THE GHANA NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM: PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS
ABOUT THE PROGRAM'S IMPACT ON SCHOOL ENROLMENT, ATTENDANCE
AND COMPLETION

Ishmael Tagoe

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

May 2018

Committee:

Stefan Fritsch, Advisor
Phillip John Welch
Shannon Orr
This research utilized the qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of people about the Ghana School Feeding Program and its impacts on school enrollment, attendance, retention and academic performance of primary schoolchildren. The research also explores some of the challenges encountered in the implementation of the SFP in Ghana.

The key questions that the research sought to address include; What are the impacts of the SFP on school enrollment, attendance and completion?, What are the impacts of the SFP on the academic performances of primary schoolchildren? and What are the challenges involved in the implementation of the SFP? In addressing these questions, the researcher utilized the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to explore the relationship between hunger and educational outcomes.

Twelve participants were selected from six selected schools in the Accra Central District of the Greater Accra Region, Ghana to participate in the research. Participants for the research were selected through the purposive type of sampling and they included parents, teachers, administrators and caterers. Data was collected through a semi-structured phone interview.

The findings of the study revealed the perceptions teachers, caterers, parents and school administrators have about the SFP and its impact on enrollment, attendance, completion and the academic performances of primary schoolchildren. Overall, the research participants perceive the SFP to improve educational and academic outcomes of primary schoolchildren. The research also found other issues such as improvement in cognitive development and the reduction of hunger associated with the SFP. Furthermore, the research found some major challenges of the SFP in
the implementation of the SFP. These include, the lack of financial resources, the delay of funds to support the implementation of the SFP and poor nutrition mainly associated with improper menu planning and the frequent absence of vegetables and fruits in school meals. Apart from the impacts and challenges of the SFP, the research also explored participants’ knowledge on the SFP and whether the program should be expanded to other schools.
I dedicate this thesis first and foremost to the Almighty God for the great opportunities He continues to provide me. I also dedicate this thesis to my mother, Rebecca Neequaye, and to my only brother, Richard Tagoe for their love and encouragement showed me throughout the course of my study. Finally, I would like to thank Pempho Chinkondenji and Samuel Adabla for being such great friends and assisting me with my education. May the Good Lord bless you all.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will first and foremost like to thank the Almighty God for giving me the strength to finish this thesis in good faith. My also sincerest appreciation goes to Dr. Stefan Fritsch for his untiring support for me in finishing my paper. Your advice and suggestions have been very helpful. Furthermore, great thanks to Dr. Philip Welch and Dr. Orr for also assisting me not only in this paper, but throughout my studies in the United States. Thanks to you all. Finally, I am equally thankful to my mother, Rebecca Neequaye, my brother, Richard Tagoe and my supervisor, Dr. Jessica Turos for their relentless efforts in supporting and guiding me with my course of studies and my future career. Not forgetting Samuel Adabla, Pempho Chinkondenji, and Steve Bainey also for their support and prayers. Medaase. God bless you all.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Context</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of the Research Problem</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Chapters</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of Study</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Research Objective</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Research Objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Republic of Ghana</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and Hunger</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education System in Ghana</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment and Completion</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Feeding Program (SFP)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Recognition for the SFP</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions under which the SFP can be implemented</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of the School Feeding Program</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Study Area ......................................................... 34
Sources of Data .................................................. 35
Study Population .................................................. 35
Research Design, Recruiting, and Sampling of Participants .............. 35
  Research Design .............................................. 36
  Sampling ......................................................... 37
Data Collection .................................................... 39
Data Analysis ...................................................... 41
Validity of the Findings .......................................... 42
Ethical Considerations ........................................... 44
  Informed Consent ........................................... 44
  Confidentiality/ Anonymity Protection ......................... 45
  Self-Determination ......................................... 46
Researcher Subjectivity ........................................ 46
Limitations of the Research .................................... 47

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS ............................ 49

Impacts of the School Feeding Program ................................ 49
  Enrollment ..................................................... 50
  Attendance ..................................................... 53
  Retention ....................................................... 54
  Academic Performance ...................................... 55
Other Benefits .................................................... 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Implementation Framework for the SFP in Ghana</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Participants
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Study Context

Every country across the globe strives to address the overwhelming social problems associated with globalization and social change (Husein, 2014). The United Nations formulated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to serve as a guide to member countries in addressing social problems. The first two goals of the SDG focus on the alleviation of extreme poverty and hunger. With these goals, the United Nations aimed at reducing the population of people who suffer from hunger and poverty across the world by more than 50% (United Nations, 2015b). According to the World Food Program (WFP) (2015), one of the ways to achieving the SDG 1 and 2 is by the implementation of the school feeding program (SFP). Additionally, the United Nations Hunger Task Force (UNHTF) proposed that the implementation of the SFP will help in reducing hunger among people and improve educational outcomes, specifically on school enrollment, attendance, completion and the academic performance of schoolchildren. Furthermore, the UNHTF also mentioned that implementing the SFP using locally produced goods rather than imported goods will provide employment opportunities to many people in the country which could eventually reduce the poverty rate. The SFP should include micronutrients supplements, improved sanitation, deworming and regular balanced diets necessary to ensure the growth and development of schoolchildren (Husein, 2014; WFP, 2013).

Many organizations across the globe have adopted the UNHTF approach in implementing SFPs (Del Rosso, 1999; Husein, 2014; NEPAD, 2002). The New Partnership on Africa Development (NEPAD), which was founded in 2002 and part of the African Union and the European Union combined SFP and agricultural development (Husein, 2014). The
objective of this effort is to reduce malnutrition among school children and expand local
demand for food production. This would help to improve food security, increase employment
and expand agriculture in Africa and other developing countries (NEPAD, 2002). Other
organizations and partners like the United Nations, WFP, the Government of the
Netherlands, and the World Bank have also contributed to the implementation of the school
feeding program.

There is an appreciable effort by the government of Ghana to promote access to
education in the country. The 1992 constitution of Ghana specifies the right of every child in
the country to basic education. It is therefore not only imperative but a responsibility of the
government to ensure that barriers to education are curtailed and citizens have access to
education (Husein, 2014). As a result of this, the government has implemented various policy
strategies and frameworks to promote access to education for all. Some of these measures
include the Capitation Grant, Free and Compulsory Education, Education for All, Ghana
Poverty Reduction Strategy, and Education Strategic Plan in 2003-2015 (Ghana Government,
2015; Husein, 2014). Despite the significant contributions of these efforts towards access to
education, attendance and completion were still low among school children (Ghana
poverty are problems that affect school attendance and completion among school children.
Furthermore, hunger and poverty can adversely affect the academic performance of school
children (Yendaw & Dayour, 2014; Osei-Fosu, 2011; UNESCO, 2013). Based on this, the
Government of Ghana introduced the SFP in the year 2005 to alleviate hunger which is a
hindrance to access to education and academic performances of schoolchildren. According to
NEPAD (2002), Ghana is the first of the 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that
implemented the SFP according to guidelines set by NEPAD. The Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) was started as a pilot program in 2005 and implemented across the country in the year 2006 (NEPAD, 2002; Husein, 2014).

The short-term objectives of the GSFP are to alleviate hunger and malnutrition among schoolchildren, to encourage local food production as well as promote school enrollment, attendance, and completion. The long-term benefit of the program is to contribute to the overall poverty reduction through an increase in employment opportunities for people and the promotion of food security (Ghana Government, 2015). Since the inception of the program, coverage has increased from 1.04 million in 2010 to 1.7 million schoolchildren in 2014 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). The government of Ghana has gained support from the WFP, the Netherlands Government and other international organizations for implementing the program in many rural communities. Additionally, the WFP assisted the government of Ghana by providing school meals to 122,000 schoolchildren in 304 schools in 2015 (WFP, 2015). Moreover, the UNHTF has also supported the program by providing seven recommendations that serve as a guideline in the successful implementation of the program.

**Development of the Research Problem**

After the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals by the United Nations to address social problems across the world, many countries including Ghana have implemented various strategies towards achieving the MDG’s (United Nations, 2015). The introduction of the SFP in Ghana has contributed to the promotion in access to education, attendance and completion among schoolchildren by reducing hunger (Husein, 2014; Yendaw & Dayour, 2014; Osei-Fosu, 2011; UNESCO, 2013). Despite the contributions that the SFP has made on education, some researchers have found the program to be ineffective in
achieving its stated goals (Agyeman, 2011). According to Agyeman (2011), the withdrawal of many partners from the program has diminished the overall coverage of the program as funding has been reduced. Furthermore, although there are few studies that have been conducted to measure the impacts of the SFP on enrollment, attendance, and completion in Ghana (Husein, 2014), there is no specific study that focuses on the challenges of the SFP in the Ablekuma South District Community of Accra, Ghana. There is, therefore, the need for a research that will fill the gap in the literature and provide specific information on the impacts of the SFP on educational outcomes among schoolchildren in the Ablekuma South. Furthermore, with the continued issues and challenges faced in the implementation of the SFP in schools across the country, there is a need to identify some of the challenges of the SFP and how those challenges can be addressed.

The current study uses a qualitative approach to explore the impacts of the SFP on educational outcomes (school enrollment, attendance, completion and the academic performances) among school children in the Ablekuma South District. Additionally, this study also explores the challenges that inhibit the successful implementation of the SFP in the Ablekuma South District of Ghana.

**Organization of the Chapters**

The current study has five chapters. The first chapter presents the context of the study, development of research problem, the significance of the study, the research objectives and questions and how the chapters are organized in this research. Chapter two of this research provides the literature review of the study and the theoretical framework utilized. The study used the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943). The Maslow hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology propounded by Abraham Maslow in his book "A Theory of Human
Motivation" and seeks to explain human needs and the general patterns of motivating human beings. According to Maslow, human needs can be categorized under different levels of hierarchy ranging from the basic level to higher level. The research applied the tenets of the theory to understand the impacts of the SFP on educational outcomes (enrollment, attendance, and completion) and academic performances of primary school children.

Chapter three highlights the methodology used in conducting this study. It provides the data collection procedures utilized in this research, the demographics of the research participants and the type of research design used in this study. It also highlights the data analysis procedures, the limitations of the research as well as the ethical framework utilized. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the research. This thematic network analysis was used to analyze data gathered from the interview. The research findings were drawn from among the common themes that emerged from the experiences shared by the participants during the interview. Three major themes were identified. These include the benefits of the SFP, the challenges inhibiting the implementation of the SFP and other issues relating to the SFP. There are subthemes under each main theme that are discussed thoroughly in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter provides the discussion on the research findings utilizing the theoretical framework used in the study and the previous literature to support the arguments made. Chapter six which is the final chapter provides the conclusions of the research and recommendations for future research.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will inform policymakers and analysts about the challenges of the SFP and the various ways in which they can address these challenges. It will also inform them about the benefits of the program and how they can be promoted to
ensure the goal of the program is achieved. Additionally, insights provided by this study will help policy analysts, who are more concerned about the impact trends of the program, to be able to measure the outcomes of the program especially on school enrollment, attendance, and completion. Furthermore, this study will also add to existing literature and provide additional information on the SFP that will help in future research. Moreover, students, researchers, educational analysts as well as academicians may also use this study as a point of reference in their academic and research efforts focusing on SFP and educational development.

**Objectives of the Study**

**Main Research Objective.** To explore the contributions of the Ghana School Feeding Program on enrollment, attendance, and completion among primary schoolchildren as well as the setbacks in implementing the program.

**Specific Research Objectives.**

- To explore the impacts of the SFP on school enrollment, attendance, and completion.
- To explore the impacts of the SFP on the academic performances of primary schoolchildren
- To investigate the challenges inhibiting the implementation of the SFP

**Research Questions**

- What are the impacts of the SFP on school enrollment, attendance and completion?
- What are the impacts of the SFP on the academic performances of primary schoolchildren?
- What are the challenges involved in the implementation of the SFP?
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of the Republic of Ghana

**Population and Demographics.** Ghana was a former British colony and the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence in 1957. The country has an area size of 92,497 sq. miles and it is located in West Africa. The country also shares border with Burkina Faso, Togo, and Cote d'Ivoire. Currently, Ghana has a population of about 27 million with the majority of the people concentrated in the southern region found near the Atlantic coast (CIA, 2017). Like most African countries (Myers, 2016), Ghana has a young population with more than 57% below the age of 25. The median age of the country is 21. Additionally, Ghana was pronounced a middle-income country in 2010 with a gross national income of $116 billion in 2015. The gross domestic product growth rate of the country was about 4.7% in 2016 and a per capita income of $1,381 in 2015. According to 2015 estimations, the country has an unemployment rate of 11.9%. Furthermore, the Ghanaian population experiences excess mortality because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and childhood illnesses, which result in high infant mortality rate, lower life expectancy, and higher death rates (CIA, 2017).

**Poverty and Hunger.** According to a United Nations report in 2015, more than 24% of the population of Ghana live below the poverty line. At least 45% of the population lives either on US$ 1.25 a day or less. However, unlike many developing countries whose poverty rates keep increasing, Ghana has experienced a strong economic growth that has helped in reducing the poverty rate by half in the past two decades. Between the year 1991 and 2012, the poverty rates shrank from 52.6% to 21.4% (CIA, 2017; Ghana Statistical Service, 2014; Molini & Paci, 2015; World Bank, 2015). Furthermore, Molini and Paci (2015) mentioned in
the World Bank report on “Poverty Reduction in Ghana” that “Over the last 20 years, the Ghanaian economy has almost always grown more quickly than have the economies of other African countries and at rates similar to those of lower-middle income countries” (2015, p. ix). This development assisted Ghana in staying on track in their efforts to achieving the MDGs. According to the World Bank Report in 2015, because of the rise in gold mining, and cocoa oil production, there has been a significant reduction in poverty in the country. However, there remain many people who still live below the poverty line. This is because of the large disparity of wealth distribution among the population which is reflective in the poverty disparity rate between the northern and southern part of the country (United Nations, 2015; World Bank, 2015). In addition to this, severe weather conditions and overreliance on rudimentary tools continue to affect food production and agriculture, thereby resulting in food insecurity, hunger, poverty, and malnutrition (World Health Organization, 2015). In 2015, Ghana was recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Milan as one of the 72 countries across the world that contributed to the reduction of the percentage of malnourished population and people suffering from severe hunger (Cornet, 2016). Despite this achievement, 23 percent of children in Ghana are still challenged with chronic malnutrition. Acute malnutrition and underweight also continue to affect many children in Ghana (Ghana Government, 2015; United Nations, 2015; World Food Program 2009, World Bank, 2015).

**Education System in Ghana.** The general school system in Ghana has a 6-3-3-4 structure. The first 6 years are spent on primary education, the following three years are spent on junior high school, the next three years after junior high is spent on secondary education and the last four years on tertiary education. Primary education in Ghana starts from grade
one to grade six (CIA, 2017; Ghana Government, 2017). This means that a total of 6 years is spent on the overall completion of a primary school. The Ministry of Education is charged with every political decision that affects the education system and the Ghana Education Service (GES) is the agency that implements the decisions made by the Ministry of Education. The GES is also responsible for the maintenance and administration of the Ghana school system. Under the Ministry of Education, ten regional offices supervise 138 district offices (Ghana Government, 2015). As of 2015, Ghana has about 14,405 public primary schools and 6,904 private primary schools (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 15 (Ghana Government, 2017). Due to the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy established in 1996, access to primary education is free for all public institutions. Although there is no certificate awarded after primary school, the curriculum focuses on writing, reading, arithmetic, and developing problem-solving skills (EP Nuffic, 2015; Ghana Education Service, 2017).

**Enrollment and Completion.** The enrollment of children in primary schools has increased significantly since 2000 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). This progress is primarily ascribed to new developments and interventions introduced in schools. According to the United Nations (2015) and Osei-Fosu (2011), some of these interventions include the SFP, capitation grant and the introduction of free school uniforms. The total enrollment in primary schools increased by 5.5% in 2015 compared to what was recorded in 2014. The total enrollment for both public and private primary schools in 2015 was 4,342,315 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015; Ghana Government, 2017).
**Education and Development**

In 2000, the United Nations established a global movement called Education for All to promote an international agenda on access to education. This movement, led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, was implemented between 2000-2015 with the commitment to meet the basic educational needs of children, youth and adults in all UN member countries. During the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, 164 UN member countries met and identified the following six goals to be achieved by the year 2015;

- Goal 1; Expand early childhood care and education
- Goal 2; Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
- Goal 3; Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
- Goal 4; Increase adult literacy by 50 percent
- Goal 5; Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015
- Goal 6; Improve the quality of education (UNESCO, 2015).

These goals were put in place as a strategy of advancing international development across the world. These goals are also included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The MDGs, which were established for the year 2000-2015, had eight international development goals, and goal number two aimed to achieve a universal primary education. On the other hand, the SDGs have 17 global goals and goal number four targets quality education. These international goals are incorporated into the global agenda of education, because of the understanding that education is an imperative tool in sustainable national and international development (United Nations, 2015a; United Nations, 2015b).
In reference to the Education for All evaluation (UNESCO, 2015), there are a number of challenges that affect educational attainment globally. These global issues, which affected schooling at different rates across the world, include poor nutrition, school dropout, gender inequalities, and poverty. Although there are additional factors that inhibit the attainment of educational development, this qualitative study is primarily focused on the SFP and its impacts on educational outcomes in Ghana.

**School Feeding Program (SFP)**

**History.** As early as 1790, an introduction of food for needy children in schools began in Munich, Germany and later diffused throughout Europe in the 1800s where lunch was provided to children in schools (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005). The global economic crisis that brought about social problems such as poverty, hunger, chronic health diseases, and food shortage in many societies, especially the developing countries also challenged the World Food Program (WFP) and other international organizations to adopt some strategies to address these problems (WFP, 2006). The WFP developed then adopted the SFP over 45 years ago as a tool to address some of the challenges faced by schoolchildren. The goal of the WFP is to promote learning and improve academic performance of schoolchildren through the reduction of short-term hunger and malnutrition that impede learning. According to WFP (2015), the SFP serves as a safety net that provides health and socioeconomic benefits to children and their families. Consistent with this, Yendaw and Dayour (2015) also mention that the SFP guarantees nutrition and safeguards positive health and education outcomes among schoolchildren.

Furthermore, the provision of food serves as an incentive to parents to enroll their children in schools while also ensuring that children complete their schools with limited
Due to the significant impacts achieved through this intervention, SFPs have been implemented under different conditions by many countries across the globe (WFP, 2015). Since its inception, the WFP has mobilized 31 national governments across the globe to provide school feeding to vulnerable schoolchildren. The WFP proposed some strategies that SFP should incorporate. These include, “strategies for sustainability, sound alignment with national policy, stable funding and budgeting, need-based and cost-effective design, strong institutional arrangements for implementation, monitoring and accountability, local production and sourcing where feasible, strong partnerships and inter-sector coordination, strong community” (WFP, 2015).

**International Recognition for the SFP.** SFPs have received substantial support from many international organizations and inter-government agencies (De Carvalho et al., 2011). The United Nations Millennium Project (2005) endorsed that SFPs be extended to all vulnerable children in severe hunger. The SFP also promotes the six “Education for All” goals contained in the Dakar Framework for Action (De Carvalho et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2015; World Food Program, 2015). Other recognition includes the incorporation of SFPs in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which was approved by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in 2003 and later supported at the African Union Food Security Summit held in Abuja in 2006 (WFP, 2015; Yendaw & Dayour, 2014).

**Conditions under which the SFPs can be implemented.** According to the WFP (2015), SFPs are implementable under different conditions across countries. These conditions include a state of emergency or crisis, post-disaster and conflict conditions, either a stable or unstable economy of a country, among others. The WFP further proposed that SFPs must be
tailored to meet outcomes and targets set in the national policy, and these outcomes and
targets must serve as a benchmark in the implementation of the program. Meals provided
under the program should be served as early as possible during school time to ensure an
optimum functioning of the children while in school. The WFP continuously provide support
to governments in most developing countries to be able to implement the policy in their
individual countries (Yendaw & Dayour, 2014; World Food Program, 2015).

Importance of the School Feeding Program

School Feeding and Health. According to World Food Program (2015), SFPs
enhance nutrition and health of children in schools. An enhanced nutrition precludes
malnutrition, diabetes, and morbidity among children. Similarly, UNESCO (2015) reports
that SFPs not only eradicate severe hunger among school children but more importantly
enhance child growth and development. As specified by the WFP, meals provided under the
school feeding program should contain micronutrient, and kilocalories necessary for healthy
growth and development. According to World Health Organization (2015), micronutrient
deficiencies are the leading cause of infections that are widespread among children especially
in developing countries. The mortality and morbidity rate among children under the age of
five escalated to over 90% and 80% respectively from 1990 to 2015 (WHO, 2015). Also, in
Nigeria, the major causes of mortality among children have been associated with
malnutrition, diarrhea, malaria, vaccine-preventable diseases and respiratory infections
(Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education, 2007). In Nigeria, childhood illnesses account for
49% of school absenteeism among school children. The SFP is therefore implemented to
address such issues and promote child growth.
Furthermore, an increase in the micronutrient particularly in vitamins and irons are essential to the cognitive development and learning capacity of schoolchildren (Bloom, 2009; Dauncey, 2009; Kazal, 2002; Shariff, Bond, & Johnson, 2000). Similarly, evidence supports that iron deficiency and anemia are the major causes of morbidity among school children, which affect more than half of the population of school children across the globe (Grillenberger et al., 2003; Kristjansson et al., 2009). Recent studies conducted in Kenya and Uganda on the impacts of SFP, however, reveal that the SFPs significantly reduce anemia and worm infection prevalence among schoolchildren (Adelman et al. 2008; Grillenberger et al., 2003).

Moreover, the SFP could give a child the potential to focus on his/her studies with limited health complications. This will allow children to fulfill their future desires and reach their fullest potential (Grillenberger et al., 2003; UNESCO, 2015; World Food Program, 2015). Also, Grillenberger et al. (2003) reveal that poor nutrition in early childhood can affect the cognitive development and learning capacity of a child. Additionally, Jukes et al. (2008) mention that poor health among children in primary schools could affect their educational outcomes, especially in areas regarding enrollment, attendance and completion. Despite the nutritional benefits associated with SFP, Jukes et al. (2008) noted that the SFP should not be seen as a substitute to some nutrition interventions such as mother and child health and supplementary and therapeutic feeding interventions. This is because the SFP does not directly target poor nutrition that occurs during pregnancy and at infancy and childhood, between 6 months to 2 years, which are the most important years to nourish a child’s cognitive development. However, according to Grillenberger et al. (2003), some of the challenges faced during pre-primary school that are related to hunger and malnutrition can be
prevented through SFPs. In support of this, the WFP also indicated that SFPs should include nutritious meals to support an optimal growth in height and weight of children in schools.

**School Feeding and Education.** According to WFP (2006), hunger is one of the most persistent and damaging problems faced by schoolchildren of today. Similarly, Adelman et al. (2008) states that hunger has an overwhelming impact on the performance of school children in school. This is because it affects the brain development and impedes the intellectual capacity of children (Bloom, 2009). According to many scientists and psychologists, acute and chronic hunger affects children’s ability to stay attentive and perform well academically in school (Bloom, 2009; Dauncey, 2009; Kazal, 2002; Shariff, Bond, & Johnson, 2000). Additionally, the WFP (2006) and Grantham (1988) highlight that hunger and poor education are interrelated in that a hungry child is less likely to attend school. According to the World Food Program (2015), factors such as the distance from home to school, child labor, running family errands before school, and poor quality of meals consumed at home can also contribute to poor classroom performance.

Del Rosso et al., (1999) also mentions that SFPs and other school-based nutrition and health programs motivate parents to enroll their children in school and help ensure that they attend school regularly. An increase in enrollment and attendance helps ensure positive academic performance of children in schools (UNESCO, 2015) which eventually promotes positive educational outcomes. A research conducted in Jamaica by Grantham-McGregor (1988) showed that providing breakfast to primary school children increased the attendance and performance of the children, especially among the stunted and vulnerable children. In addition, an analysis of the SFP in Burkina Faso revealed that schools with canteens or food
pantries that provide food for the children during school hours were associated with increased enrollment, attendance and higher completion rate (WFP, 2006).

According to Nelson Mandela (1994) “education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. Concurringly, Sen (1999) believes that providing quality and adequate education for the youth is the only way to build a strong nation. People who are educated are better able to become responsible people in the world. Persons such as politicians, policymakers, scientists, and economists that a country depends on all need education in order to become successful (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2005; World Food Program, 2015). Education imparts training, knowledge, and skills that every person needs to become responsible in the society (Sen, 1999).

Ahmed (2002) and Edstrom et al. (2008) found that children who are educated are more likely to feed themselves and their immediate families when they reach adulthood. Additionally, Kristjansson et al. (2009) also mentioned that SFP guarantees limited challenges in school attendance and ensure that children who enroll in schools attend regularly. Furthermore, the SFP has promoted female youth education and reduced child labor in Malawi (Edstrom et al., 2008).

Despite the massive developments made in education across developing countries coupled with a high increase in enrollment rate, many problems burden education systems across the world (UNESCO, 2011; WFP, 2015). Poverty and hunger have kept about 67 million children across the world out of primary school, 53% and 47% of these children represent girls and boys respectively. Approximately 43% of these children are found in the Sub-Saharan African region. Furthermore, the school dropout rate is increasing in many developing countries. In Sub-Saharan region alone, the estimated number of children who
dropped out of school increased from 29 million in 2008 to 31 million in 2010. In addition to this, the enrollment rate of school children in primary schools has slowed in the past decades (UNESCO, 2011; WFP, 2015).

**School Feeding and Enrollment.** According to the World Food Program (2004), the impact of the school feeding program on enrollment cannot be overemphasized. Kazianga et al. (2009) identified a positive relationship between the SFP and school enrollment, academic performance, and cognitive development. Similarly, Akanbi (2011) identified a significant increase in the attendance and enrollment rates in schools after the introduction of the SFP in Nigeria.

Furthermore, a research conducted by Alderman et al. (2012) to assess the impacts of the SFP in Northern Uganda found a significant increase in school enrollment and attendance in primary schools as a result of the SFP in the first five years of implementation. Alderman et al. (2012) however mentioned that the impact of the SFP varies by location depending on the type of SFP implemented. The authors assessed how the implementation of the on-site SFP and the take-home ration differently impacts enrollment rates among girls in Northern Uganda. The authors identified that in schools where there is a combination of the on-site school feeding program and the take-home ration, enrollment rate among girls was sustained at thirty percent after the first year. However, in schools that have the on-site school feeding program, the increment rate recorded after the first year reverted to that recorded before the implementation of the SFP.

In congruence with these results, Moore and Kunze (1994) also found a positive relationship between school enrollment and school canteens. They found that in Burkina Faso, schools with canteens have higher enrollment rates than schools without a canteen.
system. Moore and Kunze also found that school canteens have a positive influence on school attendance, academic performance, and educational success. These results, however, contradict the findings of Meme et. al (1998) that there is no difference in the enrollment rates among schools with canteens and schools without a canteen system in Kenya.

**School Feeding and Academic and Cognitive Development.** Many studies have investigated the impacts of the SFP on cognitive development and academic performance. Simeon and McGregor (1989) conducted a research on the effects of breakfast on the cognitive development of children between the ages of 9 and 10 years. The authors utilized a crossover design on three different groups comprised of children who were malnourished, stunted and non-stunted children. They found that serving breakfast for children is crucial to their cognitive development and the impact is even more significant among malnourished children.

Similarly, a study conducted on two groups from four primary schools in Jamaica, a group of malnourished children which was the experimental group and another group with nourished children that served as a control group. The researchers performed four cognitive tests; verbal fluency, information processing, visual search and digit span on both groups after breakfast was provided to the experimental group. The authors found an improvement in the verbal fluency of the experiment group while there was no change in the control group. The authors then concluded that providing breakfast to children helps improve their cognitive development (Chandler et. al, 1995). This result is consistent with the results of Simeon and McGregor (1989). However, Lopez et al. (1999) found a contradictory result when they assessed the impacts of breakfast on the cognitive development of primary school children. The authors found that there is a disassociation between breakfast and cognitive
development, specifically in problem-solving, visual memory and attention task of children. The authors concluded that in the short-run, missing breakfast does not affect the cognitive development of children. However, Husein (2014) mentioned that these researchers did not pay attention to the food that children ate the night before the research was conducted and the time they had that food as that could have influenced their findings.

Nonetheless, Ahmed (2004) have also found that iron and iodine nutrients are crucial for cognitive development in children. Del Rosso (1999) also emphasized that children who lack iodine and iron nutrients perform poorly in schools. A similar assertion was also made by Seshadri and Gopaldas (1989) that the provision of iron to children is crucial to their IQ development which eventually improves their performance in schools. The provision of micronutrients in the SFP supports the cognitive development and academic performance of children in primary schools. (Jacoby et. al 1996). This implies that the implementation of the SFP to malnourished children is a significant step to improving children’s academic performance and cognitive development.

Challenges of School Feeding Program

According to Chelangat (2011), there are several factors that affect the successful implementation of the SFP in schools. Some of these factors include lack of adequate financial resources to sustain the program, problems associated with the policy and regulatory framework in charge of the SFP implementation, and the lack of community and parental involvement in the program. Various literature has been reviewed on the challenges facing the implementation of the SFP in schools.

Lack of Financial Resources. According to Koontz and Weirich (2001), the availability of financial resources is a major factor to consider when implementing a national
program or policy. Just like any other national program, the successful implementation of a school feeding program depends on a strong financial commitment typically by the government and all other interested parties to fund the program. Ayieke (2005) also mentioned that national programs like the SFP should be included in the government fiscal budget spending for the year according to the national planning process. In addition to this, money allocated to the program must also be distributed to the appropriate institutions on a timely basis to support the program (Ayieke, 2005; Nkethia, 2011). However, according to Kootnz and Wierch (2001), the unstable source of funding for SFPs continue to be one of the major challenges of the program. Similarly, Olubayo et al (2013) also found that even though there are resources allocated to the spending on the SFP, there is no proper spending plan on how the funds are distributed in Nigeria.

Similarly, Nkethia (2011) found that schools in Kenya that receive resources directly from the government to carry out the SFP reported delay in the timely distribution of funds to them affecting their ability to implement the SFP successfully and in a timely manner. As a result of this, some of the children in these schools are not able to receive adequate meals to sustain them. Furthermore, the few schools that provide enough food for the children are usually not able to meet the basic nutritional elements specified under the program (Nkethia, 2011).

**Policy and Regulatory Network Problems.** According to Chelangat (2011), in order to ensure a successful implementation of the SFP, there should be an institutional arrangement that is responsible for carrying out the program. The author also recommends that the institutions set to carry out the implementation of the program must have qualified and adequate staff to help in the implementation process and the system of operation must be
transparent to the general public. In addition to this, WFP (2008) mentions that the implementation of the SFP must involve all stakeholders and the system must be monitored and evaluated. This according to Briggs (2008) will ensure a successful implementation of the program. However, a research conducted by Olubayo et al. (2013) on the SFP in Emuhaya county in Nigeria revealed that there is lack of adequate skilled personnel to successfully implement the program. The authors also mentioned that lack of transparency and effective communication between the policy network in charge of the problem were found to be a major challenges associated with the SFP implementation. According to WFP (2013) and United Nations (2008), issues such as corruption, political instability and lack of proper monitoring and evaluation are also problems with the policy administrations that inhibit the successful implementation of the SFP in many developing countries.

**Lack of Parental and Community Involvement.** According to Cole (2007), community involvement is key to the development and implementation of a SFP. Similarly, Tablot and Verrinder (2005) affirmed the proposition that community involvement is crucial in program implementation as it allows all stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process. Additionally, Briggs (2008) found that the development and implementation of a sound policy can be accomplished through the involvement of the community actors including community leaders, schools, parents, and children among others. Extending this to the implementation of the SFP, Young (2005) has argued that community and parental involvement are crucial in carrying out the program. 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”.
Furthermore, Nkethia (2011) indicated that the involvement of parents, teachers, and communities in decisions on the SFP provides them the opportunity to be aware of the impacts of the program on their children or students and their educational performances. Despite the essential implications to involve community and parents in the implementation of the SFP, Nkethia (2011) found that community and parents have not been involved in the SFP implementation process in Kenya. Similarly, WFP (2008) also mentioned that not much energy has been expended to involve parents and the community in the implementation of the SFP in many countries. This affects how parents and the community members perceive the program and its impacts on their children.

**Models of Implementing the SFP**

The SFP can be implemented under different types, models, and principles. Yendaw and Dayour (2015) identified two main types of school feeding program. They are the in-school feeding and the take-home ration. The in-school feeding program describes a type of school feeding program where children are fed in school whereas the take-home ration describes a situation where families are given food when they enroll their children in schools. The WFP (2015) also proposed five types of models for the implementation of the SFP. They are the centralized and decentralized model, school-based and community-based model and the combination model.

The centralized model describes the process where food is imported and obtained from the central government or government bureaucracy and distributed to schools. It is usually utilized in traditional school feeding programs. In addition, the decentralized model describes a process where cash is remitted by the central government to local and municipal authorities who contract with suppliers to provide meals for schools in their municipalities or...
districts. Furthermore, the school-based model describes a situation where cash or purchasing vouchers is received by the government to schools who in turn use this money to buy food items for their schools from the local markets, farmers, and co-operatives. In the community-based model, communities that have the capacity to provide food to schools provide lunch meals for their children to take to school or pay schools to provide lunch meals for them. Finally, the combination model encapsulates the entire previously mentioned models which are used contingent on the social context (WFP, 2015).

Also, coverage under the SFP varies immensely depending on the size and capacity of the country where the program is implemented. According to Yendaw and Dayour (2015), in low-income countries, the SFP usually caters for a specific category of people in the population. This can be based on the geographical location, the income level of the family among other factors. On the contrary, in high and middle-income countries, the coverage is usually extended to the general population of children attending school. Children are usually given free meals or subsidized meals in schools. This is typical of SFPs in the Scandinavian countries and other developed countries (FAO, 2005; WFP, 2015). According to the WFP, the number of people covered under the SFP are usually shaped by the capacity of the country to support the implementation of the program.

**Critics against the Implementation of the SFP**

There are various criticisms against the implementation of the SFP. According to Vermeersch and Kremer (2004), there are negative social and educational implications associated with the implementation of the SFP. The authors argued that the SFP only caters for the needs of children in school while ignoring children who may come from a poor family
but who are too young or weak to go to school. This defeats the purpose of the program in meeting the nutritional needs of children from a poor home.

Additionally, the SFP has been seen to be a contributor to academic underperformance of primary school children in schools. According to several authors, the SFP takes away hours of teaching time that students could use for learning. Instead, they spend the time on eating meals provided under the program. This contributes to the academic underperformance of children in primary schools (Vermeersch & Kremer, 2004; Meir et al. 2007; Kazianga et al. 2009).

Furthermore, the introduction of the SFP has promoted enrollment rates in schools which have resulted in overcrowding. According to He (2009), school infrastructure has not been able to accommodate the increased in enrollment and as such children are left under poor school conditions. Moreover, the program has also affected teaching quality as a limited number of teachers are made to teach more children than they can adequately serve. Another critic against the SFP is that children in schools where the program is not being implemented could move to schools where the program is being implemented. This could disproportionately affect the primary school system as some schools will have more pupils than they can afford while other schools would have too few students (Gilligan et al. 2008; He 2009).

**Implementation of the SFP in Ghana**

The major partners involved in the implementation of the SFP in Ghana include, the government of Ghana, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the Ministry of Children, Gender and Social Protection, the Ministry of Food
In order to achieve the objectives of the program, each major partner performs specific responsibilities that help in carrying out the program. The Government of Ghana, which is made up of the Parliament and the Cabinet, is responsible for the establishment and passing of the SFP bill into law. The government also serves as the primary source of funding for the program. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development are collaboratively responsible for the implementation of the SFP at the national level. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture also ensures that the program meets its intended agricultural outcomes.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance and Economics ensures that money allocated for the program is distributed to the respective institutions responsible for carrying out the program whereas the Ministry of Children, Gender, and Social Protection is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the program (GSFP Report, 2007-2010).

Moreover, at the regional level, Duah (2011) mentioned that the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC) have also been created to coordinate the implementation of the program in all the ten regions in Ghana. The RCCs are responsible for the planning and execution of the program in the various regions. In doing this, they are responsible to establish a steering committee that assists them in carrying out their roles. The District Implementation Committee (DIC) and School Implementation Committees (SIC), which are also established at the district and school level respectively, in collaboration with the District Assembly are responsible for the implementation of the program at the local level. The DICs oversee the planning and monitoring of the program in the schools where the program is
implemented and the SICs oversee the implementation and supervision of the program in each school.

The School Enterprise Development Organization and the Netherlands Development Cooperation are also responsible for the training of caterers and cooks involved in the implementation of the program. The caterers who are recruited for carrying out the program must meet some academic and food hygiene qualifications that will enable them to carry out their roles effectively towards meeting the goals of the program (GSFP Report, 2007-2010).

**Figure 1. Implementation Framework for the SFP in Ghana**

![Implementation Framework for the SFP in Ghana](image)

*Source: GSFP Annual Operating Plan, 2010*

**Theoretical Framework**

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

The Maslow hierarchy of needs was utilized in this research to explain the fundamental essence of providing food in schools as a way of influencing the academic and
The Maslow hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology propounded by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 book "A Theory of Human Motivation" explains human needs and the general patterns of motivating human beings. According to Maslow, human needs can be categorized under different levels of hierarchy ranging from the basic to the higher levels. These levels include the physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The theory establishes that certain needs, the basic needs such as food, water, air, and shelter must be met before the other higher-level needs.

Additionally, Maslow (1954) postulated that human beings are inspired by the desire to achieve goals and this inspiration is based on satisfying their human needs. As a result, the ability to meet one’s needs is an important tool to achieving one’s goals. This approach has been extended by various theorists to explain human behavior. The theory suggests that human behavior is predicated on meeting the lower-order needs of the individual and then subsequently sustained by meeting the higher-order needs of the individual. The theory and its tenets continue to be used as a popular framework in management, psychology and in sociological research (Kremer et al., 2013; Maslow, 1954).

**Key Concepts of the Theory**

**Hierarchy.** Hierarchy refers to the arrangements of concepts from one grade of a lower rank to another grade of a higher rank. According to Maslow (1943), individuals needs can be categorized in the level of a hierarchy, from the lowest to the highest. Maslow used a pyramid to depict the hierarchy of needs with most basic forms of human needs at the bottom of the pyramid and then it progresses to the top of the pyramid according to the importance of the needs to humans. Please refer to the diagram below for more information.
Deficiency and Growth Needs. Abraham Maslow distinguished between two types of needs according to the essence of the needs of human beings. According to him, deficiency needs includes all the four basic levels of the pyramid. These include the physical needs, safety needs, social needs and self-esteem needs. Without the satisfaction of these needs, an individual can be depressed and anxious and can be distracted from his or her everyday activities. The theory also establishes that except for the physiological needs that can be seen, felt and touched, the other forms of the deficiency needs are not visible and lack of them could only be reflected in the form of anxiety and lack of focus. Additionally, the theory suggests that individuals’ basic needs must be satisfied in order for them to focus on the secondary or growth needs. Moreover, the desire to satisfy the deficiency needs declines as the individual satisfies those needs.

On the other hand, the growth needs refer to the needs of an individual on the higher level of the pyramid. These include the perception the individual has about himself, his
potentials and talents and the self-actualization needs of the individual. Unlike the deficiency needs for which the desire to satisfy them declines as the individual meets them, the desire to meet the growth needs increases as the individual satisfies them. As a result of this, Maslow mentioned that the growth needs of human beings cannot be completely met (Maslow, 1954).

**Meta-Motivation.** The concept of meta-motivation was developed by Maslow to describe people’s desire for a continuous betterment that goes beyond their fundamental needs. According to Maslow, because of the complex nature of the human mind, parallel processing could occur at the same time. Therefore, individuals can have the desire to meet different needs on different levels of the pyramid at the same time. As such, the satisfaction of these needs and their level of importance to the individual is subjective, general and primary (Goble, 1970; Maslow, 1954). However, Maslow recognized this limitation of the theory and focused more on identifying the basic types of human needs or human motivations and the way in which they should be satisfied (Maslow, 1954).

**Physiological Needs.** According to Maslow, the physical needs are basic for human survival. These needs include food, water, air, shelter, and clothing, among others. Maslow identified these types of needs as the fundamental and the most important needs for human survival. Food, air, and water are basic metabolic necessities of human beings while shelter and clothing provide necessary protection for the individual. These needs can be found at the bottom of the pyramid and must be met before the other higher-level needs.

**Safety and Security Needs.** This type of need must be met after satisfying the basic needs of humans. According to Martin (2007), “Safety is the feeling people get when they know no harm will befall them, physically, mentally, or emotionally; security is the feeling people get when their fears and anxieties are low”. The safety and security needs include the
protection from various forms of violence and war, natural disaster, community and family violence, childhood abuse, insurance among others. According to Maslow, the desire of humans to satisfy their safety needs takes precedence after the physiological needs have been met. Furthermore, Maslow identified that these needs are more associated with children than adults as children feel the need to be safe and protected from various forms of harms. Safety needs could also include economic safety, financial stability, and sustained health and freedom from injury.

**Social Needs.** The third level of needs comprises of social needs which have been referred by some theorists as the need for love and belonging. According to Maslow, individuals identify their need to be part of society and have the sense of belonging to the society to which he belongs. Examples of the needs identified at this level include the need for friendship, family, society, community feeling, and intimacy. Maslow mentioned that individuals have the desire to feel accepted in a social group in which they belong to and this could be fostered through regular interaction, common goals, and acceptance. Individuals can belong to a large social group which includes the community, schools, religious groups, and trade unions. Also, individuals may also belong to a small social group which includes nuclear family, colleagues, and intimate partners. According to Maslow, the absence of these needs could expose the individual to loneliness, depression and various forms of anxiety. Furthermore, he explained that this type of need can sometimes override the need for safety and security as well as physiological needs depending on the pressure from the group in which the individual belongs to.

**Self-Esteem Needs.** This type of needs represents the fourth level of hierarchy according to the theory. The desire to satisfy self-esteem needs takes precedence after the
individual has satisfied the previous lower level needs; physiological, safety and security, and love and belonging. Individuals begin to develop positive perceptions about themselves and feel the need to be valued, respected and recognized in the society or community. However, Maslow mentioned that individuals who are not able to satisfy and balance the needs at the three-previous level can struggle from an inferiority complex at this stage. They may then participate in various forms of activities to positively enhance their self-worth and gain recognition or resort to fame and glory from others. However, the latter is not the most successful way of satisfying esteem needs especially as it involves individuals to accept themselves the way they are. Factors such as trauma and depression can negatively impact the self-esteem needs of individuals.

Furthermore, Maslow identified two forms of esteem needs, which include a lower version and a higher version. The former relates to when an individual seeks recognition and value from other people while the latter relates to when an individual seeks self-respect. Maslow also acknowledged that the desire to satisfy the needs at this level is not separated from the three previous level of needs and as such the absence of which can also result in inferiority complex, depression and anxiety (Maslow, 1954).

**Self-Actualization Needs.** The individual needs for self-actualization can be found at the topmost level of the pyramid. Self-Actualization refers to becoming whatever the individual desires to become, and the ability to pursue one’s dreams. At this level of the hierarchy, the individual also desires to express their full potential and talents into positive contributions.

According to Maslow, the satisfaction of these needs is dependent on satisfying the previous basic needs. Maslow, however, emphasized that it is difficult for an individual to
attain self-actualization. Maslow estimated that less than 1% of every adult achieves their self-actualization needs.

**Application of the Theory to the Research**

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs provides a basic understanding of human needs and the order in which they should be met. In doing so, the theory also establishes the fundamental connection between the physiological needs of humans which include food and water and higher-order needs such as academic successes. The theory draws a fine line between food and academic success and implicates that the desire of the human body to maintain homeostasis of salt, water, minerals, and micronutrients through the consumption of food are all part of the physiological needs of humans (Maslow, 1943). According to him,

“Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs…If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background…for consciousness is almost completely preempted by hunger. For the chronically and extremely hungry man…life itself tends to be defined in terms of eating. Anything else will be defined as unimportant”. In contrast to the directive authority of food, achievement is among the least potent of needs. According to Maslow (1954), “all people in our society…have a need or desire for self-esteem …that is soundly based upon real capacity, achievement, and respect from others” (p. 381).

Maslow’s theory suggests that humans who strive to achieve the higher-level needs such as to be successful in life, to be talented, to gain respect in the community and to be academically sound in school should first be able to satisfy their basic level need, which includes food. Additionally, individuals who ignore their basic nutritional needs are not able to successfully attain their higher-level needs. As a result of this, cognitive development (ability to think critically, analyze issues and be able to understand complex issues and be a problem solver) which is mainly associated with the higher-level needs, cannot be attained by
students or learners who face constant deprivation of their basic needs. Similarly, learners are not able to meet their basic needs when they have difficulty in focusing on school and this can affect their interest in school as well as their academic performances. In explaining the interconnection between food and learning, Maslow proposed that individuals must pay attention to what to eat in order to meet their physiological needs and whether there are certain types of diets that meet basic human needs better than others.

This study uses Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to explore the basic underlining of SFPs in schools and SFP’s impact on the educational and academic performance of primary school children. Maslow’s theory also provides readers with a better appreciation of human needs and the fundamental connection between physiological needs such as food and the higher-level needs of humans such as academic success.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The third chapter outlines the methodology used in this research. It describes the study area where the research was conducted, the demographic information of the participants, the population and the sampling method used in the research. The chapter also highlights the type of research design used in this research, the data collection method, recruitment procedure and the ethical principles observed in this research.

Study Area

The study area chosen for this research was that of Accra Central which is located in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly of the capital of Ghana, Greater Accra Region. According to the Population and Housing Census in Ghana (PHC) report in 2014, there are about 4 million residents in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly of which 950,000 people live in Accra Central, where the research was conducted. The area also represents a major commercial community within the Greater Accra Region and comprises people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

There are 2,117 primary schools in the Greater Accra Region. Out of this are 800 public primary schools, 1,123 registered private primary schools, and 194 non-registered private primary schools. The research is focused on public primary schools because that is where the school feeding program is implemented. The number of enrollment in the public primary schools in this region is 261,158 out of which 52.1% and 47.9% represent female and male enrollment respectively (Ghana Gov’t, 2014). At the district level, there are 403 primary schools out of which 216 represent public primary schools. Furthermore, there are 67,904 people enrolled in the public primary schools out of which 58.2% and 47.8% represent female and male enrollment respectively (Ghana Government, 2014).
Accra Central was chosen as the study area because the researcher lived in the area in previous years and therefore is familiar with the demographics of primary school children and schools in the area. The area was also chosen because it comprises of people from various sociocultural backgrounds and the school feeding program is implemented in most of the schools located in this area. This makes it easy for the researcher to access schools and participants for this research.

**Sources of Data**

The research used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data was through interviews organized to gather first-hand information from the participants. Secondary sources of data include the use of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, newspapers and both online and offline articles on the topic of interest. Other scientific materials that were relevant to the research were also used. A comprehensive list of these sources has been provided in the references which can be found at the end of this paper.

**Study Population**

The target population for this research were the parents of children who are enrolled in a public primary school where the SFP is being implemented as well as teachers, administrators and the caterers in those schools. The study population comprises of selected parents, administrators, teachers, and caterers in six selected public primary schools in Accra Central. The participants of the study were all adults.

**Research Design, Recruiting, and Sampling of Participants**

The researcher received a letter of approval from the Institutional Research Board at Bowling Green State University which gave the researcher the permission to contact the potential participants in Accra where the research was carried out. The researcher initially
reached out to administrators in ten public primary schools and asked for their interest in participating in the research. The researcher briefed the administrators about the research and what it entailed and asked if there were people who would be willing to participate in the research. Additionally, the researcher also had already established contact with one parent from one of the schools who was also helpful in reaching out to the other participants.

**Research Design.** This study utilized a qualitative research design and used an exploratory method of collecting data. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative research design focuses on exploring and understanding the social phenomenon from the viewpoint of the people who experienced it. Similarly, Green (1999) also defined qualitative research design as a type that seeks to explore the human understanding of social problems. Additionally, qualitative research aims to understand the experiences of participants. This study adopted this methodology to explore the perceptions people have about the Ghana National School Feeding Program and its impacts on school enrollment, attendance, and completion of primary school children. No intervention was executed by the researcher to determine any cause and effect.

Additionally, according to Creswell (2012), the experiences and insights shared by the participants in a qualitative research study provide an in-depth explanation of the research topic and the participants involved. The qualitative research design also provides an opportunity to understand the issue from the perspectives of the participants (Merriam, 1998). In addition to the above, Green and Thorogood (2009) also agreed that a qualitative research design allows the phenomenon to be understood from the perspectives of the communities and individuals who are affected.
**Sampling.** The researcher utilized the non-probability sampling technique in recruiting the participants. A non-probability sampling technique refers to a situation whereby the participants of the study are selected based on the personal biases of the researcher rather than a random sampling (Creswell, 2013; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). In this research, the sample was selected based on the subjective judgment of the researcher. Ten schools were initially sampled for the research however only members of six schools showed interest in the research. A total of twelve sample size of key informants were used. According to Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006), the effectiveness of a qualitative research depends on the depth of information gathered during the interview and not the number of people who participated in the interview. The authors also mentioned that qualitative research does not require a standardized sample size. Additionally, Creswell (2013) suggests that a sample size of ten to twelve participants is sufficient for a qualitative research. These ideas validate the sample size utilized in this research. Moreover, the researcher explored the research questions extensively during the interview. This helped the researcher to gain adequate information needed to meet the research objectives.

Furthermore, the researcher employed the purposive and snowball sampling techniques in this research. According to Patton (1990), purposive sampling refers to sampling techniques where the researcher uses a criterion that only allows participants with some level of experience to participate in the research. Similarly, Creswell (2009) also identified the purposive sampling technique as that type of sampling technique that places much emphasis on some key characteristics of the participants. For instance, it can be based on the level of experience, roles, status, opinion, ideas, age, gender or ethnicity of the participants as the researcher finds appropriate for the topic of interest.
This research focused on the level of experience of the participants and this criterion allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth information from the participants. Snowballing, on the other hand, refers to the sampling method where individuals participating in the project recommends other individuals who may be interested in participating in the research (Patton, 1990). Similarly, the criteria used in this research allowed only people who had relevant years of experience on the topic to participate in the research. All participants in this research have had at least one year of experience with the SFP with exception of the parents who were considered. Parents who participated in the research have children who have had at least one year of experience with SFP. The researcher considers one-year experience as adequate enough to have allowed participants to gain quite a significant experience to share during the interview. However, one of the limitations associated with the purposive sampling method is that it excluded people who do not meet the one-year criteria but have a potentially useful experience to take part in the research.

At the beginning of the research, the researcher telephoned one of the headteachers in one of the primary schools and a parent, whom the researcher personally knows. These initial contacts provided the researcher with other potential participants for the research. The initial contacts did not approach the other individuals directly to seek their interest in the research. Rather, the researcher contacted these potential participants directly to seek their interest in the research. Through the two initial contacts, the researcher was able to recruit 18 more individuals who showed interest in the research. Another strategy that was helpful to reach out to these individuals was the Parents-Teachers Association Meeting (PTA) which was organized in one of the schools. The headmaster in that school briefed everyone present about this research and asked those interested in participating to contact me. Following this
event, the researcher was able to recruit 16 individuals in total who showed interest in the research. The researcher then provided all 16 participants with a consent form that provided detailed information about the study and the risk involved in participating in the study. The consent form asked for the permission of the individuals to participate in the research. Furthermore, the researcher also spoke to the individuals on the phone and briefed them about the research.

After sending out the consent form to the 16 individuals who initially showed interest in the research, the researcher was only able to recruit and maintain 12 people. The researcher made some follow-ups on the individuals who were missing to find out whether they are still interested in participating in the research. However, after a series of efforts from the researcher to reach out to these individuals proved futile, the researcher focused on the 12 individuals who were willing to participate in the research and were also reachable. The researcher recruited 3 parents, 3 administrators, 3 teachers and 3 caterers who were affiliated with at least one of the six public primary schools selected.

Data Collection

The primary data as already emphasized above was gathered through a series of one-on-one interviews with the participants. According to Merriam (1998), interviews in a qualitative research study are conducted in situations where it is difficult to observe the participants’ experiences or behaviors. The interview was done via telephone, WhatsApp, and Skype and lasted for between 30 and 60 minutes. Due to the difference in time zone, the researcher had to select times that worked best for the participants. The approximate time around which the interview was scheduled was between 4 pm and 8 pm GMT.
A semi-structured interview was utilized for the research. A semi-structured interview is a data collection strategy that combines a set of pre-determined open-ended questions that allows the researcher to explore the issues of interest without necessarily limiting participants to a particular set of questions (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). This method was selected by the researcher to allow the participants to express themselves on selected research questions considered relevant to study by the researcher. Also, an interview guide was used in the interview process. An interview guide is a set of pre-determined questions that are asked in an interview and which ensure that information gathered from the interview is relevant to the research purpose (Creswell, 2009). The interview guide also provided the opportunity and flexibility for participants to express themselves on certain important questions. The researcher designed four different versions of the interview guide, one for each group of participants; parents, teachers, administrators, and caterers. The questions were structured around the research objectives.

The researcher probed for further explanation when there was the need to seek a better understanding of the participants’ responses. The researcher also ensured that there was no noise in the background during the interview to allow participants to feel comfortable to participate in the research. According to Moustakes (1994), it is important to consider the environment in which an interview is conducted as that can influence how participants contribute to the discussion. The author suggested that the environment must be free from inconvenience to allow participants to feel comfortable to express themselves fully. In addition to this, the researcher was also respectful of every opinion expressed by the participants, which according to Merriam (1998) improves response rate and participation. The researcher also reminded the participants that the conversation would be recorded and
that they could withdraw from the research at any stage without any cost or consequence. The researcher started the interview with an introduction to his background which was very informal. This was to build rapport with the participants. Furthermore, the participants were given the opportunity to express themselves in the language they were most comfortable.

Quite interestingly, all the interviews were conducted in English with only a few comments passed in Twi which the researcher eventually translated verbatim into English. During the interview, the researcher recorded the conversation with a voice recorder and the information was securely stored. After the interview, the researcher transcribed the recordings and used pseudonyms on transcripts and in subsequent publications to refer to participants. A year after the interview, the information gathered will be deleted permanently. Transcripts were kept in a word document for analysis. It is also important to mention that only questions which are relevant to the research topic were discussed during the interview.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2009) defined data analysis as the process of making sense out of a text or an image that can be interpreted and understood. After the interview, the researcher listened to the recorded data and made notes from each conversation. According to Maxwell (2013), it is important to pay attention and take notes when listening to the recordings. According to Maxwell (2013), this helps to gain a clearer understanding of the ideas and the relationships that exist in the conversation. The researcher then transcribed the data into a word document file for analysis. Data transcription refers to the process of translating audiotaped recorded data into text (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher then employed the Attride-Stirling's guide to thematic network analysis in qualitative research to analyze the transcribed data. This process involved coding
the data and putting the responses under categories. Basic themes emerged from these categories which were reframed into organizing themes. The organizing themes were further classified around the research questions and interpretations were made from them. The researcher also compared the findings of the research to the information gathered from the literature review to identify the similarities and inconsistencies in the findings of the study with other research work.

**Validity of the Findings**

Meriam (1998) mentioned that it is imperative for researchers conducting a qualitative research to ensure that the findings of their research are valid and present insights that are true to educators, policymakers, and other researchers. According to Maxwell (2013), analyzing the validity of the data helps the researcher to acknowledge ways in which the research findings might be biased. This is usually based on the objectivity of the research, the methodology and the data collection procedures used in the research. Some qualitative research authors have also referred to the validity of the research as the trustworthiness of the research; a strategy to test whether the research findings are reliable and can be trusted (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2013).

There are different threats that can affect the validity of the findings in a qualitative research. According to Maxwell (2013), since the researcher is the primary interpreter of the data gathered for the research, researcher bias can influence the ways in which the data collected for the research is interpreted and this can subsequently affect the validity of research findings. For the purposes of this research, it is possible that the researcher’s judgment about the SFP could have clouded the interpretations made from the data gathered for the research. Another threat to the validity of the research is how the participants react to
some of the questions asked. There was the possibility that due to my initial conversation and
the relationship that I built with the participants before the actual interview, they may have
responded to some of the questions in ways to impress me. Also, because the researcher
introduced himself as someone studying abroad, some of the participants may have
responded to the questions in ways that would appeal to the researcher’s sympathy to support
them in improving the conditions of the SFP in their schools. These events could affect the
validity of the research.

In addressing the problems above, the researcher employed peer examination,
triangulation, respondent validation and a rich-and-thick-description to enhance the validity
of the research. Triangulation involves the process of collecting data from multiple sources
to aid in the research. The research consulted peer-reviewed journals, scientific materials,
and newspapers from credible sources that shed light on the SFP. The researcher also
reviewed reports from the Ghanaian government on the SFP and this also gave a clearer
picture of the program and how it is implemented. This information was eventually useful in
how the collected data was interpreted in such a way that will be meaningful to the topic of
interest.

Furthermore, the peer examination strategy was also used to reduce the threat to
validity. According to Maxwell (2013), Peer examination is the process whereby the
researcher consults with peers and other researchers on identifying and limiting flaws within
the research approach or methodology. For the purposes of this research, the researcher also
consulted with his peers, academic advisor and the members of his research committee to
seek advice about themes and codes drawn from the data gathered. This process helped the
researcher to identify and minimize the flaws in data interpretation.
Additionally, the rich and thick description strategy used also ensure that there is an adequate description that suited a phenomenon of interest (Becker, 1970; Maxwell, 2013). The researcher ensured that adequate information about the research topic was gathered from participants to help in the data analysis. The richness of the data limited the researcher from bringing his own judgment into the research and allowed for clearer and more adequate judgment to be made from the information gathered.

Finally, the researcher also informed the participants about the data gathered to confirm whether their responses accurately reflect those presented during the interview. This process helped in ensuring the responses were reported the way they were presented to ensure that inferences and conclusions from the interviews were accurate and valid. This process is referred to as respondents’ validation (Maxwell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

**Informed Consent.** An informed consent form was sent individually to all the people who were willing to participate in the research. A copy of the informed consent is attached at the end this paper (Please refer to appendix A). The informed consent form provided the participants with every detail of the research. This was to ensure that the participants understood the research project and the risk involved in participating in the research. The information provided in the consent form includes a brief background of the researcher, an introduction to the study, the purpose of the study, and the research procedures utilized in the study. Furthermore, the consent form also provided information on the voluntary nature of the research which indicated that participants have the ability to withdraw from the study at any time if they find the research inconvenient to them.
Additionally, the anticipated risks involved in participating in the study were also specified in the consent form. Risks involved in the research are not more than those experienced in daily life. The participants were also informed of the data collection procedures and how the information they provide for the research will be stored. The consent form also expressed that any information given by the participants for the research is confidential. Furthermore, the consent informed them about the data collection procedures and on how much of their time would be needed for the study. Finally, the consent form provided the participants with the contact information of researcher’s supervisor, and the Institutional Research Board (IRB) of Bowling Green State University in case they have any further questions.

Confidentiality/ Anonymity Protection. The information obtained from participants for this research was kept confidential. Access to this information was restricted to only the researcher. The consent forms were stored separately from the data recordings and transcripts. The researcher also locked away the consent forms in a secure file cabinet in the researcher’s office. Furthermore, the audio recordings and transcripts were stored on a secure online server, which utilizes server authentication that only the researcher could access. The audio recordings of the interviews will be kept for a maximum of one year, after which they will be deleted. A pseudonym (assigned name) was used on all the transcripts and publications. This was meant to ensure that the participants cannot be traced back to their information. All the participants were informed about this procedure to assure them of their confidentiality.
Table 1. Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Asiamah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Administrator, Headmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osman</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Adomako</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owusua</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caterer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana Kwame</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana Ama</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Administrator, Headmistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niiboi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caterer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orraca-Tetteh</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Administrator, Headmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pempho</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caterer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-Determination.** The researcher ensured the self-determination of the participants by allowing participants to respond to the interview questions at their own discretion and without any form coercion or force. None of the participants was forced or coerced to provide a response that is favorable to the researcher.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

Creswell (2012) emphasized that in qualitative research, it is always difficult to separate the researcher’s personal biases from the interpretation of the data. In the same way, Merriam (1998) also mentioned that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary
instrument in gathering and interpreting the data. Based on these statements, it is therefore imperative for researchers involved in qualitative research projects to acknowledge the level of their biases in interpreting information gathered. Creswell (2012) also encourages researchers to limit their personal biases in interpreting data gathered through a qualitative approach.

The researcher’s bias in this study lies in the fact that the researcher comes from Ghana and once lived in the district in which the research was conducted. Also, the researcher is acquainted with children who attended the schools where the data were gathered. Based on this, it is therefore important to acknowledge that prior knowledge about the SFP and its impacts on schoolchildren may have been publicly discussed with other people in the district. Also, the researcher may have gained prior information about the SFP from the children he knew. These informal conversations could have affected the judgment of the researcher in interpreting information gathered from the participants.

**Limitations of the Research**

There were several limitations encountered while conducting this research. One of the limitations has to do with the location of the researcher and the participants. The location of the researcher did not allow for a face-to-face interview with the participants even though according to Creswell (2009), that is an effective way of conducting interviews for a qualitative research. The researcher was out of the country where the participants live and as a result, resorted to phone interviews, WhatsApp and Skype interviews which made it very difficult to observe participants’ reactions and facial expressions asked during the interview. The Skype interview, which could have allowed for the researcher to observe the facial
expression of the participants was also not effective due to the poor internet connection. As a result of this, only audio calls were made during the Skype interviews.

Secondly, the difference in the time zone was also another limitation to this research. It was very difficult to schedule a time for the interviews because of the 4-hour time difference between the location of the researcher and the location of the participants. As a result of this problem, participants were given the opportunity to present three different times and days that they would be available for the interviews and the researcher scheduled the interviews around these times. This process delayed the number of days used for conducting the interviews.

Additionally, the poor internet connection in some of the areas where the participants lived affected the conversations during the interviews. Some of their responses to the questions were prolonged due to this and the researcher had to hang up and call them again several times before he could finally get their responses. This problem can be challenging and frustrating in the data collection stage. For some of the parents who participated in the research, they do not have access to the internet, so I had to call them on regular call which was very costly.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The thematic network analysis was used to draw common themes that emerged from similar experiences shared by the participants during the interview. Themes generated were focused on addressing the research objectives. The main objective of this research was to explore the impact of the Ghana School Feeding Program on enrollment, attendance, and completion among primary schoolchildren as well as the setbacks in implementing the program. The interview questions sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the impacts of the SFP on school enrollment, attendance and completion?
- What are the impacts of the SFP on the academic performance of primary schoolchildren?
- What are the challenges involved in the implementation of the SFP?

In this research, three main themes were generated from the responses of the participants. These include the impacts of SFP, the challenges of the SFP, and other related issues associated with the SFP. Furthermore, subthemes surrounding different issues on the research topic were also derived and put under their respective main themes. Twelve participants from six selected primary schools in Accra Central were interviewed for this study.

Impacts of the School Feeding Program

When asked about their understanding of the impacts of the school feeding program, the responses of the participants varied based on several issues. These include enrollment, attendance, retention, academic performance and other benefits.
**Enrollment.** On the issue of enrollment, most of the participants perceive that the school feeding program has had a positive impact on the overall enrollment of students in primary schools. Some of the participants mentioned that before the introduction of the SFP, parents found it difficult to enroll their children in schools because they were not able to meet the basic needs of their children. However, some of the participants mentioned that, as a result of the SFP, parents are motivated to take their children to school because they will be provided with food. According to Diana,

“...I think the school feeding program has been very helpful to me. It has been very helpful to me a whole lot! ...I am a single mother of three children. All I do for a living is petty trade. I do not get enough to support my kids’ basic needs not to talk of education. In the previous years, two of my kids used to support me in my business, however, due to the school feeding program, I make them go to school because after all they will get some food for lunch and that can save me a lot of money”

Additionally, Leila also mentioned that, “all my two children are now going to school because I know they will be fed when they get there. It saves me a lot of money that I would have spent on school”. Similarly, Osman who is a teacher and who has a child attending a primary school where the feeding program is implemented said “I have never been this free, my wife is pregnant again and I do not have to worry about how I am going to take care of the child especially his education... hahaha.....hahaha...... but I know my child will go to school because at least they will be fed when they go to school’. Mr Asiamah, the headmaster of one of the schools mentioned, “enrollment keeps rising every now and then since the introduction of the school feeding program. ...I can testify that most parents that I talk to
confess that they are inspired to enroll their kids in my school because they believe they wouldn’t have to stay hungry at home.”

Another issue with enrollment that came up was that the feeding program has resulted in many children who would hitherto stay home because they are too young to be enrolled in primary school level, are now being enrolled in school. As a result, increases in the enrollment rate in primary schools can be observed. In the words of Mrs. Adomako, “… little kids who you wouldn’t expect to be in primary school have now come to school. They can barely read or write but they are here. I believe their parents brought them here because of the program..., and it simply because it never used to be the case before the introduction of the school feeding program.

Another participant by the name Mr. Osei, who is a teacher in one of the schools affirmed, “I teach children at the very basic level, some of whom I think should have been matured enough before coming to primary school. I suppose their parents brought them to school so they can take advantage of the school feeding program. My class size keeps rising day by day, there are new faces added everyday...”

Furthermore, Owusu, a caterer in one of the schools mentioned, “... The number of children we feed every day in the school keeps soaring every academic year. This is because, the children come plenty in their numbers and their parents because of the school feeding program, are bringing them to school, more and more... A parent told me that she would rather enroll her young child in my school as soon as she turn 4 years than to have him sit at home without any food...”

However, despite the positive responses that most of the participants mentioned about the SFP to enrollment, three of my participants think otherwise. They think the contribution
of SFP is just the same as when it was not there. There is another participant who thinks that even though the SFP has positive impacts on enrollment, the impact is not significant. These three participants believe that the increment in the enrollment rate is the result of many children moving away from schools where the feeding program is not implemented to schools where the feeding program is implemented. As a result of this, the overall number of primary school children who are enrolled nationally is not going to change. The third participant among the three thinks that even if there is going to be any impact, it is not significant. For instance, Nana Kwame who is one of the teachers interviewed for the research mentioned,

“...I don’t think the school feeding program has any impact on the overall number of children who are enrolled in primary schools. I think children are rather moving from one school where the feeding program is not there to schools where there is the feeding program. ...My school for example has recorded new enrollment of pupils from different private schools around us. They leave there to join us because of the program. This shift has increased our enrollment at the expense of the decline in their schools. The value is the same...”

Additionally, Nana Ama the Headmistress in one of the schools agreed to this point in her statement, “...I think school children are now moving from one school to another. An increase in and one school’s enrollment rate as a result of a decrease in another schools. I think the effect is the same”. Finally, Niiboi said, “I think there is no significant change in the overall effect because it is just a movement of students. However, even if there is any, it’s not much”.
**Attendance.** On the issue of attendance, almost all the groups of participants professed that the school feeding program has had a positive impact on primary school attendance. They mentioned that children now report to school more often than they used to be. According to them, this has to do with the introduction of the school feeding program. For instance, Leila mentioned, *“I always feel motivated to get my children ready for school every day. I don’t even make them absent or late to school... I do so because I don’t want them to miss the free lunch given in school. Otherwise they will stay hungry and I don’t want that...”*. In addition to this, Diana also affirmed this statement in her words, *“because I know there is food in school, I tell my children to go to school. I’m strict in making sure they attend school. I’d rather have them in school to get food every day than to stay here with me hungry with no food”*.  

The above perception is the same among teachers and administrators who were interviewed for the research. Nana Ama, a Headmistress mentioned *“I believe parents are now ensuring that their children attend to school regularly. Attendance is really key in my school. Teachers do not even have to punish children who are absent because the attendance is massive everyday’*. Moreover, Nana Kwame, a teacher also mentioned that, *“attendance has increased ever since our school started the school feeding program...I can tell you that it never used to be like this. I have been in this school for 20 years and the attendance level has never been like this...”*. Owusua, a caterer also mentioned that *“the number of children that we serve in our school never declines. This is because children attend to school regularly. I think they do so because of the school feeding program. I know they love the food. They love it haha!”*
Furthermore, two of the participants think the children are motivated, themselves, to come to school because of the school feeding program. Diana mentioned that “As for me, I do not have to even tell them (children).... They just wake up every morning and go to school”. This was also confirmed by Osman who said that “My child always praises the food served in school. He always checks his menu and feels motivated to go to school every day. I do not even have to tell him”.

Even though almost all the participants mentioned in their experiences that they think the school feeding program has increased school attendance rates, one of them further explained that children only come to school because of the food. Some of them leave as soon as they have had their food. According to Niiboi, “…Some of the kids run away sometimes after having their lunch.

It is not good. I’m not sure they do so every day, but they do so most times’.

**Retention.** On the impact of the SFP on retention, most of the participants mentioned that the SFP has impacted the ability of children to remain in school till they complete primary schools. Most of them saw the SFP has a program that fosters pupils interest to want to be in school, concentrate on their studies and avoid school dropout. For instance, Osman mentioned,

“My child is always happy to go school and I am very sure that he will be in school. All the hunger that will stop him from going to school is no more... my child wants to be a lawyer, so he will remain in school. Thanks to government for the school feeding program”.

In addition to this, Diana also mentioned that,

“Erhmm... I feel like the school feeding program has been very helpful to my family. My first child has graduated from junior high school and hoping to get into high school. This is
because the school feeding played a part, you know. I would not have been able to pay for so much money and that could have prevented her from finishing”.

Moreover, a common experience that was shared during the interview was that the general school dropout rate has declined since the inception of the program. Most of the participants credit this change to the impacts of the SFP. For instance, according to Nana Ama, “the overall school dropout rate for some time now have declined. Most of the kids are now finishing school and doing very well in their exams ever since the government introduced the school feeding program”. Additionally, Mr. Asiamah, a headmaster also affirmed, “Yes, the school dropout rate has declined. The kids are now completing school and one big barrier which is hunger is out of their way”.

**Academic Performance.** Ten of the participants perceive the SFP has significant improvement in the academic performance of primary school children. This improvement according to the participants transcends in class participation, class assignments and final exams. Two of the parents and all three teachers mentioned that the school feeding program has improved class performance. According to Leila, “I do not have to go the market with my child to sell anymore... as a result, my child now gets more time to study and focus in school. This has significantly improved his class performance”. Likewise, Mrs. Adomako mentioned that, “the children are now able to participate more and I feel like they are studying more. This is because, most of them do not work after school and they spend more time in school than they use to when there was no school feeding program”. Furthermore, Nana Kwame, mentioned, “The overall performance of my students keeps improving year by year. I have two students who sell pure water after schools at Tudu Market. They have stopped and now coming to
school regularly. I spoke to them and they mention to me that their mother said the pressure on their educational needs has decreased and for that matter, they should focus on school. Their performances have improved since then”.

Moreover, Mr. Asiamah, a headmaster also said that “the overall performance of the children in the final exams continue to increase ever since the feeding program was implemented”.

Despite the overall improvement on the performance of the children, one of the participants also mentioned that the SFP does not allow the primary school children to use full school hours on school. He mentioned that the children spend school hours on the program which sometimes delays lessons being taught by the teachers. In the words of Niiboi, “... because of the school feeding program, children do not spend all full school hours on school. They also spend most of the time in queue for food and that they come back to class very late. This sometimes distracts teachers from finishing lessons on time. That can negatively affect the performances of the kids in comparison to their peers in other schools”.

Other Benefits

Cognitive Development. With regards to the impacts of the SFP on the cognitive ability of primary school children, the researcher found that even though most of the participants did not say much about how they perceive the feeding program to contribute to the cognitive development of the kids, two of the participants mention that the kids are better able to apply classroom lessons to everyday problems and questions given in class. For instance, Nana Kwame said, “...I think the children are now able to apply whatever is being taught in class to their exams. I witness maturity every time among the kids”. Furthermore, Niiboi also mentioned “the children understanding has greatly improved. They learn and are able to apply what they learn to school assignments and activities”.
Reduction of Hunger and Malnutrition. On the issue of hunger, all the participants mentioned that the SFP has reduced hunger among primary school children. According to the participants, primary school children who hitherto would have struggled from hunger are now provided with meals when they go to school. This helps in reducing hunger among school children. For instance, Diana mentioned that “Just like my kid, I believe many children who would have struggled with hunger are now being fed constantly by the help of the school feeding program, haha…” Another participant, Osman mentioned, “I think the issues of hunger is no more a worry for many families because of the school feeding program…”

They believe that these meals have helped to prevent hunger and malnutrition. Some of the participants also mentioned that as a result of the SFP, many children are provided with good nutrition needed for growth and development. For instance, Abena, a caterer in one of the school mentioned “… we make sure the food that we provide the children contains good nutritional elements needed for their growth and development...In deciding on their menu, we make sure that we consider whether the food has enough protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and many others”. Another participant, also mentioned that “…we ensure that our schoolchildren are fed with good nutrition in schools to make them healthy... That can reduce childhood diseases and illnesses...” Furthermore, Owusua mentioned that, “I personally see to it that there is always balance diet for the kids …”

On the other hand, two of the parents who were interviewed mentioned that they do not think there is a good menu plan for the children. They mentioned that their kids complain to them that they eat the same food every time. There is no balanced diet in the food that they eat. According to Leila, “My child always complain that they always eat the same food over
and over. The caterers have to do proper menu planning and ensure that the kids are not only fed with carbohydrates because it is cheap. The kids are made to eat rice every day... this is bad! They (Caterers) can do something about it”.

**Challenges of the School Feeding Program**

Participants shared experiences they deemed challenging to successful implementation of the SFP. The responses of the participants on this theme vary on many issues ranging from lack or resources, delay of funds, and poor nutrition.

**Lack of Resources.** All the teachers, administrators and caterers who were interviewed for the research mentioned the lack of resources as one of the major challenges associated with the implementation for the SFP. The main concern of the participants was the lack financial resources to meet the expenditure on the program. Two of them also highlighted some other resources such as enough caterers, cooking materials, portable water system for the school and other essentials needed to successfully carry out the program.

According to Owusua,

“I think one major problem with the SFP is that there is no much resources to carry out. We sometimes have to look for cheap options when meeting the needs of the students, some of these options may not be the best. The government has to increase funding for the program so that we can cook enough and healthy meals for the children”.

Similarly, Anita mentioned,

“... there is not enough funding for the SFP. It makes it difficult to implement the program. We always struggle when making the menu for the children. This is because, even though we want to make sure we meet the nutritional needs of the students, we do not have enough money to do so.”
The government has to increase the funding for the school feeding program”

Furthermore, Mr. Asiamah, a headmaster of one of the school mentioned,

“I know the government has helped these children a lot with the provision of the SFP, however in order to meet the objectives of the program, there should be enough funding for it. My caterers are good cooks and they will need enough funds to carry out their job. Sometimes the school even has to add some money to the program in meeting some of its expenditure. Not Good!”

Another issue identified with the lack of resources is the inability of the funds provided by the government to meet the needs of the increasing number of children in the school. For instance, Anita said, “hmm...we have never been able to make the best food for the children, you know. Sometimes we try, yes we try our best...haha... but in order to meet the high number of children in the school, we have to look at options that will do that. We need more money to carry out the SFP”. Also, Mr. Asiamah also mentioned that “the number of children in my school are increasing every time. The money the government allocates is not sufficient to meet their needs. The government has to do more”. Furthermore, Abena said that “As more and more children are being enrolled in schools because of the program, the government needs to increase the funds allocated to the program, so that we can meet the needs of the children. That is what the program seeks to do and that is what the government has to do to reach that goal...”. Moreover, Nana Kwame, a teacher also mentioned that “I know the government is trying but that is not enough. Our kids need to be taken care of... there should me more funding to help the program. That is the only way”.

Delay of Funds. All the administrators and the caterers who were interviewed mentioned that the delay of funds is one of the major challenges affecting the implementation
of the SFP. These participants mentioned that funds from the government do not come early and sometimes the school is forced to use their own money to carry out the program. Even though they also agree that money from the school is eventually paid off by the government, they believe it distracts the school from being able to focus on other projects that are needed by the school. They also mentioned that money from the schools is not enough to meet the needs of the children and therefore believe that a timely allocation of funds for the school feeding program is necessary.

For instance, Mr. Asiamah mentioned that “the funds that the government give to the program does not arrive on time, in fact, we are compelled by this delay to use the small money of the school to carry out the program in the meantime until such a point that the government brings back our money...”. Also, Nana Ama, an administrator in one of the school also mentioned that, “the children will come to the school anyways expecting to have food. It is bad as a mother who is the headmistress of my school to make these children go hungry. I tell, most of them would drop out of school if that happens! (Sigh), so we use our money and then take it from the funds later when it arrives”.

Furthermore, Mr. Orraca-Tetteh also mentioned that “as for the fund from the government, it is always late. It has never come on time from the time we started the program in this school. We could wait several months without any feedback from the government regarding that. I hope something is done about it!”

Poor Nutrition. Another challenge that most of the participants raised about the school feeding program is poor nutrition. Six of participants mentioned that there is usually poor nutrition which defeats the purpose of the program. Participants found issues with
improper menu planning, a particular diet being served every time because it is more affordable, and the inadequate portion sizes of meals served that do not usually sustain the children throughout school hours.

On the issue of improper menu planning, Owusua mentioned “the menu we design is not the best, but we do so because we want to meet the needs of all the children in the school with only limited funds. This may affect the nutrition of the children. They may have to eat one food more frequently than others. That could affect their diet…but again I said we do our very best”. Also, Abena emphasized that “More could be done to improve the nutrition of the children. But you know, we do not have enough means to do so. The children do not consume vegetable as often as they should. Also we do not give them fruits sometimes. These are my concerns. It definitely affects their nutrition... we have to include them in their menu often but we not have enough resources”. Furthermore, Nana Kwame also mentioned that, “Hardly do the children have fruits and vegetables. Even if they do, most of them are not fresh. The whole system needs improvement. Massive improvement!”

Also, some participants also mentioned that the growing number of children in the school affect their ability to feed the children with proper nutrition. This is because they had to look out for the cheaper way of meeting the needs of all the students and which may not necessarily be nutritious. For instance, Owusua mentioned that. “We resort to making rice and stew all the almost all the time for the kids. Sometimes they consume it without any fish or meat...we try not to make some students hungry, so we cut down on cost for some items” Finally, some of the participants also mentioned that the food served is usually not enough to sustain the children. According to Abena, the food we give the kids are sometimes too small.
But that is what we can afford at the time. We do not have enough funds to serve it abundantly.

Other Related Issues

Expansion of the Program. Another issue that came up during the interview was the need to expand the SFP to other schools. Most of the participants mentioned that the government has to expand the SFP to involve so many schools if not all public schools. This is because, according to the participants, the government is responsible for every child in the country and it is not fair to have the program only implemented in some selected schools. The participants also believe that there will be an equal development in all public schools when the program is implemented in all government schools.

According to Nana Kwame, “the SFP has to be implemented in all public schools. The government is responsible for everyone not the selected few. All children in the public schools must benefit from the SFP. This could even reduce the pressure on the schools where the program is being implemented. ... For instance my school...”. Also Mr. Orraca-Tetteh mentioned, “the SFP is a good initiative. The only problem is that it is not done in all schools. The government could expand to all other schools. I believe the government can get more money for it when it stops the corruption...” and Mrs. Adomako also affirmed by saying, “there are many school children out there who need the program but are not getting because it is not implemented in their schools. Some of them do not even have it in their entire community. The government must generate more money to meet the needs of these children”

Understanding of the SFP. During the interview, the researcher also explored the knowledge that participants have about the program. While most of the participants shared
quite a good knowledge about the SFP, some of them do not know much about the program. They mentioned that they have always thought the program is implemented by schools out of their own money. They did not know it was a government initiative. For instance, when asked about how he knows about the SFP, Osman mentioned, “haha, ermm, haha….I think the SFP is where the schools provide their students with food. I think they do that to help the children to come to school”. Also, Diana mentioned that “The SFP provides the children with food. The schools which provide the food are very kind. They have helped us a lot”. Furthermore, Leila mentioned that “I didn’t know what the SFP means, all I know is that my child’s school provides free food for him and all the other students. My neighbor’s child does not have it in their school. So my child school is doing very well”.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

As it has already been emphasized in the previous chapter, the objective of the study was to explore the perceptions that people have about the school feeding program (SFP) and its impact on educational outcomes and challenges to implementing the SFP. The study focused specifically on the impacts of the SFP on enrollment, attendance, and completion and the academic performances of primary school children. The study also explored the challenges of the school feeding program.

The findings of the study revealed the perceptions teachers, caterers, parents and school administrators have about the SFP and its impact on enrollment, attendance, completion and the academic performances of primary schoolchildren. The research also found other issues such as improvement in cognitive development and the reduction of hunger associated with the SFP. Furthermore, this research found some major challenges of the SFP. Three main challenges were identified; the lack of financial resources, the delay of funds to support the implementation of the SFP and poor nutrition mainly associated with improper menu planning and the frequent absence of vegetables and fruits in school meals. Apart from the impacts and challenges of the SFP, the research also explored participants’ knowledge on the SFP and whether the program should be expanded to other schools. The current chapter will discuss these findings in detail utilizing the theoretical framework and relevant literature to support the arguments.

Impacts of the SFP

Enrollment. On the issue of enrollment, the study found that ten of the participants mentioned that the SFP has a positive impact on the enrollment of primary school children.
This finding is largely consistent with the findings of Alderman et al. (2012) and Akanpi (2011) that the SFP has a significant positive impact on the enrollment of children in schools. The participants identified several reasons for the improvement in enrollment in primary schools. First, the participants mentioned that the SFP motivates parents to enroll their children in schools as parents would rather send their children to schools where they would be given free food than to be at home without food. Also, parents who find it difficult to provide their children with food at home are more inclined to enroll their children in schools because of the SFP. Furthermore, consistent to the findings of Kristjansson et al. (2009), the SFP addresses major challenges such as child labor and financial constraints affecting families, which are major challenges to school enrollment. The study found that the financial constraints that prevent parents from enrolling their children in school are reduced as a result of the SFP. The research revealed that parents who hitherto would have involved their children in child labor to earn a source of income are motivated to enroll their children in school. This implies that most parents involve their children who are of school-going-age in child labor instead of school because they are not able to meet the basic needs of their children. As such, they rather prefer to have their children in school in so far as their basic needs such as food are met.

Furthermore, it can be inferred from the findings that even though there are various expenses that preclude many parents from enrolling their children in school, most parents find the provision of free food for their children a big incentive to enroll their children in school. For instance, even though there are many expenses including exams fees, the purchase of school uniforms, money for lunch, examination fees, and general school fees, among others (Husein, 2014), consistent with the findings of Ahmed (2002) and Kristjansson
et al. (2009), most participants in this research consider the provision of free food for their children a major motivation for parents to enroll their children in schools. The involvement of children in child labor to earn a source of income for their immediate families instead of being enrolled in school was found to be declining, as the participants mentioned that the parents are more encouraged through the SFP to enroll their children in school. This is consistent with the findings of Edstrom et al. (2008) that the SFP has reduced the involvement of schoolchildren in child labor in Malawi.

Moreover, the research found that parents are more willing to take their children to primary schools even when they are younger than primary school-going age. Two of the participants mentioned that parents are now more enthused to enroll their children in schools without regards to their age. Additionally, two of the teachers also found some of the children enrolled in their schools too young to understand what is being taught in class. However, despite these children inability to cope in primary schools because of their age, their parents would rather have them in schools to be provided with free food than to have them at home without food. This is possible because, in Ghana, especially most rural areas, there are no strict rules about what age a person must have before going to school. This finding contradicts the critics made by Vermeersch and Kremer (2004) that the SFP ignores children who suffer from severe hunger but who are too young to go to school.

Despite these issues and how they contribute to enrollment, the researcher found that some of the participants do not think the SFP has any impact on the overall enrollment of primary schoolchildren in Ghana. This is because, similar to Adelman et al. (2008) and He (2009) believe that the introduction of the SFP has made schoolchildren move from schools without the SFP to other schools where the SFP is implemented. As a result, enrollment rate
in schools without the SFP continue to decline while schools with SFP continue to receive more schoolchildren than they can sometimes accommodate. This weakens the overall impact of the SFP on enrollment and consistent with Adelman et. al (2008) and He (2009) criticize that the SFP can sometimes result in overcrowding in some schools where the SFP is being implemented, while other schools are disproportionately affected by enrollment drops.

**Attendance.** The participants revealed three main issues which were largely consistent with what previous researchers have identified. The participants revealed that as a result of the SFP, more children now attend school more consistently than they did in the past when the SFP was not in place. Also, most of the participants revealed that the SFP has been a motivation to the children themselves to want to go to school regularly. However, the research also found that despite these improvements in primary school attendance, the SFP sometimes defeats the purpose of education as it shifts the interest of children from education to the feeding program which can potentially affect their academic performances.

Firstly, in congruence with the findings of McGregor (1988) and World Food Program (2006) that providing a school feeding program promotes school attendance among primary schoolchildren, this study found that children attend schools more regularly than they did in the past when the SFP was not in place. In Ghana, just as identified by WFP (2015), there are many factors that affect school attendance in primary schools. These include the distance between school and home, financial constraints, child labor, and provision of a meal for the children, among other factors. However, ten of the participants mentioned that despite these many challenges that affect attendance rate in primary schools, the implementation of the SFP has otherwise helped to positively promote school attendance among primary schoolchildren. Based on this, it can, therefore, be inferred from the findings
that all the participants of the research view the provision of food as the most crucial need for the children and that when satisfied could ensure that children attend school regularly. The provision of food for school children is also important to prevent parents from involving their children in child labor, a factor which could jeopardize their school attendance (Edstrom et al., 2008).

Furthermore, based on this research, it was found that most of the participants believe that the children feel motivated to attend school when they are provided with food. This is similar to the implication of the Maslow’s (1954) theory of need that school children are able to seek other high-level need such as education very regularly when their basic needs like food and water are catered for. Children who go to school on an empty stomach may find it very difficult to stay in school and as such will be inclined to be involved child labor and help their parents raise extra money to meet their families’ basic needs. However, the research mentions that when the basic needs of the children are met, they are able to attend school regularly.

In contrast, two of the participants believe that the interest of children towards education should be because it provides them with an opportunity to learn new things and gain knowledge that will be useful in the future. However, they mention that the SFP has shifted the interest of children from the purpose of education to the SFP. This is largely consistent with criticisms raised by Vermeersch and Kremer (2004) and Kazianga et al. (2009) on the SFP. According to Sen (1999), education imparts training, knowledge, and skills for persons to become responsible citizens in the society. They believe that children who feel motivated to attend school simply because they will be provided with food defeats the purpose of education can negatively affect the performance of primary schoolchildren.
However, the findings resonate with the implication of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs that children will be able to focus on education only when their basic needs such as food is met. As a result, any effort to promote school attendance among primary school children should be focused on providing school meals.

**Reduction of Hunger and Malnutrition.** Even though the research did not delve in greater detail the nutritional elements of the meals provided under the school feeding program, some participants mentioned that the SFP has helped to improve nutrition and growth in children. This is consistent with WFP (2006) assertion that the SFP fosters nutrition and growth by providing nutritious meals to children. Children who may otherwise not have access to nutritious food at home because of poverty and family nutritional illiteracy are able to get quality and nutritious meals under the SFP when they attend school. This could help them avoid acute and chronic illnesses that could affect them as a result of malnutrition (Bloom, 2009; Dauncey, 2009; Kazal, 2002; Shariff, Bond, & Johnson, 2000). Furthermore, consistent to Kristjansson et al. (2009) finding, the participants also revealed that the SFP has reduced short-term hunger among many children who receive daily meals from school.

**Retention.** On the impact on retention, the researcher found that children are able to complete primary school as a result of the SFP. This is largely consistent with the findings of many researchers, especially that of Husein (2014) and WFP (2006) that primary school children are able to stay in school and complete their education as a result of the SFP. It can be inferred from the study that, just as proposed in the Maslow's hierarchy of need, because the most basic needs of children which include food and water are met under the SFP, they are able to focus more on school and improve their academic performances. When there is an
improvement in the performance of schoolchildren, they are able to avoid being dismissed because of poor academic performance. Also, the children are motivated to stay in school without dropping out because they feel motivated and happy about their performance.

Furthermore, the severe hunger which has been identified as a major challenge to education (WFP, 2006) when reduced through SFP can result in children more likely to finish school thereby impacting school completion.

**Academic Performance and Cognitive Development.** In congruence with the findings of many researchers that the SFP improves academic performance among school children (Chandler et. al 1995), this study found that participants perceived the performances of primary school children to have increased as a result of the introduction of the SFP. Participants believe that schoolchildren are now able to participate effectively in school activities, apply what is being taught in school to their everyday activities, and increase their performance on school exams. It can be inferred from the findings of the research that as children avoid from child labor and are able to spend more time on their studies, their academic performance will increase. This finding is also consistent with Simeon and McGregor (1989) findings that the performance of schoolchildren increase when meals are provided to them in school.

The researcher also found that, despite the significant contributions of the SFP to the academic and cognitive improvement of schoolchildren, the schoolchildren tend to use some of the school’s hours on the program which can potentially affect their performances at the school level. This is consistent to some of the critics of the SFP by many researchers (Vermeersch and Kremer 2004; Gelli, Meir et al. 2007; Kazianga et al. 2009). It can be concluded based on this finding that some school hours that could be used by teachers to
finish a lesson could be compromised as a result of the SFP. Children could be in a long queue for approximately 1 hour or more when waiting to receive their meals. Some of these children when are not able to receive their meals in time can be late to class. As a result, teachers may start lessons late and which precludes them from finishing their lessons. In an event like this, the performance of children at the school level will be relatively poorer than schools where the children use full school hours on academics and teachers are able to finish their lessons.

Challenges of the SFP

**Lack of Resources.** In this study, all the participants perceived the lack of resources as one of the major challenges facing the implementation of the SFP. This is very consistent with Kootnz and Wierch (2001) assertion that the lack of resources is a major challenge to the implementation of the SFP. The study also found that resources available are not able to meet the increasing enrollment of children in primary school. This is also similar to the WFP (2006) assertion that the lack of resources can inhibit the implementation of the SFP. In this research, participants emphasized financial resources more than any other resources such as materials and staff, among others, even though they agree that they are all crucial to the implementation of the SFP. Participants mentioned that occasionally the money they receive from the government to carry out the program is not sufficient to meet the increasing number of students who are enrolled in school.

It is important to note that, unlike Ayieke (2005) and Nkethia (2011), this research did not explore whether government spending on the SFP is included in the government fiscal budget and how much money is allocated to the program per year. The research findings also did not reveal any information on other sources of funding and all other parties
apart from the government who contribute to the program. This could be because the participants do not have any information on the financial state of the SFP. Also, it could be because most of the participants interviewed lack adequate information about the SFP. Furthermore, the lack of resources prevents the children from receiving adequate nutritious food which inhibits the success of the program in meeting nutritional needs of the children.

**Delay of Funds.** The second challenge revealed in this study is the delay of funds that inhibit the successful implementation of the program. This is similar to the findings of Nkethia (2011) that many schools in Kenya find the delay of government funds a major threat to the SFP. Due to the delay in funds, participants mentioned that they sometimes have to support the program with their own school money before they are eventually refunded by the government. This, according to the participants, delays the school’s completion of other developmental projects. Furthermore, some of the participants also mentioned that the school funding sometimes is not enough to meet the demands of the schools. This affects menu planning, the type and quantity of food served as well as the frequency which meals are served. These factors can negatively affect the implementation of the program.

**Poor Nutrition.** The last challenge identified in this research is the poor nutrition of food served under the program. Four of the participants mentioned that the nutrition of the meals served under the SFP is poor. They mentioned that this stems from menu planning and the absence of some basic nutritional elements needed for child growth and development. The research revealed that schools occasionally resort to cheaper alternatives when deciding on the children’s meals because of the lack of resources which consequently negatively affects the meals provided to the children. Furthermore, participants mentioned that primary school children are sometimes unable to receive adequate meals to sustain them in schools.
In situations where there is an inadequate food, according to participants, it usually lacks nutritional elements needed for the growth and development. It can, therefore, be inferred from the findings that schools are made to choose between either providing nutritious food to only a few children or providing numerous children with adequate non-nutritious food. Schools feel more inclined to choose the latter because they choose to partially meet the needs of all the children in the school. This may be detrimental to the health of the children and defeats the purpose of the SFP.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Three main themes emerged from the responses of participants during the data analysis. These themes include the impacts of the SFP on educational outcomes and academic performance of schoolchildren, the challenges that inhibit the implementation of the SFP and the miscellaneous issues related to the program. There were subthemes for every theme. With the impacts of the SFP, subthemes that emerged include the benefits of the SFP on enrollment, attendance, retention, academic performance, cognitive development, and the reduction of hunger and malnutrition. On the issue of enrollment, most of the participants shared that parents are motivated by the SFP to enroll their children in schools. The research also found that children of younger ages are now enrolled in school because of the SFP. This has increased the overall number of children who are enrolled in primary school. This finding is largely consistent with most previous research. In contrast, the research also found that two of the participants do not think the SFP has any significant contribution to the overall national enrollment rate. This is because they believe the SFP encourages children in schools without SFP to move to schools with SFP thereby resulting in a flat enrollment rate nationally.

On the issue of attendance, the research found that most participants perceive that the SFP helps in promoting school attendance among primary school children. This is because the SFP is said to motivate the children to go to school. One major issue found with attendance is that some participants believe that children no longer go to school with the belief of learning and becoming successful people in future but instead, go to school because they believe they will be provided with food. According to some participants, this defeats the
purpose of education. However, participants also believe that the SFP promote retention and academic performance of children. This aligns with the Maslow hierarchy of needs that when the basic needs of people are met, they are able to focus on other higher-level needs such as academic success. Children are also able to spend more time in school and focus on their studies because they do not have to worry about food. This has improved their academic performance in school. Also, hunger and malnutrition which inhibit educational outcomes of primary school children were perceived to be reduced by the SFP.

In regards to the challenges that inhibit the implementation of the SFP, the research found three subthemes which include, the lack of resources, delay of funds and poor nutrition. Participants perceived the lack of resources to be a major challenge in the implementation of the SFP. They believed that the resources allocated by the government are not enough to meet the nutritional demands of primary schoolchildren. Also, the participants asserted that the delay of funds is another problem that threatens the implementation of the SFP. They mentioned that the delay of government funds can be frustrating when implementing the program and that they sometimes have to use their own money for the program, which is later refunded by the government. This funding module creates uncertainty and uneasiness in the administration of the SFP.

The final problem perceived by the participants is poor nutrition. Some of the participants believe that the program does not provide adequate nutritious meals for the children. Some of them mentioned that the same menu is used over and over, and the children are not given enough vegetables and fruits which essential nutritional elements. Other related issues that were discovered from this research include the participants'
ignorance about the SFP and their desire of the government to expand the program to all schools.

**Summary of Analysis**

The data of this qualitative research was primarily gathered from a semi-structured interview with 12 participants from six selected schools in Accra Central, Ghana. The questions asked during the interview explored the perceptions teachers, caterers, parents and administrators have about the SFP and its impacts on educational outcomes as well the setbacks in its implementation. The data collected were coded and the thematic network analysis was used to draw common themes that emerged from their responses. The theory utilized the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to explain human needs and the order in which they can be satisfied. The Maslow hierarchy of needs was also used to explore the connection between human basic needs such as food and academic success. Furthermore, peer-reviewed journals and scientific articles that were relevant to the research topic were also used in the discussion to relate the findings of the research to existing literature.

**Recommendations**

There are various ways in which the implementation of the school feeding program (SFP) can be improved to meet its objectives. Some of these ways include having a sustainable source of funding for the program, increased collaboration and partnerships with individuals, private and international organizations, periodic monitoring and evaluation, and education to the general public about the program.

Firstly, one of the ways of promoting the implementation of the SFP is by ensuring a sustainable source of funding for the program. The government could ensure that money allocated to the program is included in the annual fiscal spending of the state. This will
ensure that there are always funds available to be used for the project. The funds allocated for the program must also be adequate to meet the expenses on the program. Furthermore, the government must ensure that there is a timely distribution of funds to schools to carry out the program in a timely manner. An adequate and timely distribution of funds would help ensure schoolchildren are provided with adequate nutritious meals needed for child growth and development. To accomplish this, the government must put in place proper planning and all stakeholders of the program must be involved in the decision-making process.

Secondly, the government must ensure that there are increased collaborations and partnerships for the program. This could be done through public-private partnerships and the involvement of many international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Program (WFP), intergovernmental agencies, and local organizations. The government can also involve community members and local farmers to ensure the successful implementation of the program. The involvement of many private and intergovernmental agencies could increase the scope of funding for the program which may impact the successful implementation of the program. Community members and local farmers can also contribute to the program through donations, labor, and the provision of food materials. Furthermore, collaborations with other countries like Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, and United States are needed in ensuring that the challenges that inhibit the SFP are curtailed. This will help reduce hunger, mortality and malnutrition among children across the globe as well as improve conditions that will promote their educational performance in school, thereby enhancing the growth and development of the world’s future generation.

Furthermore, periodic monitoring and evaluation could ensure that the objectives of the program are met. The government must put in place measures and outcomes for the
program and these outcomes can serve as a benchmark when implementing the program. Moreover, the government can set up a committee that will periodically monitor and evaluate the implementation process and ensures that the program is in line with its objectives. Outcomes of the programs can also be made available to the general public to ensure transparency.

The actors of the SFP must also ensure that the program provides nutritious meals for the children. This will help in reaching the programs primary objectives. In doing so, there must be a proper menu planning which will include nutritious meals for the children. Fresh vegetables and fruits can also accompany daily designed meals to help prevent chronic diseases related to malnutrition. Ghana can also borrow from the guidelines set under the Healthy Hunger Free Act established by President Obama in 2010 which provides nutritional standard of food for school children.

The final way of promoting the program is through education. The research found that most of the participants are ignorant about the SFP. The government can increase publicity of the program to the public to help residents of Ghana understand the program. When the general public is made aware of the program, they are able to contribute to the implementation of it.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This research utilized a qualitative approach to conducting a research. Future research could employ a quantitative research design to measure the significance of the impacts of the SFP on the educational outcomes (enrollment, attendance, and completion). A similar approach could also be employed to measure the impacts of the SFP on academic performances of schoolchildren. Future research could also utilize two different groups, an
experiment group, and control group from different schools in the same district to help measure the significance of the SFP on educational outcomes. A measurement of how the SFP impacts different populations in the same country can also be achieved.

Secondly, future research could also include policy actors from the Ministry of Education and administrators from the Ghana Education Services to explore the program implementation plan and the factors that affect money allocation for the program. The criteria used in the selection of schools who can participate in the program can also be explored. This will help enlighten schools and the public on how schools can participate in the program and what they will have to do.

Furthermore, this research may not have exhausted all the approaches to conducting a qualitative research. Future research can look at ways in which responses can be improved. These include face-to-face interviews, and focused group discussions among other methods. Finally, this research focused only on parents, teachers, administrators and caterers who are not direct recipients of the program. Future research, however, could consider the children who are direct recipients of the program. This will provide a better understanding of how the program directly affects them.

Researcher Reflection

This research project has enlightened me on the School Feeding Program and its contributions to the development of education in Ghana. On a much broader scale, the study has also provided me the opportunity to understand the implementation of social services and how they directly impact families and communities across the globe. Even though I grew up in Ghana and I am familiar with the SFP, I never had the chance to really look deeply into how the program directly affects families and ways in which the program can be improved.
However, interacting with various people who shared their experiences on the SFP was an eye-opening for me especially on how the program, which many people take for granted in the country, can significantly bring so many children off the street to enroll in school.

Also, drawing from the findings of this research and the theoretical framework utilized in this research, I have gained a deeper understanding on how the basic needs of human beings like food and water greatly impacts our academic successes and personal achievements. Furthermore, this study has also shaped my interest in social policies, particularly those that impact school health. Moreover, it has informed me about both international and national commitments to social services and how that can be tapped to strengthen social services. As a future health analyst and researcher, I believe these lessons learned would greatly impact my work on how sustainable policies can be made to promote the health and success of people. I hope that this research contributes to the knowledge and literature on SFP as well as informs policymakers on ways in which the program can be improved to benefit more people.
REFERENCES


Ahmed, A.U. (2002). Food for education program in Bangladesh: *an evaluation of its impact on educational attainment and food security*. Washington, DC, IFPRI.


De Carvalho et al. (2011). Ghana school feeding program: Re-tooling for a sustainable future.


of Ghana. Ghana School Feeding Programme: Programme Document 2007- 2010,
Accra. Ghana. Retrieved from


67:785S-789S.

Grillenberger, M., et al. (2003). Animal source foods to improve micronutrient, nutrition and
human function in developing countries. The Journal of Nutrition, 133 (11S-II).

Supplement


health of disadvantaged students. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews:
1.

Husein, K. (2014). The impacts of the ghana national school feeding programme on
enrollment, attendance and retention in Ga South municipality. University of Ghana.


Education for All: Levelling the Playing Field. Wallingford, UK, CABI Publishing.


Kristjansson, B. et al. (2009). *School feeding for improving the physical and psychosocial health of disadvantaged students* (Review).


Olubayo, M. A, Amisialuvi, P & Namusonge, G (2013). Factors affecting implementation of


WFP, (2015). *School feeding programs: Why they should be scaled up now.*


Yendaw, E., Dayour, F. (2014). Effects of the national school feeding programme on pupils’
enrollment, attendance, and retention: A case study of Nyoglo of the Savelugu-
Sciences*
APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent

Introduction: My name is Ishmael Tagoe and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. My advisor is Dr. Stefan H. Fritsch, an associate professor at BGSU’s Political Science Department. As a requirement for graduation, I am doing a thesis about the Ghana National School Feeding Program and people’s perceptions about the program’s influence on school enrolment, attendance and completion.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions people have about the program and its influence on school enrollment, attendance and completion. For this study, I am looking at five different primary schools in the Greater Accra Region. Although the study is not designed to help you personally, your opinions are valuable in understanding the school feeding program and providing an insight into how best the program can be improved.

Procedure: If you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct one interview with you that will take proximately 60 minutes or less. The interview will be done through telephone, WhatsApp or Skype. During the interview, I will ask you questions relevant to the school feeding program and I will use a voice recorder to record our conversation. After the interview, I will transcribe the recordings and I will give you a pseudonym (false name) that will be used on transcripts and in subsequent publications after which they will be deleted. Within one month of the interview, I may contact you again with follow-up questions that will not take more than 20 minutes of your time. Follow-up interview questions will be based on your previous responses and will seek for further clarification in your responses. I will also send you a copy of the interview transcript upon request.

Voluntary Nature: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and there will be no penalty for withdrawing from this study. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue at any time.

Confidentiality Protection: The information obtained from this research study will be kept confidential. Access to this information is restricted to the researcher. Consent forms will be stored separately from the data recordings and transcripts. I will lock away the consent forms in a secure file cabinet in my office. The audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on a secure online server, which utilizes server authentication that only I can access. The audio recordings from the interviews will be kept for a maximum of one year, after which they will be deleted. A pseudonym (assigned name) will be used on all the transcripts and publications. With the pseudonym, I may quote in published research some of the things you discuss with me during the interview. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings.

BGSU IRB - APPROVED FOR USE
IRBNet ID # 1133151
EFFECTIVE 11/28/2017
EXPIRES 10/30/2018
**Risks:** The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. There are no physical or mental risks associated with your participation in this study.

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact me at +1(419)-329-8464 or email at itagoe@bgsu.edu and/or my advisor Dr. Stefan H. Fritsch at +1(419) 372-7338 or email at sfritsc@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, The Institutional Review Board (IRB), Bowling Green State University, +1(419) 372-7716 (orc@bgsu.edu), if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study.

**Agreement:** I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. My agreement to participate in this study is signified by my saying “yes” to the question “Do you agree to participate in this study?” and my participation.

Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX B: IRB LETTER

DATE: November 28, 2017

TO: Ishmael Tagoe, Master's in Public Administration
FROM: Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [1133151-2] The Ghana National School Feeding Program; the perception of people about the program on school enrollment, attendance and completion
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: November 28, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE: October 30, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the IRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on October 30, 2018. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or orc@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board's records.
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

All the interview questions will be in English.

All Participants
1. How do you understand the school feeding program (SFP)?
2. How would you describe some of the challenges and benefits of the SFP?

School Administrators and Teachers
3. How does the SFP work in your school/area?
   a. How is it funded?
   b. How is it implemented?
   c. What are the extents of community involvement?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between the SFP and the following:
   a. Classroom performance
   b. School enrollment
   c. Retention

Parents
5. How does the SFP influence children’s willingness to attend and stay in school?
6. How would you describe the impacts of the SFP on parent’s willingness to send their kids to school?

Caterers
7. How would you describe the quality of food and its influence on the children’s nutrition?
8. How does the quantity of food measure up to the number of children?
9. How frequent are the meals served?
10. How do you describe the school dropout rate after the introduction of the SFP?
11. What responses do the children give you about the SFP?