in disadvantaged communities. By sourcing food from local farmers, HGSFP not only ensures children receive regular meals but also boosts local agriculture, creating a sustainable cycle of development. These programs directly contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 (Zero Hunger) by combating malnutrition and SDG 4 (Quality Education) by improving school attendance and learning outcomes (Singh & Fernandes, 2018).

In regions such as Africa and Latin America, these programs have been successful in increasing enrolment, reducing absenteeism, and improving household food stability. However, critics highlight that while the SDGs provide a global framework for progress, they often fail to address underlying structural issues, such as economic disparities and historical inequalities, that

disproportionately impact African nations (World Food Programme, 2024). These challenges include unfair trade practices, limited access to resources, and systemic inequities rooted in historical power dynamics.

To ensure long-term success and equity, programs like HGSFP must be paired with broader reforms addressing these systemic barriers. By focusing on local empowerment, fair resource distribution, and international cooperation, stakeholders can help create more inclusive and sustainable progress toward the SDGs (School Meals Coalition, 2024). Despite discourses emphasizing the necessity of localizing development and redistributing power to local actors, decision-making frequently remains centralized in the Global North, therefore embedding projects in Western ideals and perpetuating the devaluation or neglect of local expertise (Jonsson & Bexell, 2021).

The African Union in 2013 had an intention to establish their own national and regional development priorities. A series of development objectives aimed at the continent over an extended period via the creation of the African Agenda 2063(AA2063). An agenda for development that spans fifty years and began in 2013, with the intention of being accomplished by successive implementation plans that span ten years ever. According to the African Union (2015), AA2063 promotes itself as the "continent's shared strategic framework" for achieving sustainable and equitable growth. The document outlines several initiatives led by the African Union (AU) to promote development and integration across Africa. These include the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty, the Minimum Integration Programme, the Programme for Infrastructural Development in Africa (PIDA), the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme

(CAADP), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and various regional and national strategies. Together, these initiatives aim to address challenges and leverage opportunities to drive growth and transformation on the continent.

Additionally, the program of the AA2063 is modifiable, and each nation is urged to customize the aims in such a way that they are compatible with a national and regional agenda. This is done with the primary intention of encouraging countries to establish objectives that are attainable in the short term so that these targets may be measured and evaluated according to their effectiveness.

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) was launched in 2005 as part of a broader strategy for social protection, specifically within the framework of CAADP Pillar 3 and in alignment with eradicating poverty and hunger and achieving universal education for all. The program aims to address issues of hunger and improve education outcomes by providing meals to students, thus contributing to both food security and quality education. Through this initiative, Ghana sought to support vulnerable populations, enhance school attendance, and stimulate local agricultural economies by sourcing food locally. This was done in order to ensure that education was provided to all students in Ghana. Ghana's mobilization through social protection policies also falls in line with the AA2063 Goal 2 which seeks for "well educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation" (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection).

School feeding programs serve as an effective tool for improving child nutrition, boosting school enrolment and retention rates, and addressing hygiene challenges (Agyemang & Agyem, 2020).

These initiatives ensure that children receive regular, nutritious meals, which not only enhance their health and cognitive development but also encourage consistent school attendance. By integrating hygiene education and practices, such programs further contribute to the overall well-

being of students. Furthermore, it has resulted in the creation of opportunities for the generation of money, job opportunities, and economic advantages for the societies in which it has been implemented (Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, 2017).

At the 2016 regular session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the assembly acknowledged the significance of HGSF by adopting resolution AU Assembly (589 XXVI) on HGSF and proclaimed the African Day of School Feeding (ADSF) to be observed annually on March 1st. Prior to this, the AU Assembly had requested a study of the contribution of school feeding to inclusive and quality education within the African Union, as well as its facilitation of progress across other sectors, including nutrition and health, agriculture and local development. It was acknowledged that school feeding is a significant tool for supporting fair growth in education, particularly for populations who are economically disadvantaged, socially marginalized and economically disadvantaged.

This study examined the impact of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) on educational outcomes, particularly in relation to school enrolment, attendance, and retention among basic school pupils. By evaluating how the provision of free meals in schools' influences students' participation and performance, the research aims to assess the effectiveness of the GSFP as a social intervention. Furthermore, the study will explore the program's contribution to food security, nutritional well-being, and support for local agricultural economies through its home-grown food sourcing model. In line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 4, as well as the African Union's Agenda 2063, the research also seeks to identify gaps in implementation and policy that may hinder the full realization of the program's objectives.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2005, the Ghanaian government took the lead and announced the Ghana School Feeding Problem (GSFP). By offering one hot meal every day, the GSFP seeks to lower hunger and malnutrition among students in first cycle schools. The program's goals are to raise food production in underprivileged communities and increase enrolment and retention rates in Ghanaian primary schools situated in rural, impoverished communities (Kamaludeen,2014).

Ensuring food security in Ghana and supplying highly nutritious, locally cooked food to rural communities' elementary schools are two further goals. By so doing, the local community will benefit financially from the emergence of a ready market to acquire farm produce for the meals (Ghartey, Kendie, & Essaw, 2013). The GSF program is trying to enhance food security, reduce hunger, support the local economy with 80% of the cost of feeding, decrease malnutrition, raise enrolment, raise in attendance, and retention rates in schools, as well as promote domestic food production in underprivileged areas of the nation.

From the inception of the program, major stakeholders like the Government of Ghana (GoG), and the Ministry of Education (MoE) reported progress in children's active learning capacity, alleviated short-term hunger, and encouraged children who like to attend school and stay through the day (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2017). As an institution/ministry that exists to carry out the Government's develop a strategy to deliver relevant and high-quality education to all Ghanaians, particularly the underprivileged, enabling them to attain skills that foster functional literacy and productivity, therefore aiding poverty reduction and advancing the nation's accelerated socio-economic development, one can testify the GSFP perfectly fits into the mission of MoE.

According to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2015), the GSFP has periodically witnessed efforts at improving targeting, quality, monitoring, procurement

governance, and social accountability. Unfortunately, this is not the case as challenges that have plagued the programme from its inception are still prevalent. Since the inception of the program, stakeholders have perceived that the compensation provided to caterers was insufficient for them to supply satisfactory meals while maintaining profitability (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2017). The program originally allocated GHS 0.80 per kid each school day to caterers, but stakeholders advocated for an increase to between GHS 1.50 and GHS 2.00. Between 2008 and 2023 the amount has increased to GHS 1.20 which is still not sufficient to provide the nutritional meal that is expected. According to the Campaign Against Privatization and Commercialization of Education (CAPCOE, 2023), the GSFP has faced significant financial constraints, with the sole funding source, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), being capped under the Earmarked Funds and Realignment Act (2017) at 25% and further reduced to 17% in December 2022. The Auditor-General's report (2024) also revealed that the GSFP has been grappling with financial mismanagement, including unaccounted funds and overpayments to caterers. These issues have exacerbated the programme's financial challenges, affecting its ability to deliver quality meals to students. These limitations have hindered the programme's ability to adequately compensate caterers and procure necessary resources. Iddrisu, Gunu, and Abdul-Rahman (2022) conducted research with the objective of determining the obstacles that are affecting school feeding programs. The findings of this study revealed that political involvement and the lack of engagement of Ghana Educational Service and teachers were the leading causes of these issues. Although political involvement is vital for the success of the school feeding program, there is a negative or inverse relationship between political influence in the selection of schools and caterers and the program's effectiveness. When political considerations guide these decisions, it can lead to inefficiencies, mismanagement, and a lack of accountability, which negatively

impacts the program's operations. Despite these challenges, political support remains essential for securing necessary resources, funding, and overall program sustainability. Extremely impoverished areas with inadequate educational institutions fail to hire experienced or professional caterers. SEND Ghana (2021) conducted an assessment revealing that 73% of headteachers reported recruitment and contract awards were influenced by political party affiliation. Additionally, 50% of caterers stated they were appointed based on political connections, while only 10% were selected through a formal bidding process. This politicization has led to the selection of unqualified caterers, affecting service delivery and compromising the programme's objectives. Whenever there was a change of government, some caterers had to be changed and the period that it took for the replacement to happen meant children had to go without food. as a result of this absence, attendance was poor, and several students even left school to work alongside their parents on the farm. Teachers, due to their experience in school management and prior involvement in programs such as the World Food Program, are well-positioned to take charge of the school feeding program at the school level. Their expertise in education administration makes them effective in managing the program's operations. Furthermore, involving teachers and the Ghana Education Service helps eliminate unnecessary overlapping structures, optimize the program's processes, and promote improved governance, leading to better transparency and efficiency in the program's implementation. While evaluation studies what has been accomplished or the impact that has been made, monitoring focuses on what is being done (Samson, van Niekerk, & Quene, 2010). Evaluation is the regular, recurring review of overall accomplishments, whereas monitoring is the regular, daily examination of continuing activities and progress. It is possible that not all districts consistently follow competitive, equitable, and transparent bidding procedures; empirical

data derived from primary research is required to ascertain whether and to what degree this is the case (Fisher, 2007).

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study investigated how Ghana is localising the African Union's Agenda 2063 through the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). It aimed to explore the extent to which the GSFP aligns with the goals of Agenda 2063, particularly in areas such as inclusive education, nutrition, poverty reduction, and sustainable agriculture. By examining policy frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and on-the-ground outcomes, the study sought to assess the programme's contribution to the broader continental vision of a prosperous, integrated, and self-reliant Africa. To address the broad adjective above, the study is guided by these specific objectives:

1. To investigate the operational constraints between the policymakers and implementing stakeholders.
2. To examine the monitoring mechanisms of Ghana's School Feeding Programme.
3. To determine measures for strengthening the achievement of the policy.
4. To analyse the efficiency and effectiveness of the policy.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What problems are inherent in the implementation phase of the Ghana School Feeding Programme?
2. How is the Ghana School Feeding Programme properly monitored?
3. How does Ghana School Feeding Programme affect education of pupils?
4. How to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the policies?

1.5 RATIONALE

The Ghana School Feeding Programme has experienced some hitches in the programme implementation. Difficulties have emerged following the enforcement of this regulation, which would typically be identified through ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, this research is necessary to augment the inadequate literature on evaluation of Ghana's School Feeding Programme and Ghana's contribution in attaining Africa's 2063's first aspiration.

There has been limited research conducted on Monitoring and Evaluating of the progress of this public policy. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate into this programme and how it aims to enhance education consistently with effectiveness and efficiency, resulting in high achievements. This study is an opportunity for learning and will provide continuous improvement for the school feeding programme implementation.

This research will enhance better decision-making using evidence-based analysis that will be derived from the research.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that will guide this study is the African Agency Theory (AAT). An intriguing development in International Relation (IR) scholarship over the recent past twenty years has been the steady growth of works of African descent. The changing narrative and notion of core and periphery where African play only periphery roles in International Relations and are passive actors. The continent's colonial history has led to perceptions of it as a passive participant in global power shifts, often seen as having a minimal influence on the key drivers of change in world affairs. This view also suggests a lack of agency in shaping global dynamics (Mabera, 2019). This

has given rise to the African Agency Theory and constant conversations around finding an African solution for the African problem. Scholars like William Brown, Sophie Harman have sought to research into this field and come out with some interesting findings.

In this context, agency refers to the capacity of nations, international organizations, civil society, and individual actors to assert influence in their interactions with foreign entities. This ability helps them maximize their effectiveness and achieve specific objectives.

1.6.1 Arguments of the theory

African states and institutions are not mere recipients of global decisions but are increasingly recognized as active participants in shaping international outcomes. One of the clearest examples of this agency is the African Union (AU), which has asserted itself as a critical actor in both regional and global governance through mechanisms of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and norm-setting.

The AU has played a central role in mediating conflicts across the continent, notably through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which includes institutions such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and the African Standby Force (ASF). These bodies facilitate early conflict detection, military deployment, and diplomatic interventions. For instance, the AU was instrumental in peacekeeping missions in Darfur and Somalia, often deploying forces where the United Nations was either slow to act or absent, thereby reinforcing Africa's capacity to take ownership of its security challenges (Williams, 2011; Murithi, 2009).

Furthermore, the AU has taken significant steps in shaping continental and international norms. Article 4(h) of its Constitutive Act allows for intervention in member states in cases of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity—marking a departure from the OAU's traditional principle

of non-interference (African Union, 2000). This proactive legal stance illustrates how the AU is not only responding to crises but also redefining the principles of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention from an African perspective (Cilliers, 2008).

Beyond peace and security, the AU also influences global economic and political governance. Its admission as a permanent member of the G20 in 2023 represents a historic milestone in the international recognition of Africa's voice in global decision-making. This development is a clear affirmation of the AU's growing geopolitical relevance and a platform for the continent to influence global economic frameworks, climate negotiations, and development agendas (AP News, 2023).

Overall, these examples underscore how African institutions like the AU are reshaping the narrative of African international relations—from one of dependency to one of strategic agency and influence in global affairs.

1.6.2 Strengths of the African Agency Theory

Brown (2012) emphasizes the importance of studying Africa's international relations from the perspective of agency, highlighting the continent's role as an active participant in global politics. It shifts focus from Africa as a passive recipient of global decisions to an active participant with its own strategies, negotiations, and choices in global politics. It further recognizes African states, institutions, and leaders as agents with autonomy, capable of influencing international relations.

The book "African Agency in International Politics" edited by Brown and Harman (2013) explores how African political actors navigate international relations, considering local contexts and histories. This prioritizes local knowledge, history, and experiences, offering a more nuanced and accurate picture of African political behaviour and governance.

In their 2016 article, Bilgin et al. offer analytical lenses focused on putting an end to the marginalization of the Global South from the standpoint of Western mainstream international relations. A point of view that the international relations discourse should no longer be entirely focused on the role that major countries play in world politics and international leadership.

The theory contrasts with the typical theoretical and analytical frameworks that marginalize African agency, focusing instead on the influence of external actors in shaping Africa's reality. Western international relations scholars like Hans Morgenthau (1985) dismissed Africa, viewing it as a politically insignificant region with no history prior to World War I. Similarly, Henry Kissinger (1994) omitted Africa entirely in his projections for the dominant forces in world politics for the twenty-first century, failing to mention any African state, non-state actor, or regional organization.

1.6.3 Weaknesses of the African Agency Theory

African Agency theory offers a critical lens for understanding Africa's role in international politics by positioning African states and actors as active participants rather than passive recipients of external influence. Scholars such as Brown (2012) and Brown and Harman (2013) argue that this framework empowers local perspectives and acknowledges the strategic actions of African governments in global negotiations, particularly in areas like trade, peacekeeping, and diplomacy. However, the theory remains underdeveloped and somewhat fragmented, with limited empirical application and challenges in measuring "agency" consistently across diverse contexts (Brown, 2018). Additionally, critiques of the theory point to its tendency to overemphasize success stories while overlooking deep-seated structural constraints such as donor dependency, economic inequality, and post-colonial legacies (Shepherd & Ntung, 2022). There is also concern that the theory often centres on elite state actors, sidelining the roles of grassroots movements and civil

society. Despite these criticisms, African Agency theory continues to serve as a valuable tool in challenging Western-centric narratives and redefining Africa's place in the global order.

While African Agency theory provides a conceptually rich framework for understanding the continent's role in international politics, it lacks sufficient empirical grounding. Many studies celebrate the idea of African agency in theory, but few offer detailed, comparative case studies that demonstrate how this agency is exercised across diverse political, economic, and social contexts. This shortage of empirical evidence makes it difficult to assess the consistency, scope, and impact of African agency across different states and policy areas (Brown, 2012; Brown & Harman, 2013). As a result, the theory risks remaining abstract and overly generalized, limiting its ability to inform practical policy or challenge dominant narratives in a systematic way.

1.6.4 Critiques of the Theory

Despite its value in challenging dominant international relations narratives, African Agency theory has faced significant critiques.

One major concern is that the theory sometimes overstates the autonomy of African actors, downplaying the persistent influence of structural constraints such as foreign aid dependency, global economic pressures, and post-colonial power dynamics (Brown, 2012).

Critics also argue that it tends to romanticize agency by highlighting a few successful instances of African negotiation or resistance, while ignoring cases where agency is limited or absent (Shepherd & Ntung, 2022).

Furthermore, the theory has been critiqued for being overly state-centric, focusing mainly on the actions of political elites and government institutions, thereby neglecting the roles of civil society, grassroots movements, and ordinary citizens in shaping African agency (Brown & Harman, 2013).

These limitations suggest the need for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to understanding how agency is exercised across different levels of African society.

1.6.5 Relevance to the study

African Agency Theory emphasizes that African states are not passive recipients of global or continental agendas but are active agents in shaping, interpreting, and implementing these agendas in ways that align with local priorities and capacities. In the context of Ghana, this agency is clearly demonstrated through the localization of the African Union's Agenda 2063, particularly via the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP).

Agenda 2063, titled "*The Africa We Want*," sets out an ambitious vision for Africa's socio-economic transformation. One of its key aspirations Aspiration 1 is "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development." Within this aspiration, education and nutrition are central pillars. The GSFP aligns with Goal 2 of Agenda 2063: "*Well-educated citizens and a skills revolution underpinned by science, technology, and innovation.*"

By integrating nutrition into basic education, Ghana is operationalizing continental development frameworks through a locally driven policy. This reflects African Agency Theory's emphasis on local ownership and initiative, rather than external imposition (Murithi, 2009; Zondi, 2021).

The GSFP has also empowered local farmers and caterers, aligning with Agenda 2063's goals on inclusive development and local value chains. The programme promotes home-grown school feeding, where food is sourced locally. This not only boosts school attendance and retention but also strengthens local economies a practical form of multi-level agency that involves state institutions, civil society, and local communities (Boakye, 2020).

Through this, Ghana is asserting its agency at multiple levels from policymaking at the national level to implementation and feedback at the community level. This matches African Agency Theory's emphasis on a broad spectrum of actors influencing development trajectories.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses literature on social protection policies, implementation of such policies, stakeholder involvements and strategies adopted to ensure effective running of the policy.

Smith and Oluoch (2019) conducted an in-depth investigation in rural Kenya to examine how school feeding programs influence student attendance and academic outcomes. Using a longitudinal approach, their research monitored both attendance and academic test results over a span of three years, comparing students who participated in school meal programs with those who did not. The study revealed notably positive results—students who received meals showed marked improvements in both their school attendance and academic performance. The researchers attributed these gains to consistent nutritional support, which appeared to boost students' focus and cognitive function. Additionally, the communal nature of shared meals contributed to a more supportive and connected school atmosphere, which may have helped to lower dropout rates. A key insight from the study was that the nutritional variety of the meals significantly influenced these benefits. Smith and Oluoch emphasized that introducing a broader range of nutrient-dense foods could further improve student outcomes. They also stressed the critical role of both government and community backing in maintaining the sustainability of these feeding programs. Ongoing financial support and strong policy frameworks were identified as necessary for long-term success. The study's implications extend beyond Kenya, suggesting that similar interventions in other rural settings could yield comparable results. The authors advocated for a collaborative strategy that brings together educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of school feeding initiatives. Ultimately, their findings highlight the importance of expanding and diversifying school meals to better promote educational development in underserved regions.

Garcia, Santos, and Ribeiro (2020) conducted a randomized controlled trial in northeastern Brazil to examine the effects of enhanced school meals on student performance and attendance. They compared regular school meals with meals enriched with additional protein and vitamins. The results showed that students who received enhanced meals had better academic performance and higher attendance, particularly in subjects like mathematics and science. The researchers suggested that these findings have significant policy implications, advocating for the inclusion of fortified foods in school meals as a cost-effective strategy to improve educational outcomes. They also recommended ongoing monitoring of meal quality to meet students' evolving nutritional needs.

Tetteh's research in 2020 delved into the policy framework and challenges surrounding the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) in rural Ghana, with a specific focus on the Eastern Region. The study identified several barriers that hinder the program's effectiveness, despite its potential benefits. Notably, it highlighted issues such as insufficient funding, which limits the ability to consistently provide meals, delays in meal distribution, and challenges with local implementation. These obstacles often disrupt the program's smooth operation, affecting the intended outcomes, including improved school attendance and academic performance. Tetteh suggested that for the GSFP to reach its full potential, there needs to be greater attention to securing adequate funding, ensuring timely meal delivery, and addressing local implementation issues.

Patel and Kumar (2021) conducted a qualitative study in Northern India to examine the perceptions of school feeding programs, utilizing interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and parents. The study aimed to understand the broader effects of these programs on educational engagement and social dynamics within schools. The results indicated that school feeding programs led to increased student attendance and greater participation in school activities, as

reported by the participants. The programs were also seen as a significant tool for promoting educational equity by ensuring that all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, received at least one nutritious meal each day. This, in turn, was believed to enhance students' concentration and active involvement in classroom activities.

In addition to these academic benefits, Patel and Kumar found that the programs fostered stronger community engagement. Local families and businesses often participated in sourcing and preparing the meals, which not only made the meals more culturally relevant and accepted but also built stronger community ties and support for the school. Based on these insights, the authors recommended that school feeding programs should integrate more diverse stakeholder engagement in their planning and implementation phases. They emphasized that community participation should not just be seen as supplementary but as a core element for the success and sustainability of the program. The findings suggest that policies encouraging greater community involvement could lead to more sustainable, culturally appropriate, and effective school feeding initiatives.

1.7.1 The Concept of Social Protection Policies

Social protection, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO), involves ensuring security in the face of life's vulnerabilities and uncertainties, providing access to essential healthcare, and safeguarding workers' well-being. It serves as the foundation for a stable and fulfilling life, offering protection against various risks and challenges. Over time, social protection has become a critical component of development policy, widely recognized for its importance in fostering social and economic stability.

Social protection policies in Ghana have been crucial in addressing poverty and promoting inclusive growth, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. These policies are designed

to provide safety nets for vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and the disabled. One significant component of Ghana's social protection framework is the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), which directly contributes to the welfare of school-aged children by providing them with nutritious meals, thereby improving their access to education. According to Osei (2018), social protection initiatives like GSFP not only alleviate immediate food insecurity but also enhance long-term educational outcomes by encouraging school attendance and reducing dropout rates, particularly in rural areas. By ensuring that children receive at least one meal per day, the GSFP contributes to improved concentration and cognitive function, which are essential for academic success (Tetteh, 2020). Furthermore, these policies are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), highlighting the interconnection between nutrition, education, and social welfare.

Despite the benefits, the implementation of social protection policies in Ghana, particularly school feeding programs, faces challenges. A major issue is the insufficient funding and logistical hurdles that affect the delivery and sustainability of these programs. As noted by Gharthey, Kendie, and Essaw (2013), delays in meal distribution and inadequate resources have hindered the GSFP's ability to consistently serve all eligible students, especially in remote areas. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the targeting of beneficiaries and the adequacy of the nutritional value of meals provided. These challenges often limit the reach and impact of social protection programs, preventing them from achieving their full potential. Therefore, there is a need for stronger coordination between government agencies, local communities, and non-governmental organizations to ensure the effectiveness of these policies in reducing poverty and promoting equitable development (SEND Ghana, 2021).

It is a key element of both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, which calls on member states to implement effective social protection systems tailored to their unique national contexts. These systems aim to provide comprehensive coverage for the most deprived and vulnerable populations, with specific timelines set to ensure significant progress toward universal protection. By prioritizing social protection, nations work towards reducing inequality, enhancing social cohesion, and promoting sustainable development, particularly for marginalized groups. The primary goal of this effort is to address poverty and safeguard individuals against the potential consequences of unforeseen economic volatility. Social protection is commonly funded by public financing and donations. The implementation of Social Protection in nations with a high poverty rate is a significant challenge. During times of financial crises, increases in food prices, or natural calamities, Social Protection Schemes become particularly necessary in order to safeguard residents from adverse effects.

1.7.2 Constraints affecting Social Policy Implementation.

According to the World Food Programme (WFP, 2015), School Feeding Programs (SFPs) can be implemented under various circumstances in different countries. These include situations such as emergencies, crises, post-disaster or conflict scenarios, and even in countries with either stable or unstable economies, among others. The WFP also emphasized that SFPs should be customized to align with the goals and objectives outlined in national policies, with these goals serving as a benchmark for program implementation. The implementation of social protection policies in Ghana, including the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), faces a number of constraints that hinder their effectiveness.

One of the key challenges is the inadequate funding allocated to these programs, which often results in delayed payments to caterers, insufficient meal quality, and inconsistencies in meal

distribution (Tetteh, 2020). Without adequate financial resources, the scope and impact of these policies are severely limited, particularly in rural and underserved areas where the need is greatest. Additionally, logistical challenges such as poor infrastructure and transportation difficulties further exacerbate the problem, delaying the timely delivery of meals to schools (SEND Ghana, 2021).

Another constraint is the lack of capacity and coordination at the local level, where the program's implementation is often affected by weak administrative structures, insufficient training of local implementers, and political interference (Ghartey, Kendie, & Essaw, 2013). These challenges undermine the potential benefits of social protection policies, making it difficult to achieve long-term sustainable outcomes in poverty reduction and education enhancement. To address these constraints, there is a need for more effective government oversight, stronger community engagement, and better resource mobilization to ensure the success of these vital programs.

1.7.3 Efficiency and Effectiveness of Policies

The efficiency and effectiveness of social protection policies in Ghana, particularly the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), are central to their success in achieving social and educational outcomes. When implemented well, these policies contribute significantly to reducing poverty, enhancing food security, and promoting school enrolment and retention among children in underserved communities.

For instance, Osei (2018) highlights that the GSFP has been effective in boosting attendance and improving nutritional outcomes, especially in rural areas where food insecurity is prevalent. However, while the intended impacts are evident in some regions, the overall efficiency of the programme is often undermined by administrative delays, poor targeting, and lack of monitoring and evaluation systems (SEND Ghana, 2021). In many cases, the absence of real-time data and

feedback mechanisms affects the ability to track progress and respond promptly to implementation challenges.

Moreover, political interference in the selection of caterers and beneficiary schools has raised concerns about fairness and transparency, impacting the program's credibility and performance (Tetteh, 2020). For social protection policies to be both efficient and effective, there must be a commitment to transparency, data-driven decision-making, and capacity-building at the local level to ensure that the intended benefits reach the most vulnerable populations consistently and sustainably.

1.7.4 Monitoring mechanisms of policies

Monitoring mechanisms are critical for assessing the performance and ensuring the accountability of social protection policies in Ghana. In the context of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) and other social interventions, monitoring is primarily coordinated by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, local government authorities, and development partners. These mechanisms include routine field visits, performance audits, and the use of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks to track inputs, outputs, and impacts of the programs (SEND Ghana, 2021). For instance, the GSFP employs district-level monitoring teams that are responsible for assessing meal quality, attendance records, caterer performance, and compliance with nutrition standards (Tetteh, 2020).

However, challenges such as limited funding, lack of real-time data systems, inadequate capacity of local monitoring staff, and weak feedback loops hinder the effectiveness of these monitoring systems. In some cases, political interference also affects the objectivity of monitoring outcomes. According to Ghartey, Kendie, and Essaw (2013), inconsistent data collection and reporting undermine transparency and make it difficult to evaluate whether the policies are meeting their

intended goals. To strengthen these mechanisms, there is a growing call for the integration of digital tracking tools, increased stakeholder engagement at the community level, and the establishment of independent evaluation bodies to provide credible assessments. Strengthening M&E will not only improve accountability but also ensure that social protection programs remain responsive and impactful across Ghana.

1.7.5 Measures for strengthening policies

Strengthening social protection policies in Ghana requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both systemic and operational challenges. One key measure is the increase in sustainable funding. Many social protection initiatives, including the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), suffer from irregular and insufficient budget allocations, which disrupt service delivery and undermine long-term impact (SEND Ghana, 2021). Ensuring that social protection programs are integrated into the national budget with clear funding commitments can improve their reliability and reach. Additionally, improving intersectoral coordination between ministries such as Education, Health, Agriculture, and Gender can enhance program efficiency and ensure that interventions address multiple dimensions of poverty, such as nutrition, education, and health, in a more cohesive manner (Osei, 2018).

Another crucial measure is the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems. Real-time data collection, digital tracking tools, and community-based feedback mechanisms are essential for identifying gaps, measuring impact, and making timely policy adjustments (Tetteh, 2020). Involving local stakeholders such as school authorities, parents, and civil society organizations in both implementation and oversight can also improve transparency and accountability.

Moreover, capacity-building at the local level is vital; training district-level coordinators, caterers, and program implementers can improve service quality and policy delivery.

Finally, reducing political interference in program administration—particularly in beneficiary selection and resource allocation can ensure fairness and build public trust. By focusing on these measures, Ghana can enhance the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of its social protection systems, ensuring that vulnerable populations are adequately supported.

1.7.6 Challenges facing the Ghana School Feeding Programme.

The implementation of the school feeding program has achieved certain successes. However, like similar initiatives, the GSFP is confronted with several national challenges. These challenges have varied impacts on the program, its stakeholders, and the beneficiaries. Particularly noticeable challenges include: guidelines for policy, funding, community engagement, staff capacity, collaboration with agricultural logistics and other supplies, as well as monitoring and evaluation. The GSFP has lacked a policy guideline since its inception, which some advocates believe has significantly hindered its implementation. Although the GFSP aligns with key development policies and strategies of the Ghanaian government, there is no definitive government policy or legislation that ensures its status (Kedze, 2013).

Ghana's developmental agenda has always included aspects to improve the standard of living of its populace but these good intentions have been hampered by political instability among others (Aryeetey and Goldstein 2000).

The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) by its constitutional mandate guides the setting of national developmental goals around a common vision; determining the thematic development of focal areas; and monitoring and evaluating progress towards these goals. Therefore, the Commission is to help ensure coherence in strategic national policies with the country's social protection obligations.

In the work of Bundy et al. (2012) on school food, politics and child health it is captured the effects of the provision of school food and its impact on enrolment and concluded that the programme had an impact on enrolment. The challenge of political interference in the operations of the program is one that cannot be left out. The oversight responsibility the government plays clouds the politicians such that they control the activities and stakeholders' execution. In his paper, Abotsi (2013) noted that the program ought to be properly executed since it had an inspiration and commitment to battle hunger; nevertheless, the interference of politics in school recruiting will impair its operations. This is because the program has a commitment to fight hunger.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The term "research methodology" is defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2015) as "the general approach the researcher takes in carrying out the research project." There are three primary methodologies that may be utilized while conducting research: the quantitative method, the qualitative method, and the mixed method. Specifically, the qualitative research methodology will be employed for this study. Boateng defines qualitative research as "one that tends to explore the meanings, attitudes, values, and beliefs that people associate with a phenomenon in order to establish a better understanding." In contrast to qualitative research, which focuses on exploring and understanding phenomena through in-depth analysis and subjective insights, quantitative research aims to test hypotheses and either support or refute the relationships between the variables being studied and specific propositions or beliefs.

1.8.1 Research Design

A research design refers to the plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive survey research is a type of research design used to collect data that describes characteristics or behaviours of a population. The primary goal of this method is to provide a clear, accurate picture

of what exists in a given group or situation, without manipulating the variables. It aims to identify patterns, trends, or relationships, but not to establish causality.

There are three main research designs, namely the quantitative method, the qualitative method and the use of both the quantitative and the qualitative method known as the mixed method (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative will grant an in-depth understanding as to why certain decisions are made in the running of the GSFP to gain insight in this area of study. The advantage of this approach lies in its ability to complement quantitative research by addressing its limitations, offering strengths that enhance the overall understanding of the topic being studied.

Bobbie (2005) emphasizes many advantages of the qualitative research approach, namely its flexibility and cost-effectiveness. Owing to its adaptable character, researchers are permitted to alter, amend, and formulate study questions, as well as to offer open-ended inquiries to achieve clarity and comprehensive comprehension. Regarding cost, Bobbie contends that qualitative research may be comparatively less expensive. He believes that fundamental resources like a recorder, pen, and paper suffice for a researcher to do effective study.

Qualitative research design is the most suitable approach for this study. It is appropriate collecting and analysing data on Ghana's initiatives to enhance school enrolment and address illiteracy and poverty among its population. This research aims to investigate and analyse the respondents' viewpoint. The qualitative study methodology encourages direct interaction with experts and users of the policy, enabling the extraction of significant insights from their experiences and answers.

A qualitative study approach was considered suitable owing to its inherent adaptability and informality, facilitating respondent cooperation and significant contributions to the topic.

Qualitative research covers four methodologies: grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology (Hancock et al., 2002). Of them, phenomenology was the most suitable

methodology for this study. This methodology discusses how individuals' experiences ought to influence policy and effect change. It derives its core from the lived experiences of several persons and draws conclusions from them

1.8.2 Sources of Data

The principal primary source of information for this research was interviews conducted with several caterers and personnel from the Ghana School Feeding Programme secretariat.

Secondary data was equally important to this study. Credible journals, articles statistics and legislative instruments from existing database relevant to the field and data from school feeding surveys were reviewed as a secondary source. Databases were examined to locate relevant documents and data from school feeding surveys conducted by World Food Programme between 2020 and 2024. Data was also obtained from the websites of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the African Union, and the World Food Programme.

1.8.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A total sample size of thirty-five individuals were selected for the study, with officials from the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, the Ghana School Feeding Secretariat, and the Ghana Education Service chosen through purposive sampling. This decision was based on the rationale that personnel from these organizations are highly knowledgeable and provide relevant insights and data essential for conducting this research.

This technique was adopted because there are specific stakeholders that will be relevant for this study; the heads of schools, caterers and teachers that deal directly with SFP activities can provide the needed.

This demographic was chosen because they are the groups who are directly affected by the policy, and as a result, they are in a position to provide information on the ways in which it is being rolled out and how it impacts their lives for the purpose of the research.

1.8.4 Data Collection Process

The data for this study were derived from both primary and secondary sources, providing a comprehensive basis for analysis. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key personnel from the Ghana School Feeding Secretariat. Semi-structured interviews were well-suited for this study because they allow for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives while providing the flexibility to probe emerging themes related to the study.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for open-ended questions to be designed to elicit detailed responses, allowing participants to share their insights and experiences freely. The use of open-ended questions allowed for a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the personnel and facilitated the exploration of nuanced aspects of the topic under investigation.

These interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and were later transcribed verbatim for thorough analysis. Each interview lasted between 40-50mins and it was recorded with an electronic device. This approach facilitated open dialogue and allowed participants to share their perspectives in depth, thereby enriching the quality of the data collected.

In addition to the primary data, secondary data were sourced from various documents provided by the Ghana School Feeding Secretariat. These included brochures, fact sheets, and other relevant publications that offered supplementary information and context to support the findings from the

interviews. The secondary data were reviewed to complement the primary data, enabling a more holistic understanding of the subject matter.

By integrating both primary and secondary data, the study was able to capture a more well-rounded view of the operational and strategic elements of the Ghana School Feeding Program.

1.8.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis plays a crucial role in transforming raw data into meaningful insights and patterns (Bell, 2010). The data analysis for this study involved systematically processing and interpreting the information collected from the Ghana School Feeding Secretariat. After gathering primary data through interviews with Secretariat personnel, the recorded conversations were transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of participants' responses. The transcriptions were then analysed using thematic analysis, where key themes and patterns were identified, categorized, and interpreted to draw meaningful insights. Secondary data, including brochures and fact sheets, were also reviewed to supplement the primary data and provide additional context. These documents were analysed qualitatively to cross-check and validate the findings from the interviews. The combined analysis of both primary and secondary data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the Ghana School Feeding Program's operations and its impact. Throughout the process, care was taken to maintain objectivity and ensure the reliability of the findings.

Ultimately, the researcher expanded on their perspectives derived from the data collected from the respondents, supporting these views with relevant literature.

The facts gathered were examined quickly, free from prejudice. Responses were analysed precisely as they were obtained. Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed into text format and later categorized into topics according to the research objectives of this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is the process of identifying salient patterns or themes within

qualitative data and organizing them in such a way that they effectively address the topic and goals of the study. Over the course of this research, a summary descriptive analysis was utilized in order to get a deeper comprehension of the numbers that were acquired.

1.8.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics involves recognizing the specific norms and standards of conduct that researchers are expected to adhere to (Connolly, 2013). Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study to ensure that the research was conducted with integrity and respect for all participants.

As stated by Taylor et al. (2012), informed consent refers to the decision to participate in a study after understanding its purpose, potential risks, and benefits. This means that participants should be fully informed about the nature of the research and the potential advantages they may gain from it. Informed consent was obtained from all individuals involved in the study, ensuring they were fully aware of the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) defined confidentiality as the practice of ensuring that information provided by research participants is not revealed in a manner that could lead to the identification of the individual. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, with all personal and sensitive information kept secure and used solely for the purposes of the research. Additionally, the study adhered to the ethical guidelines set out by relevant institutional review boards to minimize any potential harm to participants. The researcher remained impartial and transparent throughout the study, ensuring that the data collection and analysis processes were conducted ethically and responsibly. By upholding these ethical standards, the study aimed to maintain the trust of the participants and ensure the credibility of the research findings.

1.9 ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS

This study comprises four chapters. Chapter one outlines the research design, introduces the subject matter, presents the research statement, outlines the research questions and objectives, defines the scope and rationale, establishes the theoretical framework guiding the study, and includes a concise literature review and research methodology.

Chapter two contains the African Agenda 2063 and steps Ghana is taking to achieve better literacy rate using homegrown solutions. The history of the Ghana School Feeding Programme and how it marries into this Agenda is highlighted in this chapter as well.

The conditions under which the GSFP is being implemented is highlighted. The importance of the policy and the successes the programme has chalked will come under this chapter as well., The challenges facing the programme amidst the policy problems surrounding it will be studied. Much focus will be given to the Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms that are in place and its effectiveness. Evaluation and monitoring are still two separate procedures, despite the fact that they are complimentary to one another. Monitoring is carried out in accordance with a management style that places an emphasis on enhancing day-to-day operations. A research model is used in the process of evaluation in order to determine the degree to which policy objectives have been attained or exceeded. Activities that are intertwined with monitoring and evaluation are what yield the best results. They are able to supply information that will assist decision makers in selecting an appropriate course of action for the future of the policy or the direction of future programs when they work together.

Chapter three contains the research findings and this chapter encompasses the Impact of monitoring and evaluation of social policies, understanding and expansion of the policy and other benefits of the policy.

The fourth chapter of the research provides a comprehensive conclusion, summarizing the key findings of the study. This section distils the main insights drawn from the research, highlighting significant patterns, trends, and conclusions based on the data collected. In addition to summarizing the findings, the chapter also presents thoughtful recommendations for future research. These suggestions aim to address gaps identified during the study, propose new avenues for exploration, and provide direction for further investigations that could deepen understanding and enhance the effectiveness of related policies or programs.



CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF AFRICA'S AGENDA 2063 GOAL 2, AFRICA'S AGENDA 2063 GOAL 3 AND GHANA'S HOMEGROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME.

2.0. Introduction

Agenda 2063 is a widely supported action plan for Africa, aimed at fostering development across the continent through cooperative efforts among African governments and various stakeholders. In this chapter, we will examine Agenda 2063 in detail, focusing particularly on Goals 2 and 3, which emphasize sustainable development and social well-being. We will also explore Ghana's significant contributions toward achieving these goals, particularly through initiatives like the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP).

Agenda 2063 is a comprehensive and strategic blueprint for Africa's long-term development, tailored to meet the continent's unique challenges and opportunities. It is designed to guide Africa toward achieving the aspirations of its people, laying the groundwork for a prosperous future. While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set global targets for sustainable progress, Agenda 2063 serves as Africa's specific framework, driving its development agenda and aspirations. This chapter will highlight how Ghana, through efforts such as the GSFP, is contributing to the realization of these continental objectives, advancing the development of the African people in line with Agenda 2063's vision.

In an effort to seize control of its own development trajectory, Africa took the initiative to promote Agenda 2063 as a self-directed project. The agenda goals are;

Objective 1: An elevated level of living, enhanced quality of life, and overall well-being.

Objective 2: An educated populace and a skills transformation supported by science, technology, and innovation.

Objective 3: Healthy and well-nourished populace.

Objective 4: Revitalized economy and employment generation.

Objective 5: Contemporary agriculture to enhance productivity and output.

Objective 6: Blue/ocean economy to expedite economic progress.

Objective 7: Environmentally sustainable, climate-resilient economies and communities.

Objective 8: Unified Africa (Federal or Confederate).

Objective 9: Establishment and operationalization of essential continental financial and monetary institutions.

Objective 10: Africa is interconnected by world-class infrastructure.

Objective 11: Establishment of democratic ideals, practices, universal human rights principles, fairness, and the rule of law.

Objective 12: Competent institutions and reformed leadership established at all tiers.

Objective 13: The preservation of peace, security, and stability is ensured.

Objective 14: A stable and tranquil Africa.

Objective 15: A completely functioning and effective African peace and security framework.

Goal 16: The African cultural rebirth is paramount.

Objective 17: Complete gender parity throughout all domains of existence.

Objective 18: Engaged and empowered adolescents and children.

Objective 19: Africa as a significant collaborator in international relations and harmonious coexistence.

Objective 20: Africa assumes all accountability for funding its development.

Agenda 2063 is widely recognized in the academic world for its ambitious and visionary nature,

with scholars acknowledging its potential to significantly transform the African continent's development trajectory (DeGhetto et al., 2016; Ndizera & Muzee, 2018). The agenda aims to tackle the unique challenges facing Africa while capitalizing on its strengths to achieve sustainable development. What makes Agenda 2063 particularly noteworthy is the alignment it shares with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as both frameworks highlight similar priorities such as poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and economic growth. This alignment underscores the belief that Africa can make substantial progress under these new development frameworks, which are designed to address the continent's specific needs while integrating it more effectively into the global community.

The quest for development has been a cornerstone of African leadership since many countries gained independence. At that pivotal moment, the newly independent leaders of African nations were driven by a shared goal: to secure the future of their people by fostering sustainable development. Their focus was on creating an environment of economic stability, social welfare, and political independence that would improve the living conditions of their citizens. However, despite these good intentions, many of the early development programs fell short of achieving their intended objectives. The reasons for this underperformance are multifaceted, ranging from ineffective leadership and political instability to structural issues within African economies, such as their reliance on a limited range of exports and the fluctuation of global commodity prices. Additionally, many of these development initiatives were influenced by donor-driven models that did not always align with Africa's unique contexts and needs. Corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and poor governance further compounded the challenges that hindered the success of early efforts (Kararach et al., 2015; Park, 2019).

Agenda 2063 was born out of the realization that the continent needed a new approach—a comprehensive, continent-wide framework that could address the failures of past development efforts and build a foundation for future progress. It is not merely a set of goals but a call to action, providing African nations with a roadmap to navigate their development challenges collectively. This framework emphasizes the need for strategic, self-reliant development, where Africa takes the lead in shaping its future. Agenda 2063 also envisions a continent where African nations work together more closely, capitalizing on their collective resources, expertise, and opportunities for mutual growth. The African Union's Vision, which underpins this agenda, seeks to create "an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa" where African people are the primary drivers of their own development. This vision reflects a profound shift toward empowering African nations to determine their own future and reduce dependence on external actors.

Agenda 2063 offers a fresh strategic outlook that not only addresses the issues of the past but also presents a forward-looking vision for the continent's future. It calls for African-led solutions to the continent's problems, fostering regional integration and promoting greater intra-African collaboration. By prioritizing the development of human capital, improving infrastructure, and enhancing economic diversification, Agenda 2063 seeks to reduce Africa's vulnerability to external shocks and create more resilient economies. It also emphasizes the importance of fostering democratic governance, peace, and security as essential elements of the continent's long-term development.

Moreover, Agenda 2063 presents a collective vision for Africa's role on the global stage. As the continent continues to grow, it aims to become a more influential actor in international affairs,

capable of shaping global discussions on economics, politics, and sustainability. The strategic framework positions Africa as a continent with the potential to harness its vast resources, human capital, and emerging markets to drive its own progress, while also contributing to global development efforts.

Ultimately, Agenda 2063 is about reclaiming Africa's autonomy and ensuring that its development is led by its own people. It aims to empower African nations, foster greater self-sufficiency, and ensure that the continent becomes a powerful and active player in global affairs. This ambitious blueprint is a pivotal moment in African history, one that calls for unity, innovation, and a reimagining of what the continent can achieve when it comes together to shape its own destiny.

2.1. Overview of Africa's Agenda 2063 Goal 2

The condition of education in Africa is notably deficient, as indicated by the overall performance score of 44%. The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of educational institutions throughout multiple African nations in an effort to curb the spread of the virus, is chiefly responsible for the considerable fall in school enrolment. This decline may be traced to the pandemic.

The performance score that was obtained during the time that is being examined is represented in fragile assessments of the performance related the fundamental indicators of education that are outlined in the First Agenda 2063 Decadal Implementation Strategy. Not only did the continent fail to meet the planned aim of 75% for the net enrolment of pre-school students, but it also failed to meet the ambitious target of 96% for the net enrolment of primary school students in the year 2021. These are both noteworthy educational goals. It was observed that the enrolment rates were 45% and 86% correspondingly in the year 2021. As an additional point of interest, the

comprehensive secondary school net enrolment rate was reported at 52%, which is lower than the aim of 87% in the year 2021.

Member States of the AU have established policies and executed programmes aimed at enhancing enrolment rates across various educational tiers. The most significant development was the implementation of universal primary and secondary education initiatives. Additional measures to advance the education sector encompassed changes in budgetary allocations, the setting up of teacher councils, the recruitment of qualified educators, the execution of strategic initiatives, and the introduction of affirmative action programs. The intentional advocacy for STEM disciplines was likewise pointed out throughout the educational landscape.

Across Africa, there has been a marked increase in enrolment rates in both primary and secondary education, reflecting the ongoing efforts of governments to improve access to education and address barriers that have historically limited educational attainment. These improvements, however, vary in scope and effectiveness from country to country, influenced by factors such as government policies, financial commitments, and broader socio-economic challenges.

Botswana's secondary school enrollment rate has seen a steady increase from 64% in 2013 to 71% in 2019. This positive trend is largely attributed to the implementation of the Free Day Secondary Education Program, which aims to remove financial barriers that may prevent students, especially those from disadvantaged families, from continuing their education beyond primary school. The government's commitment to universal secondary education has been integral in facilitating access to education, coupled with a focus on improving educational infrastructure and teacher quality.

These efforts have collectively contributed to narrowing the educational gap and ensuring that more students can pursue secondary education.

Kenya, too, has seen substantial progress in secondary school enrollment, rising from 44.52% in 2013 to 53.3% in 2019. This increase is primarily due to the country's Free Day Secondary Education initiative, which has made secondary education accessible to a larger portion of the population. Kenya has also implemented various policy measures aimed at ensuring a smooth transition from primary to secondary education, including making provisions for students from lower-income families to access funding that supports their education through all levels of schooling. These efforts align with Kenya's broader development goals of providing equitable education and improving enrollment rates across all educational levels.

Namibia's education policy has placed a particular emphasis on higher education, aiming to foster a pool of capable professionals who can drive the country's development. Efforts to improve access to Tertiary Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and broaden opportunities for university education have been central to this initiative. By focusing on equity and inclusion, Namibia has sought to ensure that education is accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic background. The government has also encouraged private sector investment in higher education, believing that increased involvement from the private sector can play a critical role in improving educational standards and providing more opportunities for students.

Seychelles, a small island nation, has made impressive strides in improving access to education. In 2021, the net enrollment rate for primary education reached 93%, reflecting the country's ongoing commitment to advancing its education system. Education is one of the highest priorities in Seychelles, with the national budget allocating a significant portion to the sector—second only to health. This financial commitment has allowed for the expansion of educational resources,

improved teacher training, and the implementation of programs designed to increase enrollment and retention rates in schools. The government's focus on education underscores the belief that a well-educated population is key to driving the nation's long-term socio-economic development.

In contrast to the progress made in other countries, Madagascar has faced significant challenges in improving primary school enrollment. The net enrollment rate in primary education fell from 69% in 2013 to 60% in 2018. This decline has been attributed to a variety of factors, including widespread teacher incompetency, frequent absenteeism, and inadequate teacher training. Moreover, the academic calendar coincides with the harvest season, which can affect student attendance, particularly in rural areas where families depend on agricultural work. Natural disasters, which are frequent in Madagascar, also disrupt the school year, further hindering efforts to boost enrollment. These factors combined have led to a stagnation in the country's educational progress, highlighting the need for comprehensive reforms that address both the quality and accessibility of education.

Ghana has also made notable strides in improving primary school enrollment. The net enrollment rate for primary school children rose from 89.3% in the 2013/14 academic year to 91.1% in 2016/17. Over the following years, Ghana's enrollment rate surged by an additional 11.3%, largely due to the introduction of free senior high school education in 2017. This policy has been instrumental in increasing enrollment in secondary education, as it has removed financial barriers for many students who would otherwise have been unable to afford the costs associated with attending senior high school. The government's investment in free education at all levels, combined with continued efforts to improve educational infrastructure and teacher quality, has contributed to an upward trend in enrollment figures across the country.

While there has been substantial progress in improving enrollment rates in many African countries, several challenges remain. In countries like Madagascar, where the enrollment rates have stagnated or declined, the quality of education remains a key issue, with teacher training and classroom management being areas in critical need of reform. Additionally, external factors such as natural disasters, socio-economic conditions, and cultural practices that prioritize other responsibilities over schooling can disrupt educational attainment.

Furthermore, while financial investments in education have improved in many African nations, the lack of adequate infrastructure, including classrooms, learning materials, and technology, continues to be an obstacle. There is also a need for more targeted policies that address the specific needs of marginalized groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, and those living in remote areas.

In conclusion, the progress made by countries like Botswana, Kenya, Seychelles, and Ghana demonstrates that with the right policies, financial investment, and strategic initiatives, it is possible to improve education access and enrollment rates. However, for African nations to sustain this growth and continue expanding access to quality education, they must address underlying challenges such as teacher quality, infrastructure, and socio-economic factors that hinder educational attainment. Strengthening the education system and ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have access to quality education will be critical in achieving long-term development goals and ensuring a brighter future for the next generation.

2.2 Overview of Africa's Agenda 2063 Goal 3

This is the third goal of Africa Agenda 2063, which focuses on ensuring that all African residents have access to decent health and well-being. Among these responsibilities are the enhancement of healthcare systems, the reduction of rates of maternal and child mortality, and the fight against

illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. In addition to this, the objective is to encourage healthy lifestyles and to broaden access to basic healthcare services across the continent. Through the accomplishment of Goal 3, Africa intends to be able to build a population that is healthier, which will in turn contribute to the general growth and prosperity of the continent. This objective is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals that have been established on a worldwide scale, including SDG 3, which is centered on health and well-being. The improvement of healthcare in Africa is essential for the growth of the economy and the maintenance of social stability. This is because a healthy population is more productive and resilient. African nations have the ability to strive toward attaining sustainable development and minimizing inequities within their society if they place a priority on health. Furthermore, investing in healthcare may also contribute to a reduction in the expenses of healthcare over the long term. This is because preventative measures can assist lower the burden of treating diseases, which in turn lead to reductions in healthcare expenditures. throughout the end, the accomplishment of Goal 3 will not only be beneficial to people and communities throughout Africa, but it will also contribute to the general advancement and prosperity of the continent across its whole. It is possible for African nations to guarantee that their citizens are better prepared to deal with health difficulties and emergencies if they place a greater emphasis on enhancing their healthcare infrastructure and providing access to key services. Not only will this result in an improvement in the quality of life for people, but it will also contribute to the overall development of a society that is more stable and affluent.

In the process of enforcing African agency through the school feeding program, there is a twin play of Goals 2 and 3, in that it tackles hunger and malnutrition while simultaneously promoting health and well-being and ensuring that students continue to attend school and obtain some level

of education. The implementation of this comprehensive strategy for tackling health and education concerns has the potential to have a favourable impact on the general development of African nations that will persist for time.

By investing in the well-being and education of their citizens, countries can create a foundation for sustainable growth and prosperity in the future. This can lead to a more skilled labour, reduced poverty levels, and ultimately contribute to the economic growth of the nation. Therefore, prioritizing programs like school feeding initiatives can have far-reaching benefits for African countries in the long term.

Additionally, improved education can result in better health outcomes, as individuals are more likely to make informed decisions about their well-being. Ultimately, this cycle of investment in health and education can help break the cycle of poverty and contribute to the overall progress of African nations. Investing in education also has the potential to empower individuals to participate more actively in their communities and advocate for positive change. By equipping people with knowledge and skills, African countries can work towards building a more prosperous future for all.

Because a population that has received a higher level of education is better suited to contribute to the workforce and to drive innovation, this may also lead to significant economic development and stability. As a whole, making investments in education is very necessary for the long-term growth and prosperity of their respective African nations. An education not only equips people with the resources necessary to make great changes in their own lives, but it also gives them the ability to make a beneficial contribution to society as a whole. The ripple effect of education has the potential to contribute to increased social cohesion as well as economic prosperity in African nations.

2.3 Overview of Ghana's role in achieving Goal 2 and 3 with the School Feeding Programme

On Ghana's efforts at achieving the AA2063 Goals 2 and 3, it can be said that the partnership with some agencies and enacting some policies constitute some of the interventions. Through the provision of in-kind food aid, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) has been working in conjunction with the Government of Ghana since 2006 to ensure that more than 200,000 students in more than 400 schools in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions get school meals. WFP made the move from providing food aid in the form of in-kind donations to providing direct cash payments to caterers in May of 2014. This allowed the caterers to purchase food from the local farmers and markets, prepare it, and serve it to the children. There was a phased hand-over strategy that was jointly agreed upon by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the government as part of the Country Programme 2012–2016.

Within the framework of this plan, the World Food Programme (WFP) transferred the direct support (financial) to the school feeding program in December of 2016, while it maintains to offer technical support which began in January of 2017.

In 2007, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) projected that there were 923 million people throughout the globe who were suffering from chronic hunger. This figure represents an increase of around 75 million people compared to the estimations that were made between 2003 and 2005 (FAO, 2008). A large number of them are youngsters, and a significant number of them are located in nations that are still developing. Based on these figures, it appears that the Millennium. It is possible that the development goals concerning hunger and malnutrition may not be achieved by the year 2015 (FAO, 2008). Hunger, malnutrition, and shortages in

micronutrients can have long-lasting effects on those who continue to experience them influences on the health condition and productivity of individuals and the nations in which they live. The onset of malnutrition may negatively impact a child's physical, mental, and social health, which in turn can lead to a variety of negative consequences to being underweight, having stunted growth, having a poorer immune system, and to death. Research has demonstrated that body mass index (BMI) and other markers are used to evaluate the physical impacts of malnutrition.

The body mass index (BMI) has a substantial influence on the productivity and earnings of an individual (Broca & Stamoulis, 2003). An adequate intake of micronutrients, especially vitamins and iron, plays a critical role in the cognitive development and learning capabilities of school-aged children (Bloom, 2009; Dauncey, 2009; Kazal, 2002; Shariff, Bond, & Johnson, 2000). Additionally, iron deficiency and anaemia are recognized as leading causes of illness among schoolchildren, with more than half of the global school-age population being affected (Grillenberger et al., 2003; Kristjansson et al., 2009). Recent research in Kenya and Uganda on the effects of school feeding programs (SFPs) indicates that these programs have a significant impact in reducing the prevalence of anaemia and worm infections among children (Adelman et al., 2008; Grillenberger et al., 2003).

Ghana's home-grown school feeding program has become a successful model for other countries to adopt. It combines both goals 2 and 3 of the African Agenda 2063, which are focused on achieving well educated citizens, food security, and improving nutrition. The program has not only increased school enrolment and attendance rates but has also provided local farmers with a stable market for their produce. By addressing both educational and nutritional needs, Ghana's school

feeding program serves as a holistic approach to development that can be replicated in other countries. This initiative has also helped to alleviate poverty in rural communities by creating employment opportunities for local farmers and food vendors.

Additionally, it has led to an improvement in the general health and well-being of pupils, which has resulted in better academic performance as well as long-term economic advantages for the nation. Taking everything into consideration, the school feeding program in Ghana has shown to be an effective model for concurrently tackling a number of different social and economic concerns.

By integrating education, nutrition, and economic development, this initiative has the potential to make a lasting impact on communities beyond just providing meals for schoolchildren. With proper implementation and support, similar programs in other countries could also yield positive results in improving overall well-being and sustainability. It is crucial for governments to invest in holistic approaches like the school feeding program to break the cycle of poverty and improve the quality of life for future generations. In prioritizing education and nutrition, countries can create a foundation for sustainable development and empower their citizens to thrive. Ensuring that children have access to nutritious meals at school not only improves their health and academic performance but also sets them up for success in the long run. By addressing basic needs like food security and education, governments can pave the way for a brighter future for their citizens.

Adopting this strategy not only helps to meet urgent requirements, but it also makes a contribution to the long-term growth of both the economy and society. The Ghana government is making an investment in a better future for everyone by putting our attention on the health and happiness of children presently. In the long run, this can result in a society that is more affluent and stable, as well as a reduction in inequality and an improvement in people's ability to work together. It is

possible that investing in programs such as school feeding programs might ultimately help to the development of a more promising future for everyone.

The selection of Beneficiary Schools is based on a set of criteria that focuses on addressing the following in particular:

- Poor school retention, attendance, and enrolment, particularly among girls.
- Rates of dropout.
- Low levels of literacy.
- A high level of sensitivity and hunger.
- Limited availability of drinkable water.
- A strong sense of community or the capacity to govern a community.
- The community's readiness to provide financial or in-kind support as well as basic infrastructure (such as a kitchen, storage, and restrooms).
- Schools and communities that aren't already served by existing meal programs.

A total of seventeen schools across ten districts in the northern area participated in the nutritional survey that was carried out as part of the School Feeding Program.

The challenges within Ghana's school feeding program have been widely noted, particularly regarding the adequacy of the meals provided. Reports indicate that the nutritional quality and quantity often failed to meet the intended standards, such as the 30% Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA). For example, the amount of oil used in meal preparation often exceeded the recommended limit, while the meals were lacking sufficient protein, which is crucial for children's

growth and health. These issues highlighted the need for more carefully planned and balanced meal offerings.

Another challenge was the inconsistency in meal rations, which were not always adjusted according to the age-specific needs of students. This led to unequal nutritional benefits among children of different age groups. Additionally, delayed payments to caterers further disrupted the delivery of the program. Concerns about financial management and sanitation were also raised, as improper handling of funds and inadequate hygiene practices affected the overall execution of the program.

To address these challenges, a randomized control experiment was conducted in collaboration with the government across all 10 regions of Ghana, involving 2,869 children. The experiment divided communities into a control group with no intervention and a treatment group, which implemented a redesigned version of the national school feeding program. This new model offered one hot meal per day to children aged 5 to 15 in public schools. The goal of the study was to assess the effects of this new approach on the health, nutrition, and educational outcomes of the children.

The results of this experiment were intended to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the school feeding program. By redesigning the initiative to meet better nutritional standards and improving its logistical and financial aspects, the government aimed to enhance the program's impact on the well-being and academic performance of students. The findings from this study will guide further improvements, helping to ensure that the program serves its intended purpose more effectively, with a focus on improving the health and educational outcomes of Ghana's children.

The research indicated a beneficial impact on overall learning, mathematics, and reading scores, which increased by around 0.15 standard deviations on average. A more pronounced beneficial impact was observed in certain categories, with girls' scores rising by around 0.25 standard deviations, and those of children from northern areas or households below the national poverty threshold increasing by almost 0.30 standard deviations.

It was also discovered that these groupings saw a 4% increase in enrollment, which further substantiates the notion that school lunch programs have a favorable influence on attendance. Further research indicated that young children, girls, and children living below the poverty line all saw higher linear growth. This is normally a good predictor of health and cognitive development, and it was shown that these children all experienced greater growth. Disparities in academic success are severe in many nations with low incomes, with girls, children of lower socioeconomic position, and children living in rural homes falling more behind than their peers. Programs that provide meals to students in schools have the potential to help minimize this imbalance, which may have long-term implications for children's health and salaries, as well as for the transfer of poverty to subsequent generations. The results of this study indicate that governments that are confronted with challenging decisions about budget should prioritize school food programs as an effective social protection strategy (Aurino, Gelli, Adamba, Osei-Akoto, and Alderman, 2023).

2.4. Policymakers and Education System Stakeholders.

Service providers are the frontline personnel that directly manage the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP), which is carried out by a complex network of stakeholders. The Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) is an initiative that provides meals to schools across the country. According to the Ghana National Social Protection Policy (2015), Parliament is tasked with enacting and amending laws related to social protection, approving and allocating financial

resources for social protection services, and overseeing the overall delivery of these services. This responsibility extends to ensuring that social protection measures are effectively implemented.

In the context of the GSFP, stakeholders can be categorized into three distinct levels: national, regional, and local/community levels. Each level plays a role in the execution and oversight of the program, ensuring that it reaches its intended beneficiaries and operates efficiently.

- The National Level:

At the national level, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Environment (MLGRD) acts as the central authority overseeing intergovernmental cooperation and interactions, coordinating efforts across different levels of government. It is also responsible for managing the whole program. At the time of its establishment in 2008, the Program Steering Committee (PSC) assumed a portion of the responsibilities formerly held by the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC), which was responsible for facilitating the launch of the program, as well as the National Technical Committee. The National Secretariat (NS) is the organization that is responsible for the coordination and management of the program. It is comprised of specialists who provide advice to the other national organizations about all elements of the program. The National Security Organization is accountable for the implementation of processes at the national level, as well as for guaranteeing accountability and reporting. Additionally, this structure provides assistance to the District Implementation Committees (DICs) as well as the School Implementation Committees (SICs). In accordance with their respective areas of competence, each of the ministries that are working together have both supporting and implementing duties.

• **Regional Level:**

At the regional and district levels in Ghana, the Regional Coordination Offices (RCOs) play a critical role in ensuring that the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) operates efficiently. They are responsible for reporting progress and ensuring accountability to the national level, while also monitoring the program's implementation at the local level. The RCOs collaborate closely with other stakeholders to ensure that the program's goals are met and that it reaches the intended beneficiaries.

In addition to supporting the RCOs, the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) plays an active role in helping the District Assemblies (DAs) enhance their operational capacity. The RCC works to ensure that DAs are adequately equipped to implement social protection programs, including the GSFP, and provides assistance in aligning district-level operations with national priorities.

The District Assemblies (DAs) are the primary bodies responsible for managing and implementing the GSFP within their respective districts. They coordinate all aspects of the program at the local level, from planning and logistics to monitoring and reporting. By directly overseeing the feeding program in schools, DAs ensure that it is delivered effectively to schools, helping improve student attendance, performance, and overall well-being.

This multi-level structure, with coordination across national, regional, and local actors, ensures that the GSFP is successfully implemented and remains accountable, thus contributing to the overall goals of improving education and addressing food insecurity for schoolchildren. They are responsible for ensuring that the program's lower levels are governed in an effective manner, as well as receiving and distributing the monies for the program.

Among their responsibilities are the establishment of operational DICs and SICs, the provision of essential infrastructure, and the mobilization of community support for the educational institutions. In its capacity as the primary school-coordinating organization, District Implementation Committees are actively participating in the supervision of the schools within the district. The District Desk Officer (DDO), who is tasked with providing feedback and communication to both the upper and lower ranks, plays a significant role within the committee.

• **Local/Community Level:**

School Implementation Committees are responsible for the implementation, planning, and execution of the feeding activities that are part of the program. Additionally, the committees are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding the mobilization of the community as well as of giving direct monitoring and supervision of the caterers.

In addition to the involvement of governmental institutions, the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) is supported by various strategic partners, each of whom plays a key role in the success of the policy. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are an essential part of this network, frequently offering technical expertise and insights drawn from their experience with previous school feeding programs. Their contributions help inform and improve the implementation of the GSFP, ensuring that lessons learned from past initiatives are applied effectively.

While some partners, such as the Dutch government, focus primarily on providing financial support, others may contribute in different ways, such as offering logistical assistance or technical guidance. This collaborative approach, combining both financial resources and technical knowledge, strengthens the GSFP and ensures its alignment with broader development goals.

These partnerships help to enhance the program's effectiveness and sustainability, ultimately benefiting the children and communities that rely on the initiative. With the help of funding from public sources, the government bears the primary duty for ensuring that social protection is provided in a manner that is both efficient and consistent throughout. With this objective in mind, the policy ensures that the national budget has sufficient provisions for social protection, which are derived from the consolidated fund. Planning and budgeting for social protection are incorporated into the overall budget of the government in order to achieve this goal. In this regard, Ghana runs the 'caterer model', where the service providers are awarded service delivery contracts by District Assemblies to purchase, store, process and serve the food pupils (Drake et al., 2016).

The enhancement of domestic food production constitutes the third urgent aim of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). The program promotes the procurement of 80% of foodstuffs from local sources, positing that providing school children with locally prepared meals will assist rural communities in generating wealth through enhanced incomes from the guaranteed market provided by the GSFP for their agricultural products, thereby disrupting the cycle of rural household and community poverty (Abu-Bakr, 2008 p.4; ECASARD/ARD/SNV Ghana, 2009).

The stakeholders cut across multiple sectors; education, agriculture, health and nutrition all with the aim of poverty reduction and food security.

2.5. Implementation of School Feeding Programme in Ghana

School feeding programs (SFPs) can be executed through various models, types, and principles.

Yendaw and Dayour (2015) categorized two main types of SFPs: in-school feeding and take-home rations. The in-school feeding program refers to situations where children receive meals at school, while take-home rations involve providing families with food when they enroll their children in

school. In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP, 2015) outlined five models for implementing SFPs: the centralized model, decentralized model, school-based model, community-based model, and the combination model.

The centralized model involves food being supplied and distributed to schools through the central government or government agencies, and it is typically seen in traditional school feeding programs.

The decentralized model, on the other hand, sees the central government transferring funds to local or municipal authorities, who then contract suppliers to provide meals in their regions. In the school-based model, schools receive cash or vouchers from the government to purchase food items from local markets, farmers, or cooperatives. The community-based model relies on local communities with the capacity to provide meals either by preparing food for children to take to school or by paying schools to offer meals. Lastly, the combination model integrates elements of the other models, adapting to the social context in which it is implemented (WFP, 2015).

The extent of coverage for SFPs varies significantly depending on the country's size and resources. Yendaw and Dayour (2015) note that in low-income countries, the SFP typically targets specific population groups, often determined by factors such as geographical location or family income levels. Conversely, in high- and middle-income countries, SFPs tend to cover a broader range of children, often providing free or subsidized meals in schools. This is particularly common in Scandinavian countries and other developed nations (FAO, 2005; WFP, 2015). According to the WFP, the scope of SFPs is generally influenced by a country's ability to support the program.

The implementation of the School Feeding Program (SFP) in Ghana involves several key partners, including the Government of Ghana, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the Ministry of Children, Gender and Social Protection, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the World Food Programme (WFP), the School Enterprise Development

Organization, and the Netherlands Development Cooperation, among others (GSFP Report, 2007-2010).

Each partner plays a distinct role in achieving the program's objectives. The Government of Ghana, consisting of Parliament and the Cabinet, is responsible for creating and passing the SFP bill into law. It also serves as the primary source of funding for the program. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development share the responsibility for implementing the program at the national level. Additionally, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture ensures that the program achieves its intended agricultural goals.

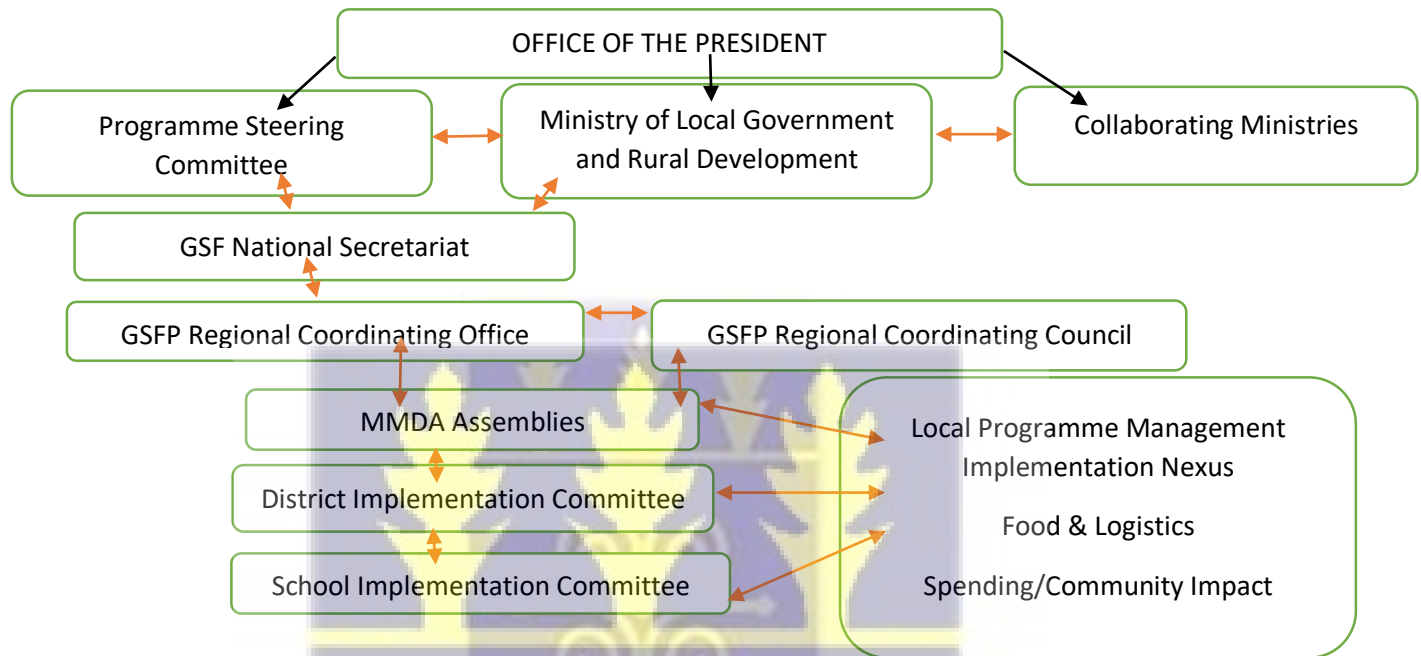
The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning ensures that allocated funds for the program are properly distributed to the relevant institutions for its execution. The Ministry of Children, Gender, and Social Protection is tasked with monitoring and evaluating the program's progress (GSFP Report, 2007-2010).

At the regional level, Duah (2011) highlights that the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) have been established to oversee the implementation of the program across Ghana's ten regions. These councils are responsible for planning and executing the program locally and are supported by a steering committee to help manage their responsibilities. At the district and school levels, the District Implementation Committee (DIC) and the School Implementation Committees (SIC) collaborate with the District Assembly to carry out the program. The DICs oversee the planning and monitoring of the program in schools, while the SICs handle the implementation and supervision of the program at each school.

Furthermore, the School Enterprise Development Organization and the Netherlands Development Cooperation are responsible for training caterers and cooks involved in the program's execution. These caterers are required to meet certain academic and food hygiene qualifications to ensure

they can effectively carry out their duties and contribute to the success of the program (GSFP Report, 2007-2010).

Figure 1: Implementation Framework for the SFP in Ghana



Source: GSFP Annual Operating Plan, 2018

2.6. The Role of Caterers in the Ghana School Feeding Programme.

A caterer model of school meal distribution is utilized by Ghana's School Feeding program at the Primary level. This model makes use of procurement criteria to contract caterers to carry out their catering commitments to beneficiary schools and pupils during the duration of the program, which is renewable.

In order to fulfill their obligation to stimulate the local economy, contracted caterers are often from the communities that are the beneficiaries of the contract. Additionally, according to the contractual guideline, they are expected to hire cooks from the same community.

It is stated in Section 3.1 of the GSFP Catering Contract that caterers who are engaged under the program are responsible for certain roles and tasks. To name a few, caterers are required to:

- Include in the meals that are provided, all three food categories.
- Fruits, eggs, and milk should be provided on a weekly basis at the very least.
- The meal chart that has been authorized by GSFP must be shown and followed.
- Make an effort to purchase at least twenty percent of the total value of food items from food producers who are small-holder farmers.
- Utilize a kitchen, storage space, and an enough amount of potable water that is given at no expense by the district in order to prepare and cook meals on the premises.
- A minimum of sixty percent of the daily stipend must be spent on food items for the purpose of meal preparation
- To guarantee that the daily nutritional and caloric requirements are satisfied, it is important to make use of the GSFP Handy Measure when food is being prepared and served.
- Provide the desk officer the "request for funds feeding forms/Caterer Claim Forms" that have been authorized by the headteacher.
- Ensure that they are in compliance with the processes outlined in the Code of Quantity and food hygiene checklist, as well as the Safety and Hygiene of Food and Health and Nutrition.
- Will be responsible for managing the payment of staff members who will be hired from within the community that will benefit from the program.
- Agree to provide his or her respective Metropolitan and Municipal District Assembly and GSFP representatives with the responsibility of monitoring the individual.

As a consequence of the initiative, more than 14,925 chefs all around Ghana were given the chance to find job and become financially independent (School Feeding in Ghana, Investment Case- Cost Benefit Analysis Report). The total number of caterers for the 2016–2017 academic year was 4,975, and the program was responsible for their employment. The pupils who attend schools that are recipients of the program are provided with meals that are prepared, cooked, and served by caterers who have been engaged as part of the project. The procurement of the materials, transportation from the market to the kitchen, meal preparation, and feeding the children are all tasks that fall within the purview of the caterers, who are responsible for organizing all aspects of the school's food production, delivery, and serving. Additionally, they are responsible for the majority of the costs, which includes the salary of the cooks as well as the overhead expenses.

2.7. Operational Issues of Ghana School Feeding Programme

The school feeding program, which is a social intervention program, began in a variety of different forms before entering its present operational structure. Across the globe, research has been carried out in a variety of departments and operations within the company. The study that D. A. Bundy and other researchers carried out in 2012 on the topic of school food, politics, and child health is one of the most notable pieces of work that has been done so far in connection to the current research challenge. Their research looked at the provision of school meals and its influence on enrollment, and they came to the conclusion that the program was successful had an effect on the number of students enrolled. It was mentioned that there was a political component not only interference in the functioning of the program, but also in what manner and in what form it interfered with the capturing of the image.

Koontz and Weirich (2001) argue that financial resources play a critical role in the successful execution of national programs or policies. The effective implementation of a school feeding program (SFP), like any national initiative, depends on significant financial support, primarily from the government and other stakeholders. Ayieke (2005) emphasizes that national programs such as the SFP should be incorporated into the government's annual budget in line with national planning procedures. Additionally, funds allocated to the program must be promptly distributed to relevant institutions to ensure its proper functioning (Ayieke, 2005; Nkethia, 2011). However, Koontz and Weirich (2001) highlight that inconsistent funding remains a major challenge for SFPs. Olubayo et al. (2013) also note that while resources are designated for the SFP, there is a lack of a clear plan for how these funds are managed in Nigeria. In a similar vein, Nkethia (2011) found that Kenyan schools receiving government funds for the SFP faced delays in the disbursement of funds, hindering their ability to implement the program efficiently and on time. Consequently, some students miss out on sufficient meals, and the few schools that manage to provide adequate food often fall short of meeting the program's nutritional standards (Nkethia, 2011).

The study that Essuman and Bosumtwi-Sam (2013) did bring to light the potential cost-effective approaches that might be utilized to ensure the program's continued success. The study examined the significant operating expenses incurred by several governments and the resulting impact on the budgets of national governments. There is no discussion of the actions that may be taken to reduce the high level of political influence throughout the whole document. The factors that are contributing to the increasing expenses associated with the program, as well as the measures that need be taken to curb the growing number of students enrolled in it. In a different piece of research,

the focus is placed on school meals as a social safety net that not only encourages children to attend school but also assists in keeping them there (Abotsi, 2013; McEwan, 2013; Bundy et al., 2009).

In addition, the work of Gelli et al. (2007) addresses the aspect of school meals as a factor in raising enrollment and attendance in schools. The aforementioned research did not provide a comprehensive overview of the significance of the teacher and the precise extent of political interference inside the program. In addition to this, it neglected to acknowledge the significance of the institutions that are accountable for education in the many nations in which these studies were conducted.

According to Robert and Weaver-Hightower (2011), there are studies that have mentioned the political influence in school feeding programs as well as the interaction between politics and food in different parts of the world. The article by D. A. Bundy et al. (2012) has yet another reference of politics in the context of school nutrition. With regard to school feeding, the majority of the work that has been done on politics involves mentioning the role of the government to oversee the program.

According to the findings of Alderman and Bundy (2012), the program in question is considered to be a social protection program in Ghana that is politically popular. To the author, the fact that politics is involved in the operations of the program, such as the recruiting of schools to participate in the program, makes it impossible to evaluate the program's actual effectiveness in terms of enrollment and attendance. In the work of Ahmed (2004), political activities in the process of recruiting schools tend to overshadow the program's objective to eliminate poverty. This is the position that Ahmed maintains. There were certain stakeholders that partnered the initiative in Ghana, such as the Send Foundation, who stated that political influence had already played a role from the very beginning of the program.

The haste with which decisions about school recruitment are made can sometimes be attributed to political considerations, which, despite the fact that they provide confusion over the poverty orientation, can also occasionally give a reason for why certain partners opt not to join. According to Essuman and Bosumtwi-Sam (2013) and Quaye et al. (2010), it is probable that they were accurate when they declared that halving hunger by the year 2015 was a political choice that could not be realized in the context of Ghana. This is because Ghana is a country that is now experiencing extremely high levels of hunger. Their findings were based on the features of the school recruitments that took place within the program. These were the factors that determined their outcomes.

During the course of their investigation on the significance of school feeding to basic participation in Ghana, Eric and Gyapong (2014) were able to quickly identify the distribution or allocation of caterer contracts in schools that are responsible for providing school meal services across the country. This demonstrates the relevance of political allocation in a plain and direct manner when contrasted with the employment of competence indicators as a means of recruitment. The capacity of the program to continue running over the long term, which is for the benefit of elementary school students, is put in peril by a practice such as this one in the recruitment of caterers. In addition to this, Chauhan (2015) mentioned that the need to increase enrollment and attendance should be the focus in order to attract efficient and skilled caterers who are able to provide better service to regions that are prone to hunger and are impoverished, and who have a larger demand for meals when they are participating in the program.

Cole (2007) highlights that community involvement is essential for the successful development and execution of a school feeding program (SFP). Similarly, Tablot and Verrinder (2005) support the idea that community participation is vital for program implementation, as it enables all

stakeholders to be part of the decision-making process. Briggs (2008) also found that the creation and implementation of an effective policy can be achieved by involving community members, including leaders, schools, parents, and children. In the context of the SFP, Young (2005) argues that the engagement of the community and parents is vital for the program's successful execution. According to Young (2005), "Implementation of SFP can be successful if the community can be consulted while designing the program if there are community-level structures for communication if there is a committee with parents and teachers...and if the community gets the motivation to execute their roles fully in providing SFP".

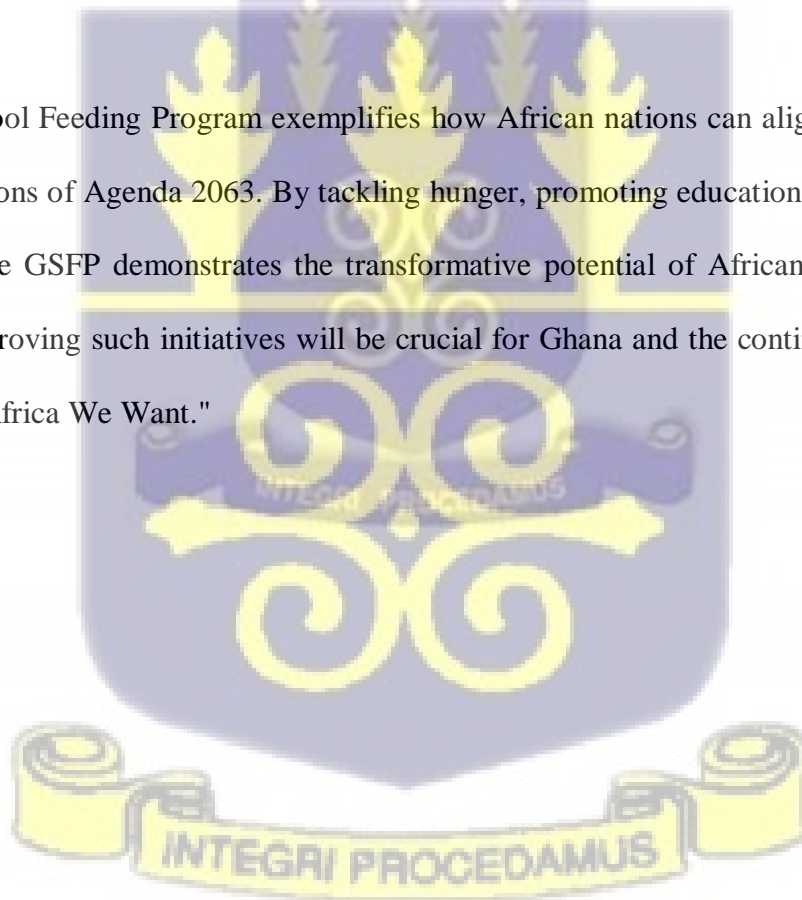
Additionally, Nkethia (2011) highlighted that involving parents, teachers, and communities in decisions related to the School Feeding Program (SFP) allows them to understand the program's impact on their children's educational performance. Despite the significant benefits of engaging parents and the community in the SFP's execution, Nkethia (2011) discovered that in Kenya, parents and communities have not been included in the implementation process. Likewise, the World Food Programme (2008) noted that, in many countries, there has been limited effort to involve parents and communities in the SFP's implementation. This lack of involvement influences how parents and community members perceive the program and its effects on their children.

2.8. Conclusion

Agenda 2063 is the African Union's (AU) blueprint for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse by 2063. It envisions inclusive and sustainable development driven by African solutions to African challenges. Key aspirations of the agenda include eradicating poverty and hunger, improving education, promoting gender equality, and fostering strong institutions. Central

to this vision is African agency, which emphasizes local ownership, innovative solutions, and leveraging Africa's resources and people to drive growth. The Ghana School Feeding Program aligns with Agenda 2063's objectives by addressing hunger, promoting education, and boosting local economic development. The GSFP is implemented through decentralized systems, engaging local governments, schools, and communities in decision-making. In supporting local economies, contracts are given to local farmers and caterers to promote entrepreneurship, enhance income levels, and reduce rural poverty. By reducing food insecurity and enhancing agricultural livelihoods, the GSFP addresses Agenda 2063's goal of zero hunger and extreme poverty. African Agency and Economic Growth under Aspiration 1 & 6: Inclusive Growth and Development are promoted.

The Ghana School Feeding Program exemplifies how African nations can align local initiatives with the aspirations of Agenda 2063. By tackling hunger, promoting education, and empowering communities, the GSFP demonstrates the transformative potential of African-driven solutions. Scaling and improving such initiatives will be crucial for Ghana and the continent to realize the vision of "The Africa We Want."



CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

3.0. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the data obtained from interviews conducted with key officials from the Ghana School Feeding Program Secretariat. The purpose of these interviews was to gather insights that directly address the research questions and objectives of the study. By exploring the perspectives and experiences of those involved in the implementation and oversight of the Ghana School Feeding Program, this chapter aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact and challenges. The findings from these interviews are discussed in relation to the specific aims of the research, shedding light on the various factors influencing the success and limitations of the program.

In this study, three key themes emerged from the participants' responses. These themes include the challenges of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP), the existing monitoring mechanisms, and other related issues associated with the program. Additionally, subthemes related to various aspects of the research topic were identified and categorized under the appropriate main themes.

3.1. Challenges of the Ghana School Feeding Programme

3.1.1 Lack of resources

In this research, every participant identified the lack of resources as a significant obstacle in the successful implementation of the SFP. The main concern was the lack of resources to meet the expenditure of the programme. One of the respondents who is a caterer stated:

“I think a main problem with SFP is that there is no much resources to pay for the foodstuff.

So, we have to always look for the cheaper ingredients when we go to the market which may

not be the best. Things are very expensive in the market and government has to add more money to the programme so that we can cook better food for the children”.

Similarly, another respondent who is also a caterer mentioned:

“...there is not enough money for the SFP. It makes it hard to cook the food. We always have to struggle when making the menu for the children. Even when we want to make the food nutritious, we can’t because the money is not enough. The government has to do something about this”.

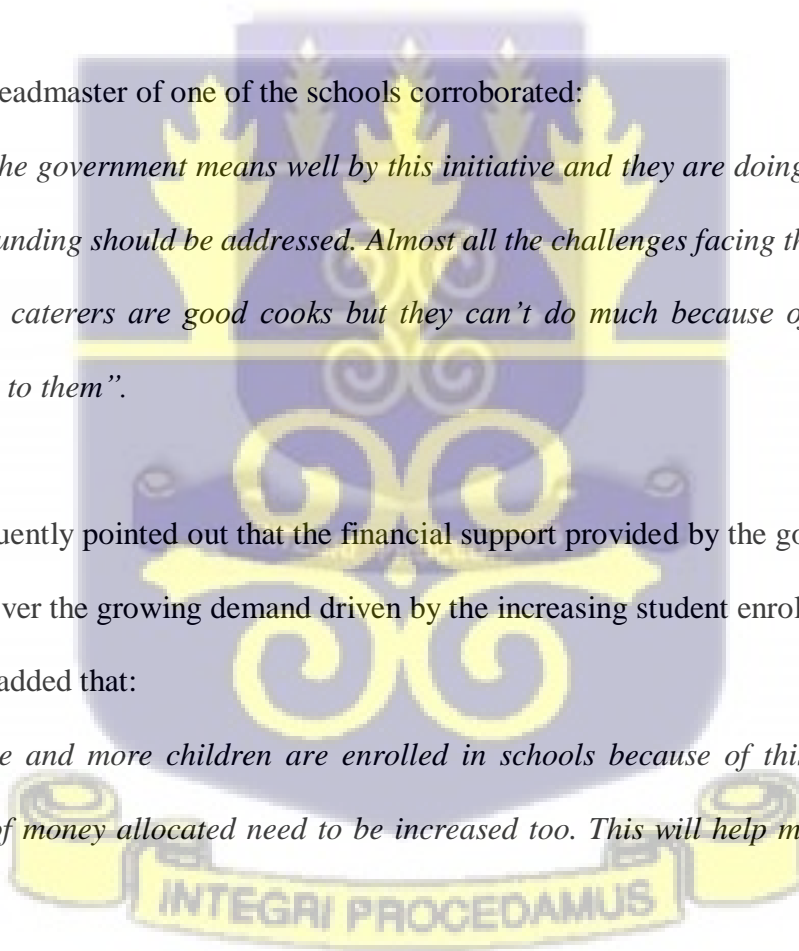
Furthermore, a headmaster of one of the schools corroborated:

“I know the government means well by this initiative and they are doing their best but the issue of funding should be addressed. Almost all the challenges facing the SFP stems from here. My caterers are good cooks but they can’t do much because of the little money available to them”.

Participants frequently pointed out that the financial support provided by the government is often insufficient to cover the growing demand driven by the increasing student enrollment.

The headmaster added that:

“As more and more children are enrolled in schools because of this programme, the amount of money allocated need to be increased too. This will help meet the prevailing needs”.



They shared that, at times, the allocated funds fall short of what is necessary to support the expanded reach of the program, which is particularly challenging as more children are enrolled each year. This financial shortfall not only affects the quality and consistency of the feeding program but also places additional strain on other resources, such as personnel and materials, which are also critical for the smooth operation of the SFP. Consequently, the study suggests that without addressing the resource limitations especially in terms of financial support the program may face difficulties in meeting its goals and delivering the intended benefits to the students.

3.1.2. Inconsistent Funding

More related to the above another significant challenge identified in this study is the delay and inconsistency of funding, which hampers the effective implementation of the School Feeding Program (SFP).

Another respondent caterer mentioned that:

“Not only will is the money not enough like my fellow caterers have said, the payment does not come consistently as it should. We can go months and months without receiving any money. Sometimes we have to put our personal money to cook the food for the children. We cannot even go for loans anymore because you cannot depend on the payment date that the secretariat tells us”.

One headteacher corroborated this by adding:

“The funds that we expect barely arrive on time and we are sometimes forced to use the small money the school has to support the programme till the government pays. As for the children, they come to school always expecting to receive food”.

Additionally, caterers involved in the SFP are often required to prefinance the program, meaning they must cover the costs of providing meals upfront, with reimbursement coming after a delay.

One of the caterers narrated an instance,

“I made my son take a loan for me because he was working in the bank at that time. I was hopeful that we would receive all our backlog payment so that I can give it back to my son but it did not come. If not for my husband that gave me some more money, my son would have been hot papa.”

This financial burden, coupled with the uncertainty of when payments will be made, discourages many caterers from continuing to invest in the program. The delays and inconsistency in funding thus create a ripple effect, not only jeopardizing the quality and consistency of the SFP but also affecting the motivation of those directly involved in its delivery.

A respondent at the secretariat added that:

“... unlike other social interventions that have specific fund allocation where the programme can always tap into, the SFP doesn't have. We have sent a petition for a policy to parliament. If it goes through successfully, we would have an account where money comes into like the GETFund and NHIS.”

Drawing from his statement, it showed that the programme only has access to funding as and when. No certainty that they could even make future projections with. Without a reliable and timely flow of funds, both schools and caterers face significant challenges in sustaining the program and ensuring its long-term success.

3.1.3. Poor Nutrition

Poor nutrition emerged during this study as a significant challenge to the effective implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP). One of the key issues contributing to this challenge is the insufficient amount of food allocated to each student, which is inadequate to provide a well-balanced, nutritious hot meal. Some participants mentioned that there is usually poor nutrition which defeats the purpose.

A respondent mentioned that:

“The menu designed is to meet the nutritional needs of the children but how can we do this with the little money? We end up cooking more of the meals that is not very expensive so that the money will be enough. It is what the money can afford that we prepare”.

Another respondent who is also a caterer corroborated this by saying:

“The authorities keep telling us to serve the children with fruits so that they have a balanced diet but even a hot meal is a challenge. The children do not eat vegetables as much as they should. This is surely going to affect their nutrition. We have to check this, hmm”.

A personnel member from the Secretariat mentioned that:

“The amount per child has recently been increased from Ghc1.50p to Ghc2.00 after series of lobbying with the government and expressing how insufficient the initial amount was”.



3.1.4. Caterer-Local Farmers linkage

A significant challenge faced in the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) is the difficulty in effectively linking caterers to local farmers, which could enable them to acquire farm products at more affordable prices.

According to one of the caterers:

“In the early days we were getting some foodstuff from the Buffer stock people and the prices were okay for us because they were coming directly from the villages. But now we don’t have those anymore. The farmers that we are lucky to get into contact with don’t even want to sell to us because they get higher prices when they go to the market to sell themselves. If only we could have a constant supply from farmers, it will help us manage our little finances and we can serve the children better”.

The program could benefit greatly from establishing direct connections between caterers and local agricultural producers, allowing caterers to purchase fresh, locally grown ingredients at lower costs. However, logistical issues, such as a lack of organized supply chains, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and limited coordination between caterers and farmers, often prevent this from happening.

A headteacher supported this statement stating that,

“The few times the farmers supplied for us they kept complaining that the bad roads and connecting to the neighboring towns is a problem. If the SFP can get some trucks that could be loading foodstuff and supplying for us that will be very good”.

As a result, caterers are forced to rely on more expensive market sources for their food supplies, which strains the already limited funds allocated per pupil. This challenge makes it harder for caterers to meet the nutritional and quantity requirements of the program while staying within

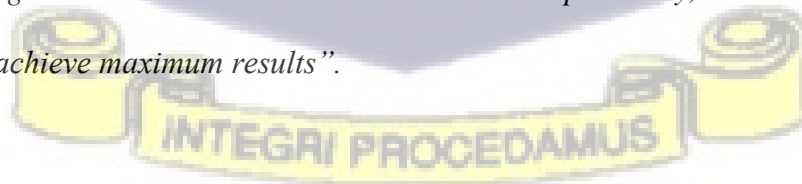
budget. By improving the linkages between caterers and local farmers, it would be possible to lower food costs, increase the availability of fresh and nutritious ingredients, and ultimately ensure that the food provided to students aligns with the program's goals of delivering healthy and balanced meals.

3.1.5. Weak collaboration among stakeholders

A major obstacle to the successful implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) is the weak collaboration among key stakeholders involved in its execution. The program involves various parties, including government agencies, school authorities, caterers, farmers, and local communities, yet these stakeholders often operate in silos with limited communication and coordination.

The participant from the secretariat mentioned,

“From the inception of the programme it was true that all these various stakeholders had to collaborate but that is not the reality on the ground. There is always a break in communication somewhere or direction challenge as to the vision and goals. In some areas, the farmers work very well with the caterers in supplying them with the farm produce but that is not the case for majority. We see some local authorities facilitating these links because they realize the benefits the community is deriving from the SFP and how well it is boosting education. No stakeholder can work independently, we all need collaborative effort to achieve maximum results”.



3.2. The Current Monitoring Mechanisms of the Ghana School Feeding Programme

The second objection sought to examine the monitoring mechanisms in place and how best it is been operationalized to ensure the programme is running at its maximum capacity and any lapses in the system is discovered.

From the field work, the study gathered that a digital system had been put in place to monitor the programme mainly ensuring that the caterers are delivering on their mandate and are showing up every day to their various schools to cater.

It was discovered that in 2021, the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) launched its digitalization initiative to improve the monitoring and management of the program. The pilot phase of this digital system was rolled out across 16 regions, utilizing 300 digital tablets equipped with ONA and Tableau software. These tools were designed to streamline data collection, analysis, and reporting, ensuring better tracking of program activities and outcomes. Key stakeholders, including supervisors, headteachers, and school feeding staff, received training to effectively use the new digital tools as part of the pilot project. The aim of this digitalization effort was to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the program, making it easier to monitor the allocation of resources, track meal distribution, and ensure that the program meets its nutritional and logistical goals. Through this initiative, the GSFP sought to modernize its operations and create a more robust system for overseeing the implementation of school feeding activities nationwide.



3.2.1 Operationalization of the Digital Monitoring system

As part of the digital monitoring system, several tools were introduced to streamline the day-to-day activities of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP).

A personnel member from the secretariat gave the breakdown of how the digital system works:

“The first level of the digital monitoring system is the daily records form, which must be completed by the Headteacher. This form is designed to capture vital information about the program’s daily operations, including meal distribution and student participation. Next is the Headteacher tool which is handled by the regional teams during their regular monitoring visits to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is collected.

There is the Caterer tool, which is managed by the GSFP's regional and zonal coordinators. This tool is intended to track the performance of caterers, ensuring they adhere to the program’s standards for meal quality, quantity, and timeliness.

A third tool, the Joint Monitoring Tool, which combines elements from both the Headteacher and Caterer tools. This is mainly used to provide a comprehensive assessment of the program’s implementation, focusing on validating enrollment figures, ensuring the smooth flow of information, and evaluating the overall performance of caterers”.

It was gathered from some interactions with the respondents from the secretariat also that the staff and regional coordinators were given adequate training on how to collect and report data using this new system. They were equipped with digital devices that had the required software programmes to facilitate this monitoring activity. These monitoring tools work together to improve transparency, accuracy, and efficiency in the program, ensuring that the GSFP meets its objectives of providing consistent, nutritious meals to students across the country.

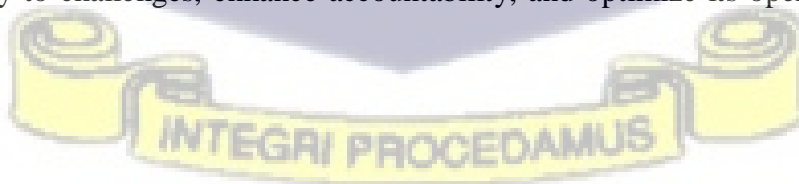
The respondent from the secretariat added:

“Formerly all the records that were gathered when the monitoring officers go to the fields are recorded in ink and the officers give monthly reports of them. In rural communities that have challenges with proper bookkeeping and storage facilities, the reports get lost before any authority gets to read it or effect any change. Sometimes too the officers do not even go to the various schools to check if the right things are done”.

It is seen that prior to the introduction of the digitalization initiative, the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) relied on manual methods for collecting, collating, and storing data. This traditional approach led to numerous challenges, including uncoordinated data management, unreliable information, and a lack of real-time access to critical data for decision-making. The manual system made it difficult to monitor the program effectively, as delays in data processing and reporting hindered timely interventions and adjustments.

However, with the new phase of the digitalization agenda, the GSFP is transitioning from the outdated manual system to a more efficient digital operating system. The system shows the geolocation at the time of upload of data so officers are compelled to visit the schools.

This shift is expected to significantly improve the accuracy, reliability, and accessibility of data, enabling more informed decision-making. The digital system allows for real-time monitoring, immediate data access, and better coordination among stakeholders, ensuring the program’s activities are effectively tracked and managed. As a result, the program is better positioned to respond promptly to challenges, enhance accountability, and optimize its operations for greater impact.



3.3. Impacts of the Ghana School Feeding Programme on education

The third objective was to examine whether truly the GSFP was making any impact and if their vision and goals were being met. And from the respondents, it was realized that indeed there had been some significant changes in the educational system after this programme rolled out.

3.3.1 Enrolment

The Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) has played a significant role in increasing student enrollment, thereby contributing to the enhancement of education in the country. By providing free, nutritious meals to students, the program has acted as a strong incentive for parents to send their children to school, particularly in rural and underserved areas where financial constraints are often a barrier to education. The promise of a reliable, daily meal has encouraged higher attendance rates, as children are motivated to come to school not only for educational purposes but also for the nourishment that supports their health and well-being.

A respondent from the secretariat mentioned:

“The number of beneficiary pupils have increased from 1,677,771 in 2016/2017 to 4,000,000 in 2022. More children not only come to school but stay till the end of the school years”

This number is very encouraging and it is safe to say that a positive impact is been made. As a result, the GSFP has not only improved food security for children but also helped reduce absenteeism and dropout rates, creating a more stable and engaged student population. This increase in enrollment has had a positive ripple effect, improving overall access to education, enhancing learning outcomes, and supporting the government's broader efforts to achieve universal primary education.

3.3.2. Retention

The Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) has also made significant strides in improving pupil retention across the country. By offering a consistent and nutritious meal to students, the program helps address one of the key reasons for school dropout, which is food insecurity.

A headteacher told us that:

“Children are now motivated to remain in school till they complete the primary education level. This was not the case some years back. The programme has its shortcomings but all in all it is a good one.”

In many rural and economically disadvantaged communities, families struggle to provide regular meals for their children, leading to poor attendance and, in some cases, eventual dropout. The provision of free meals through the GSFP not only helps alleviate this challenge but also ensures that children remain in school, focused on their education rather than worrying about their next meal. This support has contributed to a reduction in absenteeism and improved retention rates, as children are more likely to continue their education when they know they will be nourished. As a result, the program has become a critical tool in keeping children engaged in their learning journey and helping to secure their long-term educational success.

3.3.3 Academic Performance

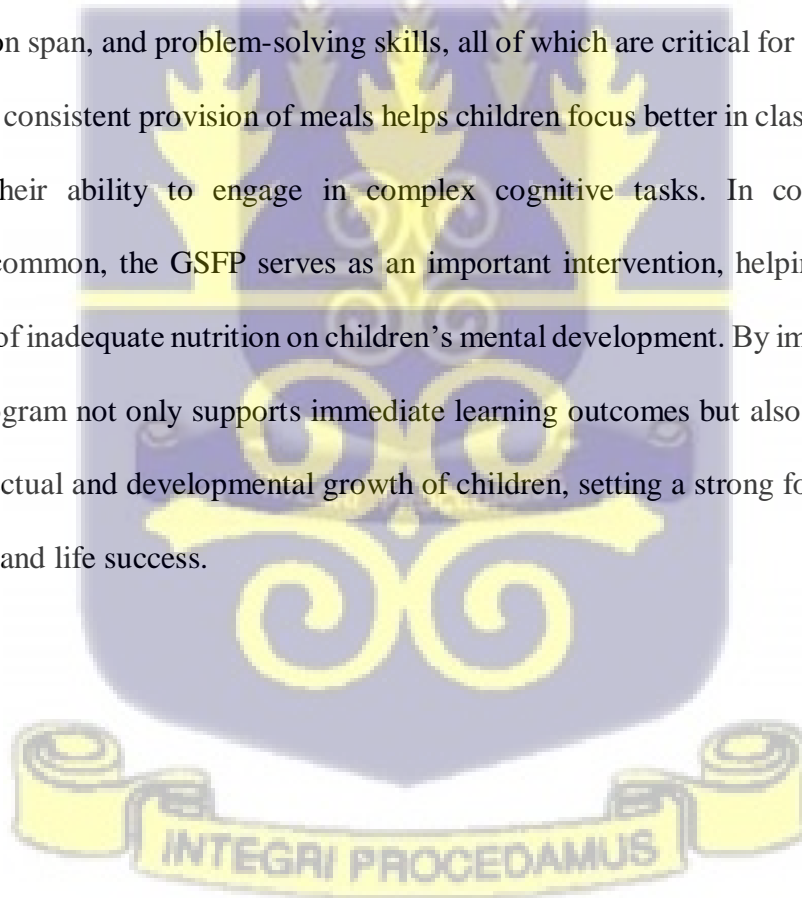
It is true that the meals were not be a well-balanced diet but it is a better option than hunger. Nourished students are better equipped to participate actively in lessons, concentrate for longer periods, and exhibit improved cognitive function.

Another headteacher added,

“... the regular meal serves as an incentive for children to attend school consistently, further promoting academic engagement. The students are doing better in BECE than before, especially in our underprivileged communities.”

This nutritional support though inadequate is particularly important in low-income areas where children might otherwise struggle with hunger and malnutrition, which can impair their ability to perform academically.

As a result, the GSFP contributes to better learning outcomes, higher test scores, and overall improvements in the academic achievements of students, making it a crucial factor in the broader effort to enhance education quality in Ghana. Adequate nutrition has been linked to improved memory, attention span, and problem-solving skills, all of which are critical for academic success. In particular, the consistent provision of meals helps children focus better in class, reduces fatigue, and enhances their ability to engage in complex cognitive tasks. In communities where malnutrition is common, the GSFP serves as an important intervention, helping to mitigate the negative effects of inadequate nutrition on children’s mental development. By improving cognitive function, the program not only supports immediate learning outcomes but also contributes to the long-term intellectual and developmental growth of children, setting a strong foundation for their future academic and life success.



3.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings under Lack of resources aligns closely with the perspective shared by Koontz and Wierch (2001), who argued that resource scarcity poses a major challenge to the effective execution of the SFP. The consistency of these views underscores the crucial role that adequate resources play in ensuring the success of such programs. The study further highlighted that the resources currently available are not adequate to address the growing number of children enrolling in primary schools. This issue has been noted by previous research, including the World Food Programme's (WFP) 2006 report, which identified the lack of sufficient resources as a key barrier to the effective implementation of School Feeding Programs (SFP). In this particular study, participants specifically underscored the importance of financial resources, placing a stronger emphasis on this aspect compared to other resources such as teaching materials, staff, and infrastructure. Despite acknowledging the importance of these other elements, they emphasized that without adequate funding, the program's sustainability and success are at risk.

This financial shortfall not only affects the quality and consistency of the feeding program but also places additional strain on other resources, such as personnel and materials, which are also critical for the smooth operation of the SFP. Consequently, the study suggests that without addressing the resource limitations especially in terms of financial support the program may face difficulties in meeting its goals and delivering the intended benefits to the students.

The issue of inconsistent funding aligns with the findings of Nkethia (2011), who noted that many schools in Kenya view delayed government funds as a major threat to the success of the SFP. Participants in the current study shared similar concerns, explaining that the delay in receiving funds sometimes forces them to use their own school resources to temporarily support the program. Once the government funds are eventually disbursed, the school is reimbursed, but this process

can cause financial strain and disrupt the smooth operation of the program and the school's schedule.

The delay in funding often impacts the school's ability to complete other essential developmental projects. The unpredictability of financial resources forces schools to divert attention away from their broader goals and concentrate on maintaining the SFP. In some instances, participants noted that the funding provided is not always sufficient to meet the growing demands of the school. This shortage in funding affects several aspects of the program, including menu planning, food quality, and the frequency of meal servings. Inadequate funds may result in fewer meals being served, a reduction in the variety of food offered, or a compromise in food quality, all of which can negatively influence the overall effectiveness and impact of the program.

The globally acceptable amount allocated for food per child ranges between \$0.60 - \$1.00 which is between Ghc9.24 and Ghc15.40. In comparison to the amount the SFP is giving, it falls way below the mark, clearly indicating how insufficient it is.

Despite the program's objective to improve the nutritional status of children, the limited food portion per pupil often fails to meet the recommended daily dietary requirements. As a result, students may not receive the essential nutrients they need for growth, cognitive development, and overall health. This inadequacy in food quantity and quality undermines the program's goal of improving student well-being and academic performance. Additionally, the lack of variety in the meals served, due to limited resources, further exacerbates the problem by not providing the necessary balance of proteins, vitamins, and minerals.

Consequently, poor nutrition remains a persistent barrier to the GSFP's success, as it compromises the health of students and reduces the program's potential impact on their learning outcomes.

The weak collaboration can lead to inefficiencies, delays, and misunderstandings, which ultimately affect the program's effectiveness. For instance, caterers may not receive timely updates on changes in funding or food supply, while schools may struggle to align their needs with available resources. Additionally, the disconnect between farmers and caterers hampers the ability to source fresh, affordable produce, while insufficient involvement of local communities can lead to a lack of support or engagement in the program. Strengthening partnerships and fostering open communication among all stakeholders is essential to improving the efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the GSFP, ensuring that the program can meet its objectives of providing nutritious meals to students and supporting local agriculture.

Stakeholders, including headteachers and caterers, have praised the initiative for reducing manual errors and enhancing accountability in meal provision. However, challenges persist. Many schools especially in remote or rural areas are not yet included in the digital monitoring rollout due to insufficient tablets, power supply issues, or poor internet connectivity (WFP, 2022). While the digital monitoring system has improved data collection in pilot schools, many schools especially in rural areas are still not integrated into the system due to limited infrastructure and device availability. This creates a gap between digitally monitored and non-monitored schools, reducing the system's overall effectiveness. Although hundreds of personnel (headteachers, circuit supervisors, GSFP staff) have been trained, inconsistent digital literacy levels affect data entry quality. Some users struggle with the tablet interface, especially where training was brief or lacked follow-up support (WFP, 2022). The stakeholders require periodic training and retraining to keep them abreast with the ever-evolving information technology.

The digital monitoring mechanisms is effective in enhancing the GSFP, but its actual success depends heavily on proper rollout, infrastructure support, and oversight mechanisms. In its current state, it's partially effective with room for significant improvement.

Impacts of the GSFP on enhancing education: Drawing from the respondents' comments the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) plays a significant role in enhancing education through its impact on enrolment, retention, and academic performance. By providing free, hot meals to basic school pupils, the programme reduces the financial burden on families and incentivizes school attendance. This has led to increased enrolment, particularly among children from low-income households, as parents are more willing to send their children to school when meals are guaranteed. A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) found that school enrolment increased by about 4% overall, with larger gains among girls and children from low-income households (IFPRI, 2023). The assurance of daily meals also reduces absenteeism, encouraging regular attendance and contributing to higher retention rates throughout the school year.

In terms of academic performance, it was deduced that GSFP supports learning by addressing hunger, which can negatively affect concentration and cognitive function. With improved nutrition, children are more attentive and better able to participate in classroom activities. While the overall impact on academic outcomes varies, the study generally shows modest but positive effects on test scores and classroom engagement. These educational gains, however, are most effective when the feeding programme is implemented consistently and supported by adequate resources and infrastructure.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study, highlighting its key findings, drawing conclusions based on the results, and offering recommendations for improving the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP).

4.1. Summary of the findings

From the data gathered and analyzed, this section presents a comprehensive summary of the key operational constraints affecting collaboration between policymakers and stakeholders involved in the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). These include challenges such as inadequate coordination, limited communication channels, and delays in funding disbursements, all of which hinder smooth implementation. The analysis also examines the existing monitoring mechanisms within the programme, including district-level oversight teams, periodic reports, and digital tracking tools, though these are often constrained by limited capacity and inconsistent application across regions. Furthermore, the section outlines proposed measures to strengthen the achievement of the policy's objectives, such as enhanced stakeholder engagement, capacity building for caterers and school administrators, and improved budgetary support. To ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness, the findings emphasize the need for transparent procurement processes, the integration of real-time data systems, and consistent policy evaluation. These steps are essential to improving service delivery, ensuring accountability, and ultimately achieving the programme's goals of supporting education and child nutrition.

4.1.1 Challenges of the Ghana School Feeding Programme

The research revealed several significant challenges that hinder the effective implementation of the School Feeding Program (SFP), with three primary subthemes emerging: Lack of resources, Inconsistent funding, and Poor nutrition. Participants in the study consistently pointed to the lack of resources as a major obstacle, arguing that the financial resources allocated by the government are insufficient to meet the nutritional requirements of primary schoolchildren. The limited funds often result in insufficient quantities of food, which affects the program's ability to provide the balanced and nutritious meals necessary for the children's growth and development. This resource shortage also restricts the variety of meals that can be offered, leading to a less effective feeding program.

In addition to resource constraints, delayed funding was another critical issue highlighted by participants. The delay in the disbursement of government funds creates substantial challenges for the smooth running of the program. As a result, school administrators and caterers often face financial uncertainty, making it difficult to plan and execute the program effectively. In some instances, participants mentioned that they had to use their own personal or school funds to cover the costs of the program while waiting for reimbursement from the government. This situation not only creates financial strain but also undermines the reliability and consistency of the program. The uncertainty around when and how much funding will be disbursed leaves school authorities and caterers anxious and less able to focus on delivering quality services to the students.

Furthermore, the delay in funds disrupts the timely purchase of necessary food items and the proper implementation of feeding schedules, which can negatively impact meal quality and student

satisfaction. This issue compounds the challenges related to resource shortages, making it even harder to ensure that every child receives a healthy, balanced meal as part of the program.

4.1.2 The Current Monitoring Mechanisms of the Ghana School Feeding Programme

As part of efforts to enhance the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP), several digital tools have been introduced to improve daily operations and oversight. A key feature is the daily records form, completed by Headteachers, which logs essential data such as student attendance and meal distribution. To ensure the accuracy of this data, regional teams review it during their routine monitoring visits.

Additionally, the Caterer tool overseen by regional and zonal coordinators tracks how well caterers meet standards for food quality, quantity, and delivery schedules. A third component, the Joint Monitoring Tool, brings together elements of both the Headteacher and Caterer tools to offer a fuller picture of how the program is running. It helps verify student numbers, evaluate caterer performance, and ensure a smooth flow of information.

Previously, the GSFP used a manual system to collect and store data, which created major setbacks, such as poor coordination, delayed reporting, and limited access to timely information. The shift to a digital platform now enables real-time data tracking, improves data accuracy, and strengthens collaboration among stakeholders. This transition not only enhances accountability but also ensures more efficient and responsive management of the program, helping it better achieve its goal of delivering nutritious meals to students nationwide.

4.1.3. Impacts of the Ghana School Feeding Programme on Education

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) has had a notable positive impact on school enrollment, retention, and academic performance, particularly in underserved and rural communities.

Since its introduction, the GSFP has contributed to a marked increase in school enrollment across many regions of Ghana. By providing free, nutritious meals to pupils in public basic schools, the program has helped remove a significant barrier to education—hunger. For many families struggling with poverty, the promise of a daily meal motivates them to enroll their children in school. This is especially true for girls and children in lower-income households, where food insecurity might otherwise prevent regular schooling.

The feeding program has also played a crucial role in keeping children in school. Daily meals not only attract students but also encourage them to attend school regularly. Many schools have reported improved attendance rates and reduced dropout levels since the introduction of the GSFP. For children who previously skipped school due to lack of food, the availability of meals now provides a strong incentive to stay in class throughout the academic year.

Nutrition is directly linked to a child's ability to learn, and the GSFP has helped improve student concentration, participation, and overall cognitive development. Children who are not distracted by hunger can better focus during lessons, retain information, and engage actively in school activities. While results may vary by region and meal quality, many schools have observed a general improvement in students' academic outcomes since the implementation of the program.

In summary, the GSFP not only addresses child hunger but also strengthens the educational system by enhancing access, encouraging consistent attendance, and creating a more conducive environment for learning.

4.1.4. Ensuring efficient and effective running of the policy

The GSFP plays a critical role in improving school enrollment, attendance, nutrition, and learning outcomes among basic school pupils. However, to sustain and enhance its impact, targeted strategies must be employed to make the program more efficient, transparent, and impactful.

Expanding the use of digital monitoring tools such as the Headteacher Tool, Caterer Tool, and Joint Monitoring Tool to collect real-time, accurate data on meal distribution, attendance, and caterer performance to all the communities. This way the frequency of visits by district and regional GSFP officers to schools will ensure that meals are delivered on time, in the right quantities, and meet required standards.

The per-child feeding allocation must be reviewed periodically to reflect inflation, food price fluctuations, and regional cost differences. The current rate must be enough to cover quality ingredients and logistics. Delays in payments that have historically disrupted services should be tackled as well. The establishment of systems that ensure caterers receive payments on time to maintain steady supply and avoid compromising food quality must be adopted.

Inclusion of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), School Management Committees (SMCs), and traditional leaders in planning, implementation, and oversight is an efficient way of engaging relevant stakeholders. Mainly to discuss the performance of the program and gather feedback from beneficiaries and community members to better the implementation of the programme. Once these stakeholders realize their relevance in the smooth running of the programme, they will throw their weight behind it and ensure its success.

Partnering with local farmers and cooperatives to supply grains, vegetables, and other staples, creating guaranteed markets for their produce. This way the caterers are assured of constant supplies and can plan accordingly, with the approved menu and available funds. In addition to this partnership, caterers and farmers can be assisted with logistical support such as safe storage facilities or transport subsidies to reduce spoilage and waste.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) has emerged as a significant pillar in Ghana's broader strategy to improve educational access, enhance child nutrition, and promote social protection. Since its inception, the programme has made commendable strides in addressing hunger in schools and creating an enabling environment for learning, particularly for children in rural and underserved communities. The core objectives of increasing school enrolment, improving retention rates, and boosting academic performance have largely been supported through the daily provision of nutritious meals to pupils in public basic schools.

However, despite its achievements, the implementation of the GSFP has not been without its challenges. Based on the findings, one of the most pressing issues is the inconsistent and delayed release of funds to caterers, which disrupts the regular delivery of meals and affects the quality and quantity of food served. Additionally, weak oversight and coordination at various administrative levels have sometimes led to inefficiencies, mismanagement, and lapses in service delivery. Some caterers lack the necessary training and logistical capacity to consistently meet the programme's nutritional and hygiene standards, while others operate without proper accountability due to political interference or inadequate monitoring mechanisms.

To address these challenges, the introduction of digital monitoring tools marks a pivotal step in improving transparency, efficiency, and data accuracy. Tools such as the Headteacher Tool, Caterer Tool, and Joint Monitoring Tool provide real-time insights into key operational areas including meal distribution, student attendance, and caterer performance. These innovations not only enhance the quality of data collection but also support more informed decision-making by stakeholders at all levels—from school authorities to national policymakers. However, the full potential of these tools will only be realized if they are properly integrated, regularly updated, and supported by adequate training and logistical support for field officers.

The impact of the GSFP on education has been widely acknowledged. The programme has played a crucial role in improving school enrollment rates, as the promise of a daily meal serves as an incentive for many parents to send their children to school. Furthermore, it has significantly contributed to improving student retention, especially in economically disadvantaged communities, where hunger is a key barrier to sustained schooling. In terms of academic performance, students who benefit from the GSFP are often more attentive and energized, with better classroom participation and cognitive function.

To ensure the continued effectiveness and sustainability of the GSFP, several strategic measures are essential. First, there must be a commitment to timely and adequate funding, adjusted periodically to reflect the realities of food prices and inflation. Second, the process of caterer selection must be transparent and merit-based, supported by continuous training in food safety, nutrition, and efficient food preparation. Third, community participation and ownership should be strengthened by actively involving Parent-Teacher Associations, School Management

Committees, and local leaders in monitoring and feedback processes. Fourth, stronger multi-sectoral coordination between relevant ministries such as Gender, Education, Health, and Agriculture is needed to harmonize resources and policies for a more holistic approach.

Finally, data-driven planning and policy-making should be at the core of programme management. Regular performance reviews, impact evaluations, and stakeholder feedback must guide future reforms and scaling decisions. If these improvements are effectively implemented, the GSFP can continue to serve as a transformative initiative—not only feeding schoolchildren but also nurturing a healthier, more educated, and empowered generation.

Finally, while the GSFP faces real and ongoing challenges, it also presents a tremendous opportunity. With strategic investment, improved accountability, and strong stakeholder collaboration, the programme has the potential to evolve into a model for school feeding in Africa and beyond—delivering long-term social, educational, and economic benefits to the nation.

4.3. Recommendations

There are several strategies through which the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) can be enhanced to better achieve its objectives.

- One of the key improvements is ensuring a sustainable and reliable source of funding to support the program's long-term success. This can be achieved through diversified funding channels, including public-private partnerships and international aid, to ensure that the program is not vulnerable to delays or financial shortages.
- Another important step is increasing collaboration and forging partnerships with individuals, local businesses, private sector companies, and international organizations. These collaborations can

provide additional resources, expertise, and logistical support, helping to strengthen the program's impact. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the program's activities are also crucial, as they allow for continuous assessment of progress, identification of challenges, and timely adjustments to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

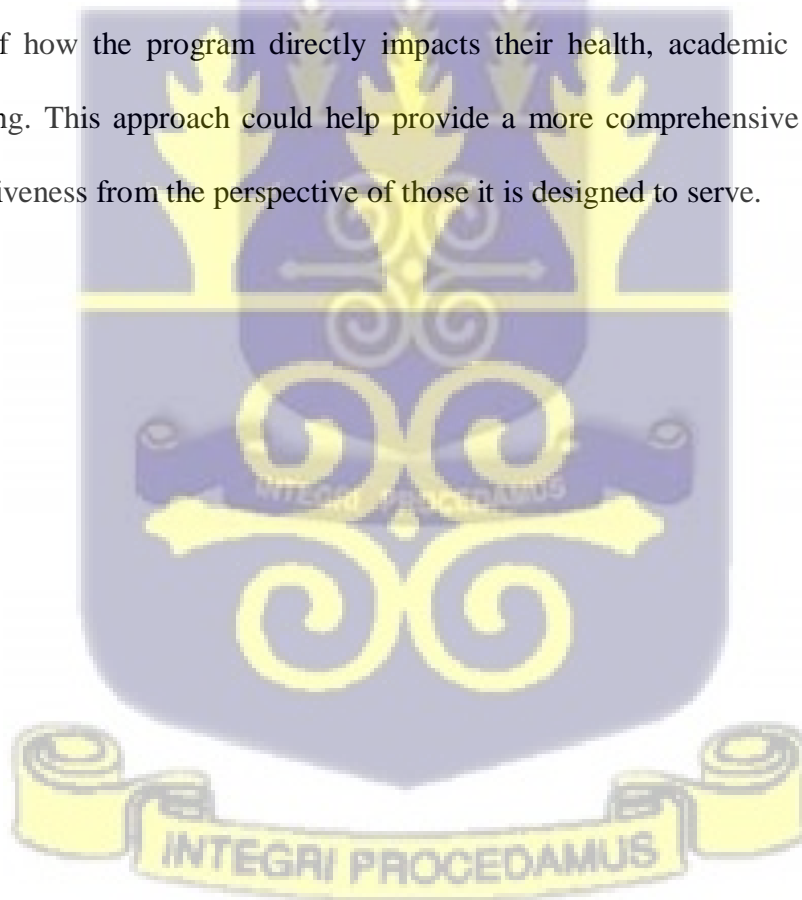
- It is recommended that stakeholders in the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) prioritize the provision of nutritious meals by implementing effective menu planning. This should include well-balanced meals that meet the nutritional needs of students, with the addition of fresh fruits and vegetables to help prevent malnutrition-related chronic diseases and promote better health outcomes.
- Lastly, educating the general public about the goals and benefits of the GSFP can foster greater community support and involvement, which is essential for the program's sustainability. By raising awareness and involving local communities, the program can gain broader support and increase its overall success in addressing issues of hunger and education. These combined efforts can significantly improve the implementation of the GSFP, ensuring that it meets its objectives of enhancing education, nutrition, and social development.

4.4. Suggestions for future study

A potential area of research could be assessing the cost-effectiveness of the program, including evaluating the financial management and sustainability of funding sources to ensure its continued success. Moreover, studies could examine the potential for improving the linkage between local farmers and caterers to reduce food costs and increase the use of locally sourced ingredients.

Exploring the role of community involvement and awareness in the success of the GSFP could offer valuable perspectives on how local engagement can support program effectiveness and sustainability.

Additionally, this study may not have explored all possible approaches to qualitative research. Future research could examine alternative methods, such as face-to-face interviews or focus group discussions, to gather more in-depth and diverse perspectives. Moreover, this research primarily focused on administrators and caterers, who are not direct recipients of the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP). Future studies could shift focus to include the children who are the direct beneficiaries of the program. Gaining insights from the students themselves would offer a deeper understanding of how the program directly impacts their health, academic performance, and overall well-being. This approach could help provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the program's effectiveness from the perspective of those it is designed to serve.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CATERERS

Background Information

- Caterer's name
- How long have you been a caterer with the GSFP?
- How many schools do you currently serve?
- On average, how many pupils do you provide meals for each day?

Food Preparation and Supply

- How do you source the ingredients used for the meals?
- Are there any challenges you face in getting ingredients on time or in the right quantity?
- Do you receive any support or guidance regarding nutrition standards or meal plans?

Funding and Payments

- How would you describe the consistency and timeliness of payments from the GSFP?
- Have you experienced any delays in receiving funds? If yes, how has this affected your operations?
- Are the funds you receive adequate to cover the cost of food, transportation, and labor?

Supervision

- How often do you interact with GSFP coordinators or school authorities?
- Do you receive regular monitoring or feedback on your performance?

Expectation and Recommendations

- What are the main challenges you face as a GSFP caterer?
- What support or changes would help you perform your duties more effectively?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving the GSFP overall?



Appendix II

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS & GSFP SECRETARIAT PERSONNEL

Background information

- Interviewee Name
- Interviewee role
- How long have you been involved with the GSFP?
- What is your role or responsibility within the programme?

Programme Implementation

For Headteachers:

- How would you describe the implementation of the GSFP in your school?
- What are the key benefits you've observed since the programme started?
- Are there any specific operational challenges you face with the caterers?

For GSFP Secretariat Personnel:

- What are the main responsibilities of the Secretariat in managing the GSFP?
- How does the Secretariat ensure that the programme runs effectively across schools?

Monitoring and Evaluation

- What monitoring systems are currently in place to track performance (e.g., meal delivery, quality, attendance)?

- How often do monitoring visits occur, and who conducts them?
- How would you describe the coordination between schools, caterers, and the GSFP Secretariat?
- Are there any established channels for feedback?
- How are decisions about caterer selection or menu development made?

Impact and Recommendation

- What impact has the GSFP had on school enrolment, attendance, and learning outcomes?
- In your opinion, what are the most pressing challenges facing the programme today?
- What specific measures would you recommend to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the GSFP?

