

Local Procurement, School Feeding, and Educational Outcomes

A Qualitative Analysis of Northern Ghana's Smallholder-Linked Programme

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ABSTRACT

{ "background": "School feeding programmes are widely implemented across Africa to address food insecurity and improve educational access. However, the specific impacts of programmes that mandate procurement from local smallholder farmers—a policy designed to synergise agricultural and educational development—remain under-researched, particularly regarding qualitative insights into educational outcomes.", "purpose and objectives": "This study aimed to qualitatively investigate the perceived effects of a government-led, smallholder-linked school feeding programme on student academic performance in the Northern Region of Ghana. It sought to understand the mechanisms through which local procurement influences educational outcomes from the perspectives of key stakeholders.", "methodology": "A qualitative, multi-site case study was conducted. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with headteachers, teachers, farmers, and programme officials, alongside focus group discussions with parents and community elders. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data.", "findings": "Stakeholders consistently reported perceived improvements in student concentration and regular attendance, directly attributed to reliable meal provision. A prominent theme was the enhanced community ownership of education, fostering greater parental involvement. However, a critical finding was that irregular food deliveries from smallholder suppliers, linked to seasonal production cycles, periodically disrupted these benefits and created uncertainty in schools.", "conclusion": "The smallholder-linked model demonstrates potential to improve the educational environment through stabilised attendance and strengthened school-community ties. Yet, its effectiveness is contingent on the reliability of the local agricultural supply chain, which can introduce volatility that undermines consistent programme delivery.", "recommendations": "Programme design must integrate robust mechanisms to buffer against seasonal fluctuations in local food availability. This includes developing structured warehousing systems and flexible procurement protocols that can source from a wider local zone during lean periods, without undermining the core objective of supporting proximate smallholders.", "key words": "Home-grown school feeding, local procurement, educational outcomes, smallholder farmers, qualitative research, Ghana, social policy", "contribution statement": "This paper provides novel empirical evidence on the policy mechanism linking local

Keywords: *School feeding programmes, smallholder farmers, educational outcomes, qualitative analysis, Sub-Saharan Africa, local procurement, Northern Ghana*

Article Highlights

- Stakeholders reported improved student concentration and

Core Policy Tension

The model successfully links agricultural support to

<p>attendance linked to reliable meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced community ownership emerged as a key mechanism for strengthening educational engagement.• Seasonal production cycles caused irregular food deliveries, creating uncertainty in schools.• Programme effectiveness is contingent on buffering against local supply chain volatility.	<p>educational goals but introduces a dependency on smallholder production cycles that can undermine consistent meal delivery.</p> <p><i>Examines the on-the-ground realities of a policy designed to synergise agricultural and educational development.</i></p>
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