Understanding the Impact and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for the Implementation of Ghana's School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Strategy

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to both:

- ✓ My late mum Bintu Abukari, a compassionate, long-suffering woman who taught me what unconditional love is.

- ✓ My wife, Zaharitayu, and my two daughters Suaabira and Alima who have had to endure years of my absence from home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Following the 2008 US banking and financial crisis, the global economy was thrown into a recession. Ultimately, the crisis resulted in many governments in both the North and South adopting austerity programmes. In the case of Ghana, the country's economy contracted, following which the government adopted fiscal austerity programmes.

Although the discourse on austerity has blanketed news headlines and the academe of the Global North, such discussions are almost non-existent in many countries in the Global South, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. At best, the extant literature on the impact of austerity has focused on macroeconomic issues, for example. There has been less scholarly attention paid, however, to the impact of austerity for the delivery of public services and the implication this has at the micro level such as schools. This thesis thus aims to understand the impacts of Ghana's fiscal austerity for the delivery of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) and the implications this has for schoolchildren.

A qualitative case study of two state primary schools in northern Ghana is the research strategy adopted by this thesis. The data analysis is based on three main sets of data: *1.* In-depth semi-structured interviews with frontline service providers of the GSFP, headteachers of two primary schools, parents, students and experts; *2.* Focus Group Discussions with teachers in both schools; and *3.* Field observation. Based on these data, the findings suggest that fiscal austerity has defined and conditioned the service delivery environment, with service providers relying on their discretion to adopt unsanctioned coping strategies as they deliver the service within austerity. The findings also suggest that these coping strategies ultimately undermine the school feeding policy intent and goals. Moreover, the results show that schoolchildren in northern Ghana routinely experience food insecurity in the school, with significant implications for teaching and learning as these students rely on their thinned agency to resist school and refuse the meals served.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFDB — African Development Bank.

CCT — Conditional Cash Transfer.

CG — Capitation Grant.

DACF — District Assembly Common Fund.

DIC — District Implementation Committee.

DFID — Department for International Development.

ECEC — Early Childhood Education and Care.

ERP — Economic Recovery Programme.

ESP — Education Strategy Plan.

FCUBE — Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education.

GES — Ghana Education Service.

GETFUND — Ghana Education Trust Fund.

GoG — Government of Ghana.

GSFP — Ghana School Feeding Programme.

HDI — Human Development Index.

HIPC — Highly Indebted Poor Countries.

HGSFP — Home Grown School Feeding Programme.

ILO — International Labour Organisation.

IMF — International Monetary Fund.

ISSER — Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research.

LEAP — Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty.

NHIS — National Health Insurance Scheme.

OECD — Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

OPEC — Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

PAMSCAD — Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment.

PRSP — Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

PURC — Public Utilities Regulatory Commission.

SAP — Structural Adjustment Programme.

SDA — Social Dimensions of Adjustment.

SDF — Social Development Funds.

SF — School Food.

SI — Social Investment.

SIF – Social Investment Fund.

SLB — Street-Level Bureaucrat.

SSA — Sub-Saharan Africa.

UNCTAD — United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

UNDP — United Nations Development Programme.

UNICEF — United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

VAT — Value Added Tax.

WB — World Bank.

WFP — World Food Programme.

WTA — Winner-Takes-All.

CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

1.1 Research Context and Background

Broadly, this thesis is about the implications of austerity for the implementation of social programmes in the Global South. More explicitly, the thesis sets out to explore the implications of fiscal austerity for Ghana's social investment aspirations. This study is critical because, in part, there is a dearth of research focusing on what austerity means for social policy in the Global South. Whereas public discussions and research on the effects of austerity in the Global North are vast, the same cannot be said of the Global South. However, contrary to popular perceptions, developing countries are also undergoing fiscal austerity (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2014a), although it is not as highly publicised in the international mainstream media compared to that of the Global North. In 2014, the ILO reported that 122 countries — out of which 82 were developing countries — were retrenching public spending in furtherance of the goals of austerity (ILO, 2014a). Through fiscal austerity programmes, developing countries are cutting food and fuel subsidies, placing caps or cuts on wages; right-sizing civil service resulting in job losses, increasing consumption taxes — such as Value-Added Tax (VAT) on essential consumer products, revising eligibility criteria and (re)targeting social protection more narrowly (ILO, 2014a). Nonetheless, while austerity is real in developing countries, Harper and Jones (2009) and Ortiz and Cummins (2013) observe that there is little information on the impact of economic austerity in developing countries, and especially on children. In other words, the reality of austerity on low-income families in developing countries has not received enough coverage and research (Ortiz and Cummins, 2013). Accordingly, there has been limited policy responses directed at addressing the impact of austerity on children and poor households.

The need to research the effects of austerity in the Global South is against the backdrop of the low human development indicators in the region. Fiscal austerity is happening in a period when

development indicators in general, and progress on child wellbeing related indicators is slowest in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa [SSA] (Harper and Jones, 2009). Low-income countries are often saddled with diverse and seemingly intractable multi-dimensional development challenges. Hence, development indicators of low-income countries, especially within SSA, generate quite a disconcerting feeling. For instance, the World Bank (2013: 31) estimates that while 290 million Africans were living under the meagre poverty line of US$1.25 a day in SSA in 1990, this figure rose to 414 million in 2010. Additionally, more than half of all maternal deaths globally in 2010 occurred in SSA (ibid). Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2013) indicates that in 2012, while the global average Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.694, SSA had the lowest HDI value of 0.475.

Incidentally, many of these socio-economic development challenges have roots in or were exacerbated during the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP[1]) period. The period between 1980 and the 1990s is often referred to as the 'lost decade' in terms of the trajectory of developing countries' economic and social development — particularly in SSA (European Report on Development 2010; World Bank, 1990a). This era was marked by a steep decline in social and economic development due to political instability, droughts, and Cold War politics, among others. However, SAPs arguably played a more critical role in the social and economic regression of developing countries then as these countries embarked on a path of massive disinvestment in social programmes.

Following two decades of the implementation of SAPs, the evidence indicates that growth and human development was unsatisfactory across SSA (see Watkins, 1995; Mkandawire, 2001). Disappointment in the results of SAPs during the 1980s and 1990s and extensive criticism of the SAPs as being anti-poor (Handley et al., 2009), led a renewed global interest in the late-1990s that

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[1] SAPs were a series of neoliberal macroeconomic stabilization programmes that were externally imposed on developing countries as a blueprint for economic growth between the 1980s and 1990 by the Bretton Woods institutions. See Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1 for a discussion of SAPs.

called for a redirection of development priority away from solely concentrating on macroeconomics, toward social investment (SI). The 1995 World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) in Copenhagen played a vital role in bolstering support for the then-emerging consensus on the need for a (re)focus on a human-centred approach to development. In essence, the WSSD called for human needs to be placed firmly at the centre of development (Kwon et al., 2009). In other words, there was the reaffirmation of the efficiency of social policies as instruments to achieving human development goals through the SI perspective (Bradshaw, 2008).

The SI perspective believes that social spending is an investment rather than a cost, as suggested by neoliberalism (Deeming and Smyth, 2015; Leoni, 2015). The SI paradigm refutes neoliberalism's claims that social spending is needless and undermines economic growth by contending that investments in human capital, in the long run, provide enormous benefits both to the individual and the economy. Hence, social spending and economic growth can be mutually beneficial. This perspective is 'productivist' in outlook because resources are not expended on 'unproductive' consumption needs, but instead, focused on building quality human capital (Midgley, 1997).

Subsequent to the renewed interest in social development and poverty reduction through the SI paradigm, there has been an upsurge in the number of developing countries establishing social protection[2] programmes with SI rationale since the end of the SAP period (de Haan, 2014). For example, Zambia in 2004, established the Social Cash Transfer Scheme that offers monthly cash payments to households with children and orphans. Malawi also started the Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Scheme in 2006 targeted at poor households to increase school enrolment and to discourage child labour (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012).

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[2] The UK Department for International Development [DFID] (2005) defines social protection as encompassing a subset of public actions, carried out by the state or privately, that address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty.

Having established SI as a viable development strategy in stark dissimilarity to the neoliberal calls for fiscal austerity in the Global South, there are genuine concerns that fiscal austerity has the potential of reversing the trend of increased social spending, post SAPs. The current wave of austerity sweeping across the world (and in developing countries in particular) masks real threats of reversing the modest successes achieved in recent years in the quest for improved human development. For instance, the ability to rely on social protection in times of shocks is still far from being the reality for billions of people worldwide. As of 2012, 73 per cent of the world's population had inadequate or no access to comprehensive social security systems (ILO, 2014a). A large number of these people are in developing countries with SSA having the lowest social protection expenditure worldwide. For example, the World Bank (2012a: 1) reports that whereas Western Europe and Latin America spent 17.98 per cent and 7.63 per cent respectively of their GDP on social protection, SSA spent 2.81 per cent of GDP on social protection in 2012. Five years later, the International Labour Organisation's 2017 *World Social Protection Report* paints a depressing picture of under coverage. The report states that 71 per cent of the global population are either not covered, or covered only partially — with Asia, Africa and the Arab states accounting for a significant share of the under coverage (ILO, 2017: XXIX). Also, while 84.1 per cent of people in Europe and Central Asia and 67.6 per cent of people in the Americas are covered, only 17.8 per cent of Africans have access to social protection (ibid, XXX). Furthermore, the report states that 18.3 per cent of Ghanaians are covered by at least one social protection programme; compared to 6.1 per cent of Gambians and 2.9 per cent of Ugandans[3] (ILO, 2017: 123).

Reading the two ILO reports (2014; 2017) together, it is evident that public spending on social protection programmes in SSA and developing countries are inadequate — especially during the pre-austerity crisis. Nevertheless, it is during times of economic crisis (manifested in cutbacks on social spending) that the need for social protection programmes becomes all the more critical as

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[3] Gambian and Ugandan are fellow African countries.

failing to protect the poor risks not only a significant increase in poverty in the wake of crisis but also has broader implications after the crisis (Ravallion, 2008). Austerity can be harmful, particularly to children, because they have different experiences of poverty and disadvantage. For example, children's physical and cognitive development can be severely undermined even with brief periods of food poverty (Ortiz et al., 2012; ILO, 2014a).

1.2 The Ghanaian Case

Ghana, like many SSA countries in the 1980s,[4] underwent a period of strict fiscal austerity, leading to deteriorating social and human development indicators. However, after two decades of prolonged social spending retrenchment as a result of the introduction of SAPs, Ghana's development strategy at the turn of the millennium changed from fiscal austerity and social safety nets to increased social spending through the SI paradigm. Accordingly, the period between 2003 and 2008 witnessed a significant expansion of Ghana's social protection programmes primarily driven by the then-burgeoning poverty alleviation and SI discourse. The total government expenditure on social services rose from 30 per cent in 2001 to 48 per cent in 2006 (GoG, 2007). Although the government initiated a host of SI programmes, it must be noted, however, that the priority was on spending on healthcare and education (Awal, 2012). Two of Ghana's flagship SI programmes that emerged were the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) and the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP). First, as part of efforts to attain the UN MDGs of achieving universal primary education and enhancing the human capital, the GSFP was launched in 2005. Second, in terms of the SI programme designed to reduce the incidence of extreme poverty directly, the government in 2008 launched its flagship conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme LEAP. Together, the LEAP and GSFP are the country's flagship SI programmes designed to enhance Ghana's human capital.

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[4] See Chapter 4 Section 4.2.1 for an in-depth discussion.

Ghana is currently going through financial and economic challenges, as are many other countries worldwide. The economy in recent years has been on a path of a relentless slump. Ghana's economic growth has wilted on a confluence of factors such as a persistent energy crisis, rising inflation, spiralling public debts, and declining government revenue (Acheampong and Barkers-Okwan, 2015). On the back of oil exploration, Ghana's economic growth peaked at 14.9 per cent of GDP in 2011, then fell precipitously to 8.8 per cent in 2012[5] (*The Economist*, 2015).

To address the country's macroeconomic challenges, the response of the government of Ghana has been a policy shift towards fiscal austerity programmes. Central to fiscal austerity is a deliberate and significant cut in public spending to halt rising budget deficits. Consequently, the government of Ghana has embarked on a series of fiscal austerity measures. For example, the Mahama[6] administration since 2011, embarked on far-reaching budget cuts to almost every sector of the government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Austerity has meant that statutory requirements for the transfer of funds to state agencies have been in arrears for several quarters. Specifically, payments to the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF), National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) have all been in arrears in recent times. Therefore, service providers under the NHIS for example, have had to turn away patients holding the NHIS card (holding the NHIS card qualifies a patient for care), pushing poor patients to seek alternative traditional treatment or self-medication.

1.3 Research Rationale and Objectives

The current economic situation in Ghana provides the opportune moment for this research study as budget cuts (usually targeted at social services) have the tendency of undermining social spending efforts. In other words, economic austerity can fundamentally pose an existential threat to the already inadequate levels of human development in developing countries. It is during times

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[5] See Chapter 4, Section 4.5 for a detailed discussion of Ghana's economic challenges.
[6] President Mahama was Ghana's elected president between 2012 and 2016.

of austerity that the need for social protection programmes becomes all the more critical as inaction to protect the poor has broader implications well after a crisis (Ravallion, 2008). Nonetheless, as mentioned above in section 1.1, research on austerity in the Global South is surprisingly sparse. Thus, this thesis is an exploratory study into the implications of fiscal austerity for Ghana's SI strategy, using one of the country's flagship SI programmes (the GSFP) as a case study. The research broadly sets out to examine the impact of fiscal austerity on Ghana's social investment strategy of increased spending on the flagship programme highlighted above. To achieve this objective, the thesis seeks to answer the main research question: *How has fiscal austerity impacted Ghana's Social Investment Strategy with a specific focus on the GSFP?* Following this, two interrelated sub-questions are asked:

(a) In what ways has austerity affected the funding and service delivery of the GSFP?

(b) How are the implications of austerity for the GSFP experienced in the everyday lives of pupils, teachers and families in northern Ghana?

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters:

Chapter 1 here introduces the research topic and phenomena under study. The chapter also explains the research aims and questions to be addressed and discusses the importance of the study, in relation to its contribution to an understanding of the impact of austerity for Ghana's social investment strategy.

Chapter 2 is the literature review chapter dedicated to the country context of this research — Ghana. The chapter begins by exploring the nature of the post-2008 global financial and economic crisis. The chapter then discusses Ghana's development trajectory of a transition from SAPs to safety nets and social investments, following a decade of IMF imposed severe fiscal austerity and disinvestment in the 1980s. The second part of the chapter examines the nature of the current regime of fiscal austerity in Ghana and the country's economic challenges.

Chapter 3 systematically reviews the literature on the study's theoretical framework (social investment) as well as the research's data analytical framework (the street-level bureaucracy). On the whole, the chapter is dedicated to examining and discussing the emergence of the social investment paradigm in the Global North (in the 19990s) as an intellectual response to the dominance of neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s. The chapter shows that both social policy and economic policy can be complementary (rather than antithetical) as the social investment paradigm makes a case for increased government attention and spending on social policy in furtherance of economic development goals. Therefore, social policy can be a productive factor and not only confined to consumption needs. In the second section of the chapter, the literature on austerity, with its impacts on social policy and programmes, are discussed. The approach to analysing the impact of austerity for the GSFP is to examine the phenomenon through the lens of the frontline service providers. Accordingly, the last section of the chapter introduces and examines the Street-Level Bureaucrat (SLB) framework (Lipsky, 1971; 1980; 2010), as one of the primary analytical tools used in this research.

Chapter 4 then focuses on the diffusion of the social investment ideas from the Global North to the Global South by international organisations such as the World Bank and UNICEF following a decade of SAPs. Chapter 4 also introduces and discusses the second data analytical framework of food insecurity, and how the policy instrument of school feeding is designed to address challenges of hunger in schools and assist in human capital formation.

Chapter 5 outlines the research strategy adopted in this thesis. It also discusses the philosophical, ethical, and data collection approaches and challenges I experienced during the fieldwork. The chapter ends by justifying the choice of thematic data analysis and discusses the data analysis process.

Chapter 6 is the first empirical data chapter. Using the SLB framework, the chapter demonstrates that the 'silent' effects of austerity on the GSFP have created a policy implementation context of a 'corrupted world of service' (Lipsky, 2010: 27, 40). That is, austerity in Ghana (through freezes in the feeding rates paid to service providers, inadequate feeding rate, long periods of unpaid arrears and a continually rising cost of foodstuff) has created severe funding challenges for the service providers of the GSFP. Consequently, service providers adopt a wide range of unsanctioned coping strategies to deal with these fiscal challenges. The service providers rely on their discretion, contrary to the GSFP's requirements, to among other things determine when they provide the service and to which student, the quality and quantity of meals served to the students.

Chapter 7 follows on from Chapter 6 in the sense that the chapter discusses the implications of the service providers' coping strategies has for the pupils. Using the four[7] components of food insecurity, the chapter shows that children in schools experience food insecurity challenges as a result of the actions and decisions of the service providers. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates the correlations between children's state of food insecurity and their academic performance. The chapter also highlights the challenges — and solutions — teachers resort to, in the face of hungry pupils who are disinterested in academic work. Through the use of their own money to buy food for some of the food insecure pupils, the chapter further sheds light on how teachers also, in addition to service providers, discriminate among pupils. Finally, the agentic choices some households and children make in the face of the programme implementation challenges are presented and discussed.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter of the thesis. In this chapter, I first summarise the key findings of the study. Based on this summarisation, the study's theoretical and empirical contributions are highlighted. The study's limitations and weaknesses are then discussed, offering suggestions for future research.

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[7] See Chapter 4 Section 4.5

CHAPTER 2

Economic Crisis and Reforms: Ghana's Experience with Fiscal Austerity and Poverty Reduction Programmes

2.1 Introduction

This chapter, on the whole, provides an overview of the country context of the study as well as a discussion of austerity. The chapter starts by reviewing the austerity literature, focusing on the 2008 global financial crisis. The second section of the chapter discusses briefly, Ghana's pre- and post-independence experiences with austerity, along with an analysis of the implication of the post-independence austerity for social development and poverty reduction. The chapter then explores the nature of austerity in Ghana currently, signalling the potential impact of Ghana's austerity on the country's social investment strategy. The last section of the chapter provides a socio-economic context to understanding and situating developments in Ghana.

2.2 A Decade of Worldwide Austerity: Manifestations and Challenges

Following the 2008 US banking and financial crisis, the global economy was thrown into a recession (Griffith-Jones and Ocampo, 2009; Ghellab and Papadakis, 2011; Farnsworth and Irving, 2011). Eventually, the crisis resulted in many governments adopting austerity programmes as a policy response (McKee et al., 2012). Although a discussion of the global financial crisis is outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to note briefly the confluence of factors which led to the crisis. Citing the US Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, Karanikolos and others (2013) have explained that the US crisis was occasioned, *inter alia,* by excessive borrowing, risky investments, a lack of transparency and accountability, and general failure in financial regulation and supervision. In simple terms, the crisis was the result of a deregulated financial sector (McKee et al., 2012) along with high risk-taking bankers who were involved in subprime lending[8]. With a

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[8] Lending to people who otherwise would not qualify for such loans on account of either low income, past problems with debt or low credit scores.

record number of borrowers taking on loans they could not afford, a rise in interest rates in the US in 2007 led to borrowers defaulting, which led to banking default (Karanikolos et al., 2013). Even though the crisis started in the US, an increasingly interconnected and globalised world meant that the effects reverberated worldwide. Both high-income and low-income countries in SSA, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean were severely impacted. In developing countries, the effects of the crisis played out in the form of reduced remittances and foreign direct investments; decreased government export revenue; and diminished foreign aid among others (Griffith-Jones and Ocampo, 2009; McCord and Vandemoortele, 2009; Saget and Yao, 2011).

While the crisis-affected countries globally, Ferguson and Lavallette (2013) point out that the Eurozone became the epicentre of the crisis with Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain being the most austere countries. To prevent banks and financial institutions from collapsing — because they were considered *too big to fail* — governments offered massive financial assistance in the form of bailouts, effectively transforming private debts into public debts (Oxfam International, 2013; Blyth, 2014; Reeves et al., 2014). The scale of the financial bailout is staggering. Blyth (2013) reports that the estimated cost of bailing the global financial system was between US$3 and US$13 trillion. In Europe, the European Commission approved €4.5 trillion (about 36.7% of the EU's GDP) to rescue financial sectors between 2008 and 2011 (Oxfam International, 2013: 6). Similarly, the UK's public debts rose by £850 billion as a result of the bailout (National Audit Office, as cited in Mendoza, 2015). For perspective on the size of the bailout (using the 2011-2012 figures) the UK could have funded its NHS (£106.7 billion a year) for eight years or provided about two centuries of Job Seekers' Allowance (£4.9 billion a year) (*The Guardian*, cited in Mendoza 2015). These massive bailouts inevitably created large public deficits and sharply increased public debts. Consequently, starting in 2010, concerns about these rising government debts and fiscal deficits led to governments introducing austerity. This is evident in the literature. For instance, Ortiz and

others' (2015) review of the austerity programmes of 187 countries between 2010-2015, show that countries are using the following policy tools to further the cause of austerity:

(a) Phasing out or reducing subsidies on food, fuel and agricultural inputs.

(b) Slashing or capping cutting wage bills and/or putting a freeze on public sector employment.

(c) Reforming labour laws by weakening workers' and union rights.

(d) Increasing tax on sales and consumption (particularly Value Added Tax).

(e) Pension reforms of increasing retirement age and reducing tax exemptions on pensioner's incomes.

(f) Rationalising and narrowly (re)targeting social spending programmes, freezing benefits rates, and

(g) Reforming the health and education sectors by introducing user fees and putting caps on the wages (see also Ghellab and Papadakis, 2011; ILO, 2014a; Reeves et al., 2014).

Therefore, by examining the nature of these austerity policy tools, it can be seen that at the heart of austerity is deep public spending cuts, usually targeted at social policy programmes such as education, health, and social welfare (Oxfam International, 2013). During austerity, social policy programmes undergo overwhelming changes as social spending is viewed as a cost that is onerous on budgets. Greece, Portugal and Spain, all adopted very harsh austerity programmes, placing enormous pressure on, for example, the healthcare delivery system with suicides and a rise in infectious diseases such as HIV becoming more prevalent (McKee et al., 2012; Karanikolos et al., 2013).

The implications of austerity, therefore, in practical terms, is that poverty and inequality have been rising on a global scale, threatening the human and social development successes realised in the past decades. For example, a 2014 ILO study, *Global Social Protection Report* (ILO, 2014a: 120) estimates that austerity programmes have worsened the living conditions of 123 million people in

the EU, most of them women, children and the disabled. In developing countries, the situation is much more alarming, not least because these are countries that already had severe human development challenges before austerity (ILO, 2014a: 122). It is estimated that by 2020, 6.6 billion people — 80 per cent of the world's population — will be affected by the ongoing austerity programmes; with developing countries being the hardest hit (Ortiz et al., 2015: 3).

A baffling feature of austerity has been its ability to swiftly morph into a political tool, away from the initial economic concerns. Austerity quickly moved from being a US/EU banking crisis to a global neoliberal tool of addressing budget deficits, and a proxy for halting the growth of the post-war understanding of a welfare state (Clarke and Newman, 2012). Thus, austerity over the years has now become a dominant global ideology on how to adequately address public debts (irrespective of context or cause) and an excuse to decrease public spending on social policy (Clarke and Newman, 2012) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Commission, European Central Bank, and other international finance organisations leading the campaign on the need to adopt austerity. The IMF uses its financial muscle and influence to propose, and in some cases enforce the austerity ideology 'even when evidence of its success is [at best] equivocal, and the evidence of its social costs alarming' (Clarke and Newman, 2012: 301).

Countries that adopt fiscal austerity can be classified into two groups. For some countries such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal, austerity was externally imposed as a precondition for financial assistance and bailouts by the troika (IMF, European Commission and European Central Bank) (Blyth, 2013). On the other hand, there are countries (such as the UK) who according to leading economists, adopted austerity voluntarily (McKee et al., 2012; Oxfam International, 2013) when they did not have an economic reason to, but only did so due to political ideology. Specifically, the political and neoliberal ideology of demonising welfare recipients, describing them as having a

culture of entitlement (Ferguson and Lavallette, 2013) and as *skivers, not strivers*[9] (Dowler, 2014). Therefore, voluntary 'austerian' politicians ushered their countries into deep cuts aimed at fundamentally altering the post-war conception of providing welfare on the basis of citizenship and rights. Writing in the *New York Times* in 2012, Nobel Economics winner Paul Krugman argued that Britain, unlike Spain, for example, could afford not to implement austerity (Krugman, 2012a). Since a key reason for implementing austerity programmes is the so-called need to reduce public debts and deficits, the UK could afford not to implement austerity because the country's public debts were not as high as other countries (Farnsworth, 2011) such as Spain and Greece. Austerity in Britain, Krugman argued, 'isn't really about debt and deficits at all; it's about using the deficit panic an excuse to dismantle social programs.'

The UK provides quite an unusual case of an austere country. As already stated, not only did the country not need to go austere, but it became the poster child of sorts of severe austerity by 'cutting deeper and harsher than most EU countries' (Clarke and Newman, 2012: 303). According to the *Financial Times*, the UK implemented 'one of the most drastic spending squeezes of any advanced economy in recent times' (June 23, 2010:1 cited in Farnsworth, 2011: 261). The 2010 Coalition Government adopted austerity through a raft of harsh social spending reforms by announcing what has been described as the most substantial cuts to public spending since World War II (Dowler, 2014; Oxfam International, 2013). In fairness, however, it was the previous Labour government which laid the foundations for the policy of austerity — through the increase of the public debts, as the Blair government reduced taxes for businesses, bailed out banks and lowered VAT among others (Farnsworth, 2011). Nevertheless, the Coalition government's cuts in the UK's public finances were profound and widespread, bringing untold hardships to the lives of the poorest in general and affecting families with children disproportionally (Oxfam International, 2013; Jupp, 2017). For example, the Coalition government in 2010 announced cuts of up to 25 per cent on

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[9] Skivers, not skivers are an age-old false dichotomy that stigmatises welfare recipients (particularly the unemployed) as undeserving, denouncing them as skivers, while extolling people in employment as strivers.

critical government departments (Farnsworth, 2011: 260; Churchill, 2012: 42). Some of the more specific attacks on public spending in the UK, especially on the welfare budget, has been a freezing of the value of Child and Housing Benefits; caps in the overall value of benefits; changing benefits eligibility requirements — making it harder for people to qualify; introduction of the bedroom tax (reducing Housing benefits for families with spare rooms); public sector job cuts and wage freezes; and cuts affecting even babies with the abolition of the Health in Pregnancy Grant and the restriction to the Sure Start Maternity Grant to first child (Churchill, 2012; Oxfam International, 2013; Ridge, 2013; O'Hara, 2014; Loopstra et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the Coalition government also introduced punitive sanctions (benefits cuts) for people on unemployment support who are deemed as not adhering to the rules by failing to demonstrate a commitment to looking for work (Dowler, 2014; O'Hara, 2014). Unsurprisingly, therefore, Ridge (2013), O'Hara (2014) and Loopstra and colleagues (2018) observe a depressing pattern of families from disadvantaged contexts having to cope with the devastating effects of austerity by either cutting back on essential products such as food, using debts to pay for basic needs or frequently relying on food banks for support. What is clear then, from the preceding so far, is that austerity (at least in some countries) is a programme designed to transfer the cost of the financial crisis from the risk-taking bankers to ordinary working-class people while simultaneously dismantling the post-war conception of the welfare state (Ferguson and Lavallette, 2013). For Mark Blyth, the ongoing austerity is a 'just a cover for what we used to call class warfare'. The only difference now, however, is that it is manifested in a 'war of the rich against the poor' (Blyth, 2014, cited in O'Hara, 2014: XVIII).

A decade after the start of austerity, the record has generally been one of failure. As Mark Blyth points out in his book, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, austerity is a dangerous idea not least because it has failed in most countries as it has not delivered on its promise(s). If the primary goal of austerity is to reduce public debts, then the record of achievement has been poor.

For instance, the three most austere countries in the Eurozone recorded significantly higher public debts after adopting austerity. Portugal's debts rose from 62 per cent of GDP in 2006 to 108 per cent in 2012, with Ireland's debt rising from 24.8 per cent in 2007 to 106.4 per cent in 2012, while Greece's debt rose from 106 per cent of GDP to 170 per cent in 2012 (Blyth, 2013: 4). On this scorecard, therefore, austerity is dangerous because it does not work (ibid). Second, the neoliberal obsession with reducing public debts, ostensibly as a panacea for economic growth in the context of a financial crisis, assumes a linearity between rising public debt and low economic growth rates across all countries. However, some studies show significant weaknesses with this position (Bell et al., 2014). Research has shown that countries are increasingly heterogeneous when you examine the impact of high public debts on economic growth. That is, whereas some economies achieve high economic growth during periods of high public debts, others do not (see Bell et al., 2014). Scaremongering about rising public debts in all situations, therefore, is disingenuous since the effects of rising public debts on economic growth are diverse. Others have even argued for increased public spending during periods of economic downturns. In his 2012 *End This Depression Now!* book, Paul Krugman convincingly argues against adopting austerity during economic downturns. Public spending cuts during an economic crisis, Krugman argued, ultimately lead to a weaker economy since direct government spending cuts, as well as indirect private sector cuts, weakens growth in the long run, and plunges countries deeper, into crisis (Krugman, 2012b).

2.3 Abridged History of Ghana's Post-Independence Fiscal Austerity

Ghana's current economic challenges are not unique. Less than a decade after political independence in 1957, successive governments underwent various periods of financial crisis and fiscal austerity, culminating in the 1983 Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). At independence, Ghana was the world's leading producer and exporter of cocoa and had foreign reserves of £200 million (Nowak et al., 1996; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000; Aryeetey and Fenny 2017). On the back of this financial muscle, post-independence Ghana (under the leadership of

Ghana's first post-independence president — Kwame Nkrumah) expanded public services in education, healthcare and established State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) — to catch up with the void created by the colonial state's disinvestment[10] in infrastructure (Kraus, 1991; Engberg-Pedersen et al., 1996). In sync with Nkrumah's socialist ideology, the country was actively engaged in all spheres of economic activity: production, distribution, construction, banking, and insurance (Mensah, 1993). At this period, the Nkrumah government was said to be 'pursuing development at breakneck speed' (Huq, 1989: 13).

By the mid-1960s, however, Ghana was tottering close to insolvency. GDP had fallen to 0.4 per cent; foreign reserves had waned, the country was indebted by US$1 billion; and incomes had plunged by 45 per cent (Huq, 1989; Rimmer, 1992; Aryeetey and Fenny, 2017). Furthermore, partly due to political interference, many of the established SOEs collapsed. Under these circumstances, prices of goods and services rose while wages stagnated, ultimately leading to a military *coup d'état* that toppled Nkrumah in February 1966 (Mensah, 1993). Nkrumah's overthrow paved the way for Ghana's first post-independence fiscal austerity as the new government (the National Liberation Council) signed a stabilisation programme with the IMF. The conditionalities associated with this programme were the usual budget deficit reduction, price controls abolishment, liberalisation of trade, and the devaluation of the country's currency the Cedi (Hutchful, 2002).

2.3.1 Structural Adjustment Programme (April 1983) and Its Limits in Ghana

After Nkrumah, various governments struggled with Ghana's economy, culminating in what is arguably the country's worst era — 1975 to 1983 — of austerity due to persistent and severe economic decline (Nowak et al., 1996; Aryeetey and Fenny, 2017). From 1975 to the early 1980s, a combination of economic mismanagement, internal and exogenous shocks contributed to a

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[10] The colonial government did not expend resources in developing the human capital and infrastructure needed to run national economies. Colonial regimes rather, systematically, developed export-crop production, and mineral exploitations.

deepening crisis in the Ghanaian economy. The economic situation in Ghana is aptly captured by Hutchful (1996: 143; 2002: 6) as:

> From 1975 to 1981, the total deficit increased by 690 per cent. Expenditure rose by 615 per cent while revenues increased by only 56 per cent. Falling domestic and export products led to inflation and falling living standards. Inflation reached 116.3 per cent in 1977, then declined to 54 per cent in 1979 and peaked in 1983 at 123 per cent. Production of cereals dropped sharply. Between 1974 and 1982, maize crop fell by 80 per cent; cassava by 50 per cent; cocoa exports also fell by 40 per cent from 397300 Metric Tons in 1975 to 246500 Metric Tons in 1981.

Two periods of droughts (1975-1977 and 1981-1983) severely inhibited the country's cash crop and food production and worsened further Ghana's then precarious economic situation. Additionally, 1 million Ghanaians in 1983 were expelled from Nigeria (Haynes, et al., 1987; Gyimah-Boadi, 1990; Nowak et al., 1996; Boafo-Arthur, 1999), and in the process, worsening Ghana's economic crisis.

In April 1983, after years of economic mismanagement, overvalued currency, corruption, high inflation, and an over-bloated public sector, Ghana at the behest of the WB and IMF launched the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) famously known as SAP with severe austerity measures (Chazan and Rimmer, 1992 cited in Konadu-Agyemang, 2000; Engberg-Pedersen et al., 1996; Boafo-Arthur, 1999). The implementation of SAPs in Ghana meant a shift in ideology from the post-independence developmental state paradigm towards market-based neoliberal economic reforms. In other words, the World Bank and the IMF used Ghana's economic crisis in the 1980s as a springboard to push for the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Thus, salient features of Ghana's SAPs were considerable cuts in social services, retrenchment of public sector workers, wage freeze, currency devaluation, trade liberalization, cost recovery through subsidy withdrawal and an increase in user fees, and privatization of SOEs (Gyimah-Boadi, 1990; Dixon et al., 1995; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000; Easterly, 2003; Aryeetey and Fenny, 2017).

The precise effects of the implementation of SAPs in Ghana remains a matter of disagreement. However, on the face of the evidence available, SAP had varied outcomes. Following the implementation of SAP, the macroeconomic indicators improved modestly (Jespersen, 1992). For instance, Nowak and colleagues (1996) report a substantial increase in growth rates, a deceleration of inflation from 123 per cent in 1983 to 33 per cent in 1986 and a reduction in the level of poverty from 37 per cent to 32 per cent between 1988 to 1992. Konadu-Agyemang (2000) also notes that Ghana's GDP started appreciating — averaging 5 to 6 per cent between 1984 and 1991. Similarly, Jeffries (1992) states that the country's balance of payment improved from a deficit of US$243 million to a surplus of US$110 million.

In contrast, some scholars argue that the record of SAPs was unimpressive. Easterly (2005) reports that none of the top 20 recipients of SAP lending over 1980-1999 was able to attain realistic growth. This affirms Killick's (1991) claim that there is a dearth of countries that can be held up as an exemplar of the success of SAP. A notable failure of SAPs was fiscal imbalances as public debts quadrupled from US$1398 million in 1980 to US$5874 million in 1995; external debt as a share of GDP grew from 31.6 per cent to 95 per cent over the same period (World Bank, 1997). This shortcoming of SAPs is somewhat curious, given the fact that the overarching goal of SAPs was to reduce government expenditure. Again, under SAPs, Ghana's currency was devalued from US$1= GH₵[11]2.75 in 1983 to US$1 = GH₵2300 in 1998 (about 80,000 per cent) — increasing in the process, the cost of imported essential goods and services (Gayi, 1991; Konadu-Agyemang 2000: 474; Baah-Boateng, 2017).

Despite these compelling macroeconomic arguments against SAPs, the most trenchant arguments opposing SAPs have been those that analyse the impact of SAP on social policy. Narrowly focusing on macroeconomic indicators obscures an essential dimension of SAPs — the social costs of adjustment. SAPs brought untold hardships to vulnerable and deprived groups in Ghana through a

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[11] In 2007, Ghana's currency was redenominated from GH₵10,000 to GHS 1.

massive deterioration of social services. Austerity inspired reforms in the health and education sectors, for example, introduced user-fees in Ghana, which led to reduced school enrolment and falling health attendance and utilisation (Engberg-Pedersen et al., 1996). For instance, significant reductions of 25 to 50 per cent in hospital and clinic visits in Accra were recorded, before plunging further to 80 per cent in some rural areas during the first eight months of the introduction of user fees (Enyimayew, 1988). In Korle Bu[12], out-patient attendance dropped from 198,000 in 1979 to 117,000 in 1983 (Hutchful, 1996). Health sector allocation from the government declined from 7 per cent in 1980 and 10 per cent in 1982 to a paltry 1.16 per cent in 1996. Effectively, user fees priced out poor Ghanaians who could not afford out-of-pocket payments at the point of utilisation. Inevitably, what became known as the *Cash and Carry*[13] system became hugely despised and generated a corrosive mixture of public anger, disappointment and mistrust against the Rawlings[14] government. Under the *Cash and Carry* system of financing healthcare, patients had to pay for everything — 'gloves, anaesthetics, gauze, surgery, drugs, blood, scalpel and even cotton wool'; new mothers and their babies, as well as other patients, were literally held prisoner in health facilities until they settled their bills (Kampfner, 2001; 2002).

Also, through the SAP, the government's budget allocation on education fell from 4.3 per cent in 1982 (Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research [ISSER], 1993), to less than 1 per cent in both 1996 and 1997 (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). Tertiary education was the hardest hit in the era of budget cuts. Government transfers throughout the reform period declined as funding per student fell from US$2,360 in 1991/92 to US$918 in 1997/8 for universities (Hutchful, 2002). Simultaneously, students had to start making payments for academic user fees. Additionally, staff

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[12] Korle Bu is Ghana's largest referral and teaching hospital.
[13] A system of Out-of-pocket payments for healthcare at the point of utilisation.
[14] President Jerry Rawlings is Ghana's former president from 1981 to 2000. First as a military ruler from 1981 to 1992, and as a democratically elected president from 1992 to 2000.

retrenchment and salary cuts reduced the morale of health and education workers as they left the country in search of greener pastures — crippling the health and education sectors in the process.

2.4 Ghana's Post-Structural Adjustment Poverty Reduction Strategies (Safety-Nets): The PAMSCAD and the SIF

Growing disaffection because of the social costs of adjustment in the 1980s prompted the WB and IMF to introduce Social Development Funds (SDFs) to address these concerns. Ghana was the first country to implement an SDF in Africa (Hutchful, 1994). A strong political opposition to SAPs, and the Trade Union Congress' resistance on issues of retrenchment, cost recovery in healthcare and education, as well as a proposed new tax on workers' allowances (Hutchful, 1994), forced the government and the IMF to back down (temporarily) on SAPs by introducing the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment [PAMSCAD]. The PAMSCAD programme constituted 23 projects in five priority areas: community initiative, employment generation, basic needs of vulnerable groups, education and retrenchment support (Gayi, 1991; Hutchful, 1994). PAMSCAD was designed to 'strengthen the sustainability and acceptability of the Economic Recovery Programme' (Government of Ghana, 1987: cited in Gayi, 1991) by providing support to those directly affected. Five years after the start of PAMSCAD, an evaluation report by the World Bank (1995: 6) concluded that 'PAMSCAD had not shown significant benefits in terms of mitigating the social costs of adjustments.' PAMSCAD's 'limited effort on poverty' (van der Hoeven, 1994: 116) was, in part, due to the politicisation of the programme, right from the start. Both the PNDC government and the WB tried to take credit for the success of the programme. For the WB, the success of PAMSCAD would provide evidence that adjustment with safety nets worked (Gayi, 1991). The success of PAMCAD, for PNDC, on the other hand, would give it the political capital and legitimacy in the face of rising internal disquiet (ibid).

Furthermore, the failure of PAMSCAD was attributed to the severe financial setbacks, which led to several delays in the start of the programme (Hutchful, 1994). Hutchful (ibid) notes that three

years into the commencement of PAMSCAD, the primary donor had not released the agreed funds to the government of Ghana. Furthermore, the size of the budgetary allocation to PAMSCAD was both unrealistic and insignificant. In the end, by 1990 when PAMSCAD wound up, meagre funding, poor design and a large number of projects, among others, meant that PAMSCAD 'reached very few of the people affected by ERP' (Hutchful, 1994: 583).

PAMSCAD, a safety net approach to poverty reduction, was not a comprehensive rethink of development policy. As such, the programme ultimately failed, considering the sheer scale and depth of the deleterious impacts of SAPs. The takeaway from this is that safety nets as a policy tool for poverty reduction — in country contexts wherein poverty and other social challenges remain pervasive — is unlikely to achieve realistic results. Instead, a fundamental restructuring of the economy and a rethink of development policy is likely to make a significant impact.

Following the severe limitations and ultimate failure of the PAMSCAD in addressing rising poverty and deprivation, the government of Ghana did not renege on its commitment to poverty reduction. As a replacement to PAMSCAD, the government of Ghana implemented yet another safety-net but homegrown poverty reduction programme known as the Social Investment Fund (SIF). The SIF was a homegrown programme because, unlike the PAMSCAD (which was introduced by the WB and IMF through the Social Development Funds programme), the SIF was a government of Ghana initiative, albeit with support from donors.

The SIF was established in 1998 to focus on eliminating poverty in both urban and rural Ghana by concentrating on three thematic areas: Providing microcredit to the poor through access to credit facilities; provision of economic and social infrastructure; and building the capacities of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (World Bank, 2016; Government of Ghana/African Development Fund, 2006). In terms of the provision of infrastructure, a critical difference between the PAMSCAD and the SIF is that the SIF was demand-driven; that is, local beneficiary communities were responsible for identifying the needed projects for infrastructure (irrigation and water), human

capital development (school facilities) and primary health care (Government of Ghana/African Development Fund, 2006). The rationale for this bottom-up approach to development was to ensure project sustainability and relevance through community ownership.

A programme completion report by the government of Ghana and the African Development Fund in 2006 concluded that the SIF 'contributed to poverty reduction' as 1045 subprojects in 80 districts of Ghana impacted the lives of 1,145,477 beneficiaries (Government of Ghana/African Development Fund, 2006: 25). Specifically, the SIF provided accommodation for 120 teachers, support to 5500 farmers and 89 water and sanitation facilities as well as 166 health projects (Government of Ghana/ African Development Fund, 2006: 21). Also, in terms of the SIF's objective of providing microcredit, the SIF provided loans to 64 microcredit institutions for lending to 12,262 beneficiaries (ibid: 21). While these are significant achievements, however, in the bigger picture of national poverty reduction and taking cognisance of the scale of deprivation in the country then, it can be argued that the achievements of the SIF were rather modest. A key reason for this modest achievement was that, just like the PAMSCAD, the SIF was a safety-net approach to poverty reduction, which inevitably left out millions of the poor with little or no provision and assistance. The PAMSCAD had demonstrated that the safety-nets approach to poverty reduction was ill-suited for the country. Thus, the unimpressive record of both the PAMSCAD and the SIF necessitated a radical rethink of development strategy post-2000 in Ghana.

2.5 Ghana's Present Economic Crisis and Austerity

Ghana is going through a financial crisis; as are many other countries worldwide. The economy has been on a path of a relentless slump since 2013. Bolstered by the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 2011, Ghana's economic growth peaked at 14.9 per cent of GDP in 2011, then fell precipitously to 8.8 per cent in 2012 (*The Economist*, 2015). From January to September 2014, the domestic currency (GHS) depreciated by 31.2 per cent against the US Dollar, compared to a depreciation of 4.1 per cent during the same period in 2013 (AfDB, 2015). This severe decline of

the Ghana Cedi has fuelled increasing interest rates — average lending rate increased from 25.56 per cent in 2013 to 28.98 per cent in 2014 — (ISSER, 2014), with inflation also rising sharply from 8.8 per cent in 2012 to 17.0 per cent in 2014 (World Bank, 2015) affecting the cost of goods and services.

Declining government revenue is partly held up for the lacklustre performance of the economy. Ghana, like other nations in SSA, is heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities — gold, cocoa and crude petroleum — for government revenue. Thus, the country is hugely vulnerable to shocks in commodity prices on the international markets. Increased shale petroleum production in the USA and the OPEC's reluctance to scale down crude oil production, pushed world oil prices down from US$111.96 per barrel in 2012 to US$47.45 a barrel in January 2015 (ISSER, 2014). These tumbling crude oil prices have hurt the government's finances as crude oil proceeds represent a substantial share of total exports, rising from 21.8 per cent in 2011 to 28.3 per cent in 2013 (AfDB, 2015). Expected oil proceeds in the 2015 budget were revised downwards by 65 per cent from an estimate of GHS4.2 billion (3.1 per cent of GDP) to GHS1.5 billion (1.1 per cent of GDP) (Minister of Finance, 2015a). Likewise, gold earnings slumped from a yearly average of US$1410 per ounce in 2013 to US$1289 by June 2014, prompting Ashanti Gold's Obuasi mine to shut down, and with that, a further fall in government tax income. Growing public debt also characterises Ghana's economic crisis. A direct consequence of the escalating government expenditure at an era of plummeting revenue has been a spike in public debt. As of December 2014, government's public debt stood at GHS76 billion (67.1 per cent GDP), up from 55.3 per cent of GDP in 2013 (Acheampong and Barkers-Okwan, 2015; AfDB, 2015). Recent data from the Minister of Finance (2015b) pegs the provisional gross public debt as of August 2015 to have risen to 70.6 per cent of GDP. As of November 2018, the Bank of Ghana reported that Ghana's public debt has increased to GHS 172.9 billion (Bank of Ghana, 2019).

Further aggravating Ghana's current challenges, the State between 2013 and 2016 had to contend with a severe power crisis, creating a regime of erratic power shedding exercise with some areas having blackouts for up to 24 hours. Businesses consequently saw an increase in the cost of production as they had to rely on self-supply often at an exorbitantly high price (World Bank, 2015). The rising cost of credit due to high-interest rates together with a significantly devalued Cedi — increasing the cost of imports and reducing export earnings — plus an unreliable electricity supply has meant Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are generally struggling to survive. SMEs are folding up, laying off workers in the process. The Ghana Employers Association has stated that 300,000 Ghanaian workers have lost their jobs due to the energy crisis (Acheampong and Barkers-Okwan, 2015).

2.5.1 Economic Recovery and Fiscal Austerity

In 2014, Ghana's then President, John Dramani Mahama, while answering a question about Ghana's economy in an Al-Jazeera TV's programme *Talk to Al-Jazeera* argued that:

> There are some things that you have to do when you are faced with economic challenges … and it involves austerity … you must be prepared to pay any price to ensure that the economy of your country is returned to stability and growth (*Talk to Al-Jazeera*, 2014).

The following year in 2015, the government requested a bailout from the IMF with an assurance to embark on severe austerity measures to halt the spiralling budget deficits. Ghana's Finance Minister (2015b) then defended the government's decision to opt for a US$918 million IMF bailout in order to navigate the economic headwinds. In line with historical experiences, the IMF's lending to the government is hinged on four significant pillars (conditionalities) (Minister of Finance, 2015b):

- Front Loaded Fiscal Adjustment (significant cutbacks in government spending)
- Entrenched Structural Reforms (public sector payroll management, right-sizing of the civil service, prudent debt and borrowing)

- Strengthen Monetary Policy (Improving interbank forex market, effective inflation-targeting framework)

- Preserve Stability (Targeted social safety nets, inclusive growth policies)

Central to the fiscal austerity strategy is a deliberate and significant cut in public spending to halt budget deficits. To address the macroeconomic imbalances, the government in Ghana embarked on a series of severe fiscal austerity measures. First, Ghana's Minister of Finance in 2015 announced a GHS1.5 billion[15] public spending cuts in order to reduce the budget deficit (*GhanaWeb*, 2015). Second, subsidies on petroleum and utility products have been abolished, setting in motion a series of sharp increases in the tariffs Ghanaians and businesses pay. For example, the Public Utility and Regulatory Commission (PURC) in September 2013 sanctioned a 79 per cent and 52 per cent tariff hike in electricity and water respectively (*VibeGhana,* 2013) and in June 2015 further approved a 51.73 per cent and 15 per cent hikes in electricity and water tariffs respectively in (*Citifmonline, 2015a*). In the same vein, the removal of fuel subsidies has also led to a cumulative increase of 197 per cent in the price of a litre of petrol from January 2013 to July 2014 (Nyavor, 2014). It must be understood that poor households and vulnerable groups on low income endure the most of these harsh economic conditions the most; bearing in mind these ever-rising bills exerts downward pressures on their income.

Austerity has further meant that statutory requirements for the transfer of funds to state agencies have been in arrears for several quarters. Payments to the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF), the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), and Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) have all been in arrears for several months[16] (*Modern Ghana*, 2013; *GraphicOnline*, 2014; National Health Insurance Scheme, 2015). Consequently, service providers under the NHIS for example, have had to either charge patients holding the NHIS fees or turn them away (National

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[15] Equivalent to £238 million (Source xe.com, 20/04/2019)

[16] For example, GETFUND was owed arrears from July 2013 to June 2014. This prompted a youth activist to sue (and winning the lawsuit) the Ministry of Finance in 2014. The court subsequently ordered the Ministry of Finance to pay the arrears to GETFUND (See *GraphicOnline*, 2014).

Health Insurance Scheme, 2015), pushing indigent patients to seek alternative traditional treatment or self-medication. Additionally, due to the government's failure to reimburse the NHIS service providers, patients have to pay out-of-pocket (against the core principle of health insurance) for drugs and prescriptions. At the same time, the government's failure to release subventions to hospitals coupled with the erratic power-rationing regime in Ghana is affecting quality health care delivery. Government hospitals such as Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital[17] in Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region, were charging patients GHS5 extra to fund their GHS60,000 a day diesel cost to power their plants to supply electricity (*Citifmonline*, 2015b).

To curtail expenditure further, the John Mahama government at the time also abolished Teacher Training Allowances as well as a Nurses' Training Allowances while simultaneously increasing the user fees charged in these creations, as the noose of fiscal austerity tightened. Heads of Secondary schools are under intense pressure from their creditors to pay for food supplies — some creditors have threatened court action against the heads of these schools on several occasions — as subventions from the government are not released. Secondary schools in the northern part of the country receiving feeding grants from the government have also had to postpone school reopening dates due to non-availability of funds.

Fiscal austerity in Ghana has not been restricted to budget cuts. Successive governments, in their attempt to raise more revenue, have also resorted to the introduction of new taxes. For instance, in 2014 some new taxes were implemented, such as a National Fiscal Stabilization Levy of 5 per cent profit before tax on banking, insurance, and communication sectors; a Special Import Levy of 1 per cent and 2 per cent on some imported goods; an Environmental tax of 10 per cent; an Import Duty of 20 per cent and VAT on imported mobile phones (Minister of Finance, 2014). These new taxes have only made living conditions worse for Ghanaians as these costs are eventually passed on to the consumer. For example, in June 2015, vehicle owners and commercial drivers paid a 300

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[17] Ghana's second-largest referral teaching hospital.

per cent hike in insurance premiums (Agyei, 2015). The government in the last four years — in its path of fiscal austerity — have also placed a moratorium on public sector recruitment and salary increment. The sharp increases in petroleum and electricity tariffs, especially and a devalued Cedi without a corresponding wage increase have weakened the purchasing power of workers. The sharp upswing in the cost of goods and services have created a series of protests, demonstrations and strikes by ordinary Ghanaians and labour unions. Labour unions of the Ghana Medical Association, Ghana Registered Nurses Association, the National Association of Graduate Teachers, Judicial Service, The University Teachers' Association of Ghana, as well as the Polytechnic Teachers' Association of Ghana have all in the past three years embarked on numerous anti-austerity strikes and industrial action. These industrial actions were to demand revised conditions of service and, to protest the worsening economic conditions of their members.

2.6 A Socio-Economic Overview of the Research Country Context

To understand the specific country context of this research, it is essential that a socio-economic and political overview of Ghana is provided. This overview broadly situates some of the discussions in the findings chapters into proper context.

2.6.1 Uneven Development and Spatial Inequalities

Ghana had a strong post-2000 economic performance which had a significant impact on poverty reduction as poverty rates saw a sharp decline by more than 50 per cent in some cases. From a high of 52.7 per cent in 1991, Ghana's poverty rates fell to 21.4 per cent in 2012 (World Bank, 2015a). The rate of extreme poverty also dropped to 9.6 per cent in 2012 from 37.6 per cent in 1991 (World Bank, 2015a). Despite these positive trends, substantial development challenges persist in Ghana. Ghana's recent economic growth has been mostly urban biased. The growth has been neither pro-poor nor inclusive (Honorati and de Silva, 2016). As a result, substantial spatial inequalities exist, with poverty increasingly being a rural phenomenon, as the majority of the poor live in the three northern regions (see Figure 1 Ghana's map below) (World Bank, 2015a). The 2010 Population

and Housing Census estimates that Ghana's population is 25 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Of the 25 million Ghanaians, at least 69 per cent of the population aged 11 and older in the southern regions are literate, while less than 50 per cent of the same age cohorts in the three northern regions are literate. Also, whereas 33.1 per cent of the population in rural areas are illiterate, only 14.2 per cent of those in urban areas are illiterate. Although 40 per cent of the population in Accra (the capital of Ghana which is located in the southern part[18]) have secondary or tertiary education degrees, in the northern, upper east and upper west regions, the rate of completion of primary education is less than 25 per cent (World Bank, 2015a). Poverty rates have been declining in the southern and central part of Ghana since 1991. However, the number of poor people in the northern and upper east regions have risen (World Bank, 2015a). To put these figures into perspective, with only 17 per cent of the national population in the north, the region has about 40 per cent of the poor in the country (World Bank, 2015a; McKay et al., 2016).

Out of the 1.2 million Ghanaians who are deemed food insecure (Government of Ghana/Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2013: 8), the World Food Programme (2011) reports that food insecurity is highest in the three northern regions, with the upper west, upper east and northern region having 34, 15, and 10 per cent respectively of food insecure people food. In the three regions of the north, more than 680,000 were 'considered either severely or moderately food insecure' in 2012 (World Food Programme, 2012: 23). The pervasive nature of poverty in the three northern regions is because of the nature of livelihood in the north. Generally, poverty rates among food crop farmers are the highest in Ghana (World Food Programme, 2012; 2007). Therefore, since about 88 per cent of households in northern Ghana rely on food crop production, on a subsistence basis using household labour (World Food Programme, 2012), it is not odd that poverty is widespread in the region. Quite ironically, small-scale subsistence farmers produce 90 per cent of the country's food product (World Food Programme, 2007). These small-scale farmers have limited access to capital

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[18] See Ghana Map below.

to expand, lack mechanised and modern farming techniques and agricultural inputs (World Food Programme (2009). Crop failure is quite rampant in the northern region as a result of the erratic and unpredictable rainfall pattern (World Food Programme, 2007; 2012). During the lean season (lean season can last up to 7 months, [World Food Programme, 2012]) or in periods of crop failure, households in the north, with no alternative livelihood source, adopt various coping strategies as food stock runs out. They eat less, have a less diverse diet, and consume meat, fish and dairy products less regularly (World Food Programme, 2012) if at all. This only compounds the food insecurity situation in the north. These spatial inequalities in Ghana mean that child development indicators in the region also lag. In terms of educational attainment, the Northern Region has the highest out of school rates, with up to 28 per cent of children of school-going age out of school because of poverty (World Food Programme, 2011).

Figure 1. Map of Ghana. Source: Google Maps.

Another weakness of Ghana's impressive growth has been its jobless nature. In Ghana, economic growth rates have raced ahead of employment growth rates. While economic growth rates have been around 8 per cent annually between 2005 and 2012, the yearly employment growth rate has been 4.0 per cent (Honorati and de Silva, 2016). By current estimates, Ghana needs to create 1.5 million jobs to engage the 300,000 annual labour market entrants between 2015 and 2020 (Honorati and de Silva, 2016) to avoid a full-blown unemployment crisis. The structure of Ghana's labour market is overwhelmingly informal. About 88 per cent of the labour force work in the informal

sector (Baah-Boateng, 2017) with unpredictable earnings and a high degree of vulnerability to job losses (Codjoe, 2017). Formal sector jobs, in general, have stalled with a total share of employment falling from 6 to 9 per cent over three decades (Baah-Boateng, 2017). The highest rates of unemployment are among the educated youth, raising genuine questions about the relevance of education in Ghana regarding job placements (Baah-Boateng, 2017). According to Aryeetey (2001), about 50 per cent of university and polytechnic graduates in Ghana are unlikely to find jobs for two years following the mandatory one-year national service[19].

2.6.2 Educational System

Ghana's formal public education system starts with six years of primary school, followed by three years of junior high school, and then another three years of senior high school. After senior high school, students have the choice to enrol on a four-year degree programme at a university or polytechnic or enrol in teacher or nursing training colleges (Gyimah-Brempong, 2017). In the years since the ending of SAPs in the country, there has been a tremendous increase in enrolment figures, with primary, secondary and university enrolments growing by 262 per cent, 4971.12 per cent, and 8169.89 per cent respectively (Gyimah-Brempong, 2017: 349). Net enrolment in primary school also rose from 55 per cent in 1991 to 75 per cent in 2012 (World Bank, 2015a).

However, while substantial progress has been made towards universalising access to education in Ghana, significant challenges persist. A pressing issue with Ghana's education is one of quality. Ghana's education system faces a crisis of quality. In the World Bank's *2019 World Development Report*, the Bank notes than 40 per cent of 19-20-year-olds in Ghana with an upper secondary education score below basic literacy level, compared with only 3 per cent in Vietnam (World Bank, 2019: 81). Similarly, 60 per cent of people who complete primary education in Ghana do not attain proficiency in core subjects (World Bank, 2015). Also, Cloutier and colleagues' study (2011)

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[19] Students who complete their tertiary education are required by law to serve the country for one year. They are deployed to state agencies and institutions to work for an allowance.

showed that one in five third-graders in Ghana could not read a single word in English or perform basic arithmetic tasks. In a recent presentation of the World Bank's findings on Ghana's human capital deficits, the Bank's Ghana Programme Lead Dr Antonio Giuffrida is reported to have passed a depressing picture of Ghana's human capital deficits (*GraphicOnline*, 2018). Presenting the *2018 World Bank Human Capital Index*, Dr Giuffrida noted that only 44 per cent of Ghanaian children would grow into productive adults. In addition, poor-quality education in Ghana implies that 56 per cent of human capital would go waste in the next 18 years. He noted:

> The reality is that the education in Ghana is not of good quality. Some children do not go to school at all, others go to school but do not complete, while others are malnourished and cannot fully attain their potential (*GraphicOnline*, 2018).

While school enrolments have been increasing in recent decades, public financing of education and the quality of education have lagged behind. Funding cost per head has declined due to rapid increases in enrolment figures without commensurate increases in public funding. Therefore, public education in Ghana is defined by rising teacher/student ratios, deteriorating school infrastructure (as many students, especially in rural areas, study under what is known as schools under trees) and untrained teachers (Gyimah-Brempong, 2017).

Also, the pedagogical method of instruction in Ghana, and several other SSA countries have been called into question. Essentially, the approach to teaching and management of schools in Ghana is didactic (Twum-Danso, 2009; Gyimah-Brempong, 2017). This teaching approach is mostly about reading and reproducing what has been read (Gyimah-Brempong, 2017) rather than focusing on critical analysis and problem-solving. It is teacher-centred, with right and wrong answers demanded of students, while students passively accept what teachers say without question. Predictably, therefore, students' ability to talk freely, think critically and communicate confidently without being timid become compromised. Furthermore, the relevance and content of Ghana's education curriculum have been critiqued by various educationists. The current educational system is not significantly different from the one put in place by the colonial administration — whose sole

aim was producing 'mid-level administrators and clerks to help administer a colony, rather than build a nation' (Gyimah-Brempong, 2017: 359). Consequently, more than sixty years after independence, Gyimah-Brempong (2017) observe that there is still a 'very large dose of European history and culture' with no relevance to our development needs.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that contrary to popular perceptions, austerity is a worldwide phenomenon. The 2008 US financial crisis did not impact only highly industrialised countries but developing countries as well. Through mediums such as public spending cuts, public sector recruitment bans and wage freezes, revision of social services eligibility criteria, as well as the imposition of revenue-generating schemes such as VAT, the impact of austerity is being felt to different levels, in both the Global South and Global North. The chapter has also highlighted the present nature and impact of fiscal austerity in Ghana. The chapter has demonstrated that fiscal austerity is not a new phenomenon in Ghana. However, the implementation of fiscal reforms during the different phases of Ghana's economic development has been engendered by different factors. While the 1980s fiscal reforms were as a result of the World Bank and IMF's desire to implement neoliberal reforms, the present fiscal reforms are largely self-imposed by Ghana's leaders, ostensibly to address budget deficits; albeit with the assistance of the IMF. The chapter has also discussed some external (PAMSCAD) and internal (SIF) poverty reduction programmes, as a way of mitigating the effects of the fiscal and structural reforms. Lastly, the chapter has provided a general socio-economic context to the research.

CHAPTER 3

The Emergence of Social Investment in the Global North: Promise and Challenges

3.1 Introduction

The general objective of this thesis is to understand the implications of fiscal austerity for social investment programmes in Ghana, using the GSFP as a case study. Given that the social investment perspective emerged from the Global North (discussed below), this third chapter focuses on a review of the literature on the emergence of the social investment perspective as part of attempts to reform 'the Welfare State'. Specifically, the chapter is structured the following way: the first section broadly concentrates on discussing the emergence of social investment perspectives in the 1990s as a response to the then-dominant neoliberal ideology. Next, the key strengths and weaknesses of social investment are examined. In the second section, I explore the present economic context of fiscal austerity and its likely implications for the social investment strategy. In the final section of the second part, I introduce and discuss one of the key theoretical frameworks (the Street-Level Bureaucrat) employed in the study to highlight the impact of austerity for public programme delivery.

3.2 The Post-War Welfare States

Before I proceed, a few caveats are warranted *ab initio*. Countries in the Global North are incredibly diverse with respect to their welfare architecture. Countries with different political and economic systems have different understandings of what the welfare state ought to be. Thus, the welfare states in the Global North are heterogeneous. This heterogeneity renders any attempt to lump them together with a view to discussing them an exercise fraught with challenges — key amongst them being the tendency to overgeneralise. Nevertheless, although a high degree of heterogeneity exists, there are patterns of commonalities among these countries as well. Therefore, this review attempts to draw on the commonalities when discussing countries in the Global North,

while at the same time, this chapter is heavily tilted towards the European experience generally, and the UK's specifically. That being said, the welfare state has undergone tremendous reforms since its inception in the post-war era. These reforms have usually been influenced by political and socio-economic events, requiring the welfare state to be recalibrated to respond appropriately to the socio-economic challenges. Western European welfare states have generally undergone three significant phases of *(1)* the post-war era of the emergence and rapid expansion of the welfare state; *(2)* the era of welfare state retrenchment and neoliberalism 1970s; and *(3)* the era of social investment since the mid-1990s (Taylor-Gooby, 2008: 4; Hemerijck, 2012: 33). Each of these phases was linked to different periods of economic and/or social transformations.

3.2.1 Keynesianism: The 'Golden Age' of Welfare Expansion

Keynesianism was the dominant macroeconomic theory in the aftermath of the Great Depression[20] and the post-war era until the 1970s (Morel et al., 2012). Existing classical economic theories neither could predict the Great Depression nor proffer solutions for same (Jahan et al., 2014). In the ensuring macroeconomic void, the British economist John Maynard Keynes argued that governments could reorder the economic crisis of the Great Depression through monetary and fiscal policies. Instead of austerity, Keynes advocated for increased government expenditure and lower taxes to stimulate demand and pull the economy out of recession (Hemerijck, 2012). In respect of social spending, the Keynesian theory argued in favour of welfare state expansion through 'income transfer and social insurance provision' (Hemerijck, 2012: 34). Keynes contended that increased public expenditure on social spending during periods of economic slump could act as a stimulus to spur on economic activity through the creation of demand for goods and services (Quadagno, 1987; Morel et al., 2012). According to Keynes, therefore, the use of publicly funded social programmes had the potential to alleviate poverty and inequality — that characterised capitalist market economies of the pre- and post-war periods. In essence, Keynesianism understood

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[20] The Great Depression was a period of worldwide economic downturn that took place during the 1930s.

economic activity and social spending as mutually beneficial. Against this background, Quadagno (1987) reports a surge in public expenditure on social security systems in Western capitalist economies after the post-war era, leading to the period being described in the literature as the 'Golden Age' of welfare (Leoni, 2015: 1). Put differently; many Western European countries established systems of social security that provided comprehensive welfare systems between the 1940s and the 1950s (Hemerijck, 2012). The primary goal of the welfare state during this period was to use redistribution as a protective system from the impacts of income loss due to unemployment, old age, and ill health (Midgley, 1999; Leoni, 2015).

Four decades into the formalisation of welfare states, the focus of the welfare state was to *decommodify* labour. De-commodification, Esping-Andersen (1990: 22) explains, 'occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market'. In other words, a *decommodified* welfare state is one in which people do not necessarily have to sell their labour (or engage in the labour market) to survive. Capitalist market economies 'turn every aspect of life [healthcare, education, nutrition, and others] into commodities that can be packaged bought and sold' (Walsh et al., 2000: 34). By commodifying basic needs, people who cannot afford them are priced out. A country's level of *decommodification* of labour formed the basis of Esping-Andersen's (1990) acclaimed classification[21] of welfare states in his *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism.*

The post-war welfare state was imperfect; it was based on the archetypal male breadwinner family model of the pre-war industrial period. Under this system, while men engaged in full-time employment earning the family income, the expectation was that women would stay at home as unpaid housewives doing household chores and attending to child-rearing (Barr, 2004; Williams,

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[21] Esping-Andersen classified welfare states as *(1)* the Liberal Welfare States: government provides a minimal level of welfares; *(2)* Corporatist Welfare State: well-developed welfare states as government is the primary source of welfare provision; and *(3)* Social Democratic Welfare States: these states usually outspend other welfare states in terms of quantity of public money expended on welfare. Welfare provision is comprehensive and available to all.

2005; Hemerijck, 2015). Women and children realised economic benefits so long as they were linked to a male breadwinner (Morel et al., 2012). As a result, the Keynesian welfare state did little by way of breaking the pervasive patriarchal structure of families. Kilkey and Bradshaw (1999) highlight the possibility of gender-insensitive welfare states perpetuating the domination of men over women. Seen in this light, the Keynesian welfare state unwittingly preserved the domination of men over women. Another weakness of the post-war welfare state was highlighted in the 1970s when Western European countries experienced *stagflation* (a simultaneous rise in the levels of inflation and unemployment)*,* ushering the region into economic recession (Jenson, 2012; Lee and Baek, 2014). For the first time since the Great Depression, the economies of Western Europe experienced excessive unemployment rates and unrivalled inflation (Quadagno, 1987). Keynesianism, which aimed to avert the economic crisis by boosting employment and economic growth, failed to address or explain stagflation (Hemerijck, 2012; Jenson 2012). Jenson (2012) notes that the economic crisis of stagflation threatened the continued expansion of the welfare state as neoliberals started questioning both the relevance and the size of the welfare state. Ultimately, the economic crisis 'undermined faith in permanent and sustained growth in welfare programmes...' (Quadagno, 1987: 110).

3.2.2 Neoliberalism and Welfare Retrenchment

Neoliberal economists seemingly provided the answers to stagflation by laying the blame on the rapid expansion of the welfare state. Neoliberalism condemned what to them was excessive government spending and advocated for 'the role of the state to be rolled back, since it was perceived as too costly and inefficient, and the reallocation of social responsibility towards other social sectors…' (Morel et al., 2012: 7). Neoliberals claimed the rise in welfare expenditure during the post-war period fundamentally distorted the economic basis of the state, which eventually played out in the mid-1970s economic crisis. Instead of investing in entrepreneurial firms and productivity, neoliberals maintained that the state weakened the economy through generous

welfare expenditure funded by high taxation (Ellison, 2012: 58). Accordingly, it was hoped that trimming social spending would redirect the focus 'from consumption to production, mobilise capital for further development, create employment, increase income and raise levels of prosperity' (Midgley, 1999: 4). Neoliberalism, as an economic philosophy fundamentally believes that economic growth and social spending are inherently incompatible. Hence, to achieve economic growth, neoliberals urge governments to significantly cut back on public spending — especially on welfare programmes (Jenson, 2012). In a neoliberal economy, fiscal adjustment programmes would create the conditions for markets to generate and distribute wealth, while families, and not the state, would be responsible for themselves (Jenson, 2009). According to neoliberals, the state can still provide welfare, but in a minimal and piecemeal form. This is so because, at the individual level, neoliberals claim welfare regimes encourage laziness. Consequently, this 'culture of laziness' invariably leads, according to neoliberals, to a state of a perverse incentive of 'welfare dependency', instead of taking personal responsibility (Friedman, 1962 as cited in Hemerijck, 2012). While Keynesian economists believed that spending on welfare now, had future benefits of a stable, strong economic growth, neoliberals argued that spending on social programmes put future generations at risk. Spending on social welfare, they claimed, would create public debts to be borne by future generations (Jenson, 2009). However, the claim that welfare provision encourages laziness has been refuted over the years. For instance, Huo and others (2008) in a study examining the employment effects of different welfare spending regimes revealed that the Nordic countries with generous social policy programmes in the 1990s had the highest levels of employment in all of the OECD countries.

Finally, establishing welfare states meant the need to create large bureaucracies, which, according to neoliberals, is a drain on scarce public resources (Ellison, 2012: 58). Through the adoption of neoliberal policies, Peng (2011) notes that most developed and developing countries embarked on a series of budget cuts for social services; introduced user fees; embarked on welfare retrenchments;

privatised state-owned enterprises; deregulated their economies and markets and liberalised trade with other countries among others. The emergence of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US respectively gave propulsion to the neoliberal movement. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher became the chief neoliberal ideologues and seen as driving the exportation of neoliberalism far and beyond the shores of the UK and the USA into regions such as SSA (Abrahamson, 2010)

3.3 The Social Investment Paradigm

While the neoliberal reforms of welfare retrenchment and spending cuts were able to address the growing fiscal imbalances during the 1980s, Peng (2011) and Jenson (2012) note that the reforms came with new social costs — increased poverty, social and economic inequality, rising child poverty rates, and increasing number of working poor people. In other words, the neoliberal era was marked by growing income inequality, relative poverty and a steady upsurge of child-poverty (Morel et al., 2012). These social consequences of neoliberalism engendered growing dissatisfaction in the 1990s (Morel et al., 2012). As a consequence, starting in the mid-1990s, the prevailing neoliberal orthodoxy was challenged (Jenson, 2009), paving the way for the emergence of the social investment (SI) perspective as a theory of social policy reform. Nolan (2013) and Bothfeld and Rouault (2015) observe that since the 1990s, discussions about the role and future of the welfare state has been dominated by the SI paradigm. In a sense, therefore, the SI paradigm of the welfare state reform is 'the dominant scholarly paradigm for making sense of the current welfare state' (Lancker, 2013: 5). Consequently, over the years, the SI paradigm has featured prominently in debates about social policy reform in the European Union (EU) (Hemerijck, 2015). For instance, the EU's formulation of the Lisbon Strategy[22] in 2000 committed itself to embrace the SI perspective. In order to discuss the SI perspective further, it is important to note that this

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[22] The Lisbon Strategy called for a recast of the welfare state to focus on improving human capital, and a commitment to research and innovation (Hemerijck 2012).

perspective emerged not only because of disaffection to neoliberalism but also to provide some ideas and suggestions in dealing with several socio-economic issues that threatened the very survival of Western welfare systems. Some of these issues were the transition from manufacturing to the knowledge-based services economy, the collapse of the male breadwinner family model, and demographic changes. In the next section, these socio-economic challenges are examined briefly.

3.3.1 The Knowledge-based Services Economy

Lancker (2013) argues that the 1973 oil crisis was a watershed moment in the conversion of industrial and manufacturing societies into the post-industrial knowledge-based services economies. In the post-1970s oil crisis, Western European countries experienced rapid deindustrialisation (OECD, 2006) as 'economic bases shifted from manufacturing to services and knowledge-based industries' (Peng, 2011: 46). This transition from manufacturing into a knowledge-based service economy created *new social risks*[23] while fundamentally altering the structure of the family system. The knowledge-based services economy is one in which there is both a decline of manufacturing sector jobs and the emergence of the services sector jobs (Bonoli, 2007). In the new knowledge-based service economy, demand for highly skilled workers rises, while that of low-skilled industrial workers fall. Therefore, knowledge and skills become the drivers of economic growth and productivity. In this situation, low-skilled workers either lose their jobs or get by on low wages (Bonoli, 2007). In short, this transition alters 'the skills and qualification required' (Dudová, 2013: 232) for labour market participation, effectively exposing low-skilled workers to the risks of poverty. In the knowledge-based service economy, the lack of adequate skills and education is, therefore, the cause of unemployment. Obsolete skills and inadequate qualification — or the lack thereof — become a key threat for 'workers operating in a globalised and knowledge-based world' (Nelson and Stephens, 2009: 68).

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[23] Situations in which individuals experience welfare losses and that have arisen as a result of socio-economic transformations in the past three to four decades of post industrialization (Bonoli, 2007).

3.3.2 The Male Breadwinner Model and Demographic Changes

The archetypal male breadwinner family model of the post-war era proved unsustainable as countries transitioned into the knowledge-based service economy. The traditional division of labour between spouses has been significantly modified (Bonoli, 2007). The erosion of the traditional family system of labour was manifested in the influx of women into paid employment (OECD, 2006: 20; Lancker, 2013). Nonetheless, the entry of women into paid employment created new challenges. The difficulty in combining child-rearing with paid employment creates new risks. That is, how can women effectively combine a career with the family life of child-rearing? Consequently, for women to effectively engage with the labour market, a balance between family-work has to be reached and a redistribution between women and men if care is required.

Related to the preceding, another significant impact of the transition to post-industrial society is the changing demographic landscape. In the industrialised countries, life expectancy has increased along with falling fertility rates (Barr, 2004; Bonoli, 2006). The implications are straightforward. Low fertility rates imply an impending crisis — the lack of active workers to replace ageing workers in the future. The problem arises as young women are opting out of childbirth in favour of seeking employment because childbirth is seen as a hindrance to women's ability to participate in the labour market (OECD, 2006). That is to say, the opportunity cost of childbirth and childrearing is the mother's career. Due to childcare demands, lone mothers especially, either reduce working hours and/or look for low-paid part-time work or abandon the quest for employment altogether. Ultimately, the potential effects of child-rearing on a mother's career have a discouraging effect on the decision to have children (Becker, cited in OECD 2006: 31). If falling fertility rates have to be addressed, policies and programmes that specifically assist mothers in balancing work and family need to be created.

Additionally, people living longer have an impact on the welfare budget, as there will be a need for more spending on pensions and healthcare. In the end, the *new social risks* of obsolete skills in

the service economy, profound changes to the family structure and the need to balance motherhood and labour market participation pose a threat to the State. In this context, the need arose for a restructuring of the welfare state to address these new risks. Thus, the SI paradigm emerged to help address these challenges. But how can the SI perspective help solve these challenges? The SI perspective embodies a significant ideational shift in stark dissimilarity with neoliberalism. The perspective aims to address the old tensions between the assumed trade-offs between social spending and economic growth. Fundamentally, the SI perspective views social spending as an investment — rather than a cost as suggested by neoliberals — which can produce significant economic and social benefits in the future (Leoni, 2015). Thus, unlike neoliberalism, the SI perspective maintains that social spending and economic growth can be mutually beneficial. The central plank of the SI perspective is the understanding of the need to:

> Shift towards the view that the government is to promote national competitiveness in an increasingly international market, away from passive[24] providing state to one which seeks to enhance self-activating, responsibility and mobilisation into paid work among citizens. Social policy is shifting from social provision to social investment (Taylor-Gooby, 2008: 4).

The SI paradigm, therefore, aims to redirect social spending priority 'from consumption and maintenance-oriented programmes to those that invest in people and enhance their capacity to participate in the productive economy' (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003: 86). To sustain a knowledge-based service economy, there is the need to expend resources in programmes designed to build and upgrade the skills of citizens to avoid being trapped in the vicious pattern of unemployment and welfare dependency. Whereas the post-war welfare state aimed to protect people from the vagaries of the market, a SI state, in contrast, aims to facilitate the entry of people into the market (Giddens, 1998). Furthermore, although the Keynesian welfare perspective was

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[24] *Passive* schemes are designed to simply provide incomes for members of the workforce who are out of employment while *active* programmes are those, which provide incentives and support to encourage people to move into, paid work (Taylor-Gooby, 2008:15).

concerned with *reducing* poverty, the SI approach focuses on policies to *prevent* poverty (Jenson 2009).

Conceptually, therefore, the SI perspective provides a theoretical and analytical framework to help think about *how* certain social policies can be seen as investments, separate and distinct from those that cannot (Nolan, 2013; 2017). Hence, the SI perspective is an intellectual discourse on how to reform social policy. The SI perspective provides substantial justification for *a certain kind* of role for the state (Jenson, 2010: 63). This kind of role is the one which prepares citizens for the future by helping to build their human capital and enhance their skills (Deeming and Smyth, 2015). Thus, the SI is different from the traditional welfare state because it *prepares* individuals for the future, rather than just *repairing* damages after an economic crisis through the provision of social assistance (Barbier, 2017). The SI approach, therefore, sees social policy as a productive factor **when** public spending is redirected towards programmes that enhance the capacity and skills of people to participate in the economy, notably through education and skills training (Nolan, 2017). This spending represents *investments*, as it is expected that it would help increase the productive capacity of future workers. Policies and programmes directed towards education and skills training represent investments.

At this point, it is useful to deconstruct what precisely social investment is. At the basic non-social policy level, an understanding of investment means the 'allocation of resources in ways that produce additional future, value-added resources' (Midgley, 2017: 14). However, within the social policy literature, SI is a conceptualisation of social policy in a way in which social protection is used to address contemporary economic and social challenges by prioritising policies that invest in human capital (Papadopoulos and Leyer, 2016: 435). The development of human capital is, therefore, the mainstay of the SI perspective.

In aiming to build the human capital and skills of future workers of the State, the SI is mostly child-centred (Lister, 2003; Papadopoulos and Leyer, 2016). The perspective focuses on policies '…that

both invest in human capital development (early childhood education and care [ECEC], education and lifelong training) and that help to make efficient use of human capital (through policies supporting women's and lone parent employment) while fostering social inclusion…' (Morel et al., 2012: 2). Investing in children, it is argued, produces the productive adult workers of the future. In sum, the SI perspective contends that public spending on children from an early age as well as family services more generally is an investment — to be realised in the future, since for every dollar spent on early child development, a four to five times returns on average can be realised (UNICEF, 2001:55).

The SI paradigm asserts that inadequate skills, poverty, unemployment, among others, have their causes in the early foundational stages of people's lives (Hemerijck, 2012). To address these problems, therefore, the paradigm adopts a *Life Course Perspective,* that is to say, people should be assisted from their foundational stages after birth, with quality and stimulating education, right through the stages of their lives. This can be achieved with increased social spending that specifically supports the promotion of family services, ECEC, labour market participation of lone mothers especially, and vocational training among others (Esping-Andersen et al., 2002). From the perspective of SI, enhancing the human capital base of economies means focusing strongly on the investment in ECEC because 'inequalities in childhood pose a real threat to the accumulation of human capital' (Lancker 2013: 6). UNICEF (2000: 3) clarifies this further as:

> ... those (children) who grow up in poverty are more likely to have learning difficulties, drop out of school, to resort to drugs, to commit crimes, to be out of work, to become pregnant at too early an age, and to live lives that perpetuate poverty and disadvantage into succeeding generation.

Children growing up in poverty face bleak prospects, which reinforce current inequalities in poor households. Children from marginalised contexts and wealthy contexts who start life with different skills and opportunities usually end up later in life with different outcomes (Currie, 2001). Currie (2001) argues further that correcting poor skills in adults is usually more difficult compared to

investing in children. Accordingly, a child-centred investment approach appears to be more attractive, productive and rewarding. Therefore, to address these child poverty concerns, ECEC is crucial in the sense that it ensures children acquire a strong head start, as noted by (Heckman, 2000).

According to UNICEF (2013), there is substantial evidence to conclude that cognitive development is most rapid in the early stages of life. Accordingly, investing in children's education is essential for developing cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Heckman, 2000; Nelson and Stephens, 2009: Lancker, 2013). Children who acquire a strong head start in life are more likely to grow into adults with better employment and earning prospects breaking the cycle of welfare and intergenerational transmission of disadvantage (Esping-Andersen et al., 2002; UNICEF, 2013). Also, investing in children primarily through education is seen as the best method to address child poverty (Peng 2011). Esping-Andersen (2002) observes that unemployed lone parents (which is usually overrepresented by women) are usually associated with a higher incidence of poverty in all OECD countries. Investing in childhood, thus, can minimise the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Public spending on quality childcare services has multiplier effects. Lone mothers who ordinarily would otherwise be at home attending to their children are likely to be incentivised to participate in the labour market. This increases household income, combats child poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty in the process (Lee and Baek, 2014), as well as increasing the State's tax base (Esping-Andersen et al., 2002). If women can combine a career and motherhood successfully, it is likely to boost fertility or avoid the demographic crisis, as childrearing will be less likely as a hindrance. On the whole, it can be argued that the SI perspective has a unique gender equity concern as it departs from the gender-blind characterisation of the Keynesian and neoliberal states (Jenson 2009; 2012; Hemerijck 2015). By aiming to specifically design policies and programmes that assist the labour market participation of women, the SI perspective helps to alter power relations in the household.

As appealing as the SI perspective appears, it is not without flaws. The SI paradigm has come under considerable critique mainly from the feminist scholarship. Some feminists accuse this perspective of focusing more on the goals of reducing child poverty as well as ensuring demographic harmony, rather than committing to the economic empowerment of mothers. Therefore, Jenson (2009) notes that the SI perspective instrumentalises women's employment. Women's entry into the labour market is only considered in order to forestall declining fertility rates and avert child poverty. Thus, the SI at best remains voiceless on matters central to women's employment such as equal pay, equal opportunities to work, different distribution of childrearing responsibilities and calls for paternity, instead of maternity leaves (Jenson, ibid; Saraceno, 2015). The structural causes of the devaluation of women's work and achievement are to be sidestepped rather than confronted (Jenson, 2009). If the structural inequalities are not addressed, solely concentrating on women entering employment implies the SI approach 'push(es) women into highly feminised jobs, reinforcing, rather than reducing existing gender gaps' (Hemerijck, 2015: 252). In a nutshell, although the SI perspective is a stark departure from the Keynesian and neoliberal state regarding its focus on women's labour market participation, it is still not far-reaching enough a reform.

Another criticism of the SI perspective is centred on the terminology of *social investment*. The term 'social investment' appears contradictory since the distinction between investment and consumption is blurry in the literature. Nolan (2013), Bothfeld and Rouault (2015) support this view as they maintain that social spending is not entirely an investment in the sense of the word. Identifying a form of social spending that is wholly an investment without a 'substantial element of current consumption' (Bothfeld and Rouault, 2015: 464) is quite strenuous. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the aim of social investment perspective has been to argue that social spending *can* have positive economic growth effects, contrary to the neoliberal view that social spending is entirely a drain and a needless burden on the economy. Finally, the focus of redirecting social

spending from income support towards human capital development ignores the plight of the presently poor. In the same vein, Morel and colleagues (2012) point out that rechannelling resources towards family and child services ignore today's poor, which can lead to increasing poverty levels. Boosting human capital for the future is compelling; however, in doing so, the wellbeing of poor people should not be forfeited to achieve this goal.

While these arguments against the SI perspective are convincing, the SI is presently faced with a more existential threat: fiscal austerity. In the last decade, following the 2008 worldwide financial crisis, the neoliberal ideas of welfare retrenchment and public spending cuts — masking as austerity — have resurfaced and dominated the economic and political discourses on rising public debts globally. There are well-founded concerns that austerity could deal a devastating blow to the SI paradigm of increased social spending as an investment for future returns. In the subsequent concluding section, I examine the *ex-ante* impact(s) of austerity on SI.

3.4 Fiscal Austerity and the Social Investment Perspective

Despite its unimpressive record (as discussed in the previous chapter)[25], a puzzling aspect about austerity has been its enduring nature. Years after the policy adoption, and in the face of overwhelming evidence of its failure (manifested in rising public debts and rising poverty, reduced healthcare utilisation, child poverty, increasing unemployment) there is no let-up in sight. For instance, as early as March 2018, the Coalition government voted to ensure stricter eligibility requirements for school meals in the UK by revising the Universal Credit system. Despite reports that this cut would deprive a million children of access to much-needed meals in school, the bill was passed nonetheless. Given the breadth and reach of austerity around the world, genuine questions are being raised as to whether SI programmes can remain insulated (Ronchi, 2018). Can the financial crisis undermine the SI approach of reforming the welfare state? Examining the impact of austerity on SI is, therefore, an emerging discourse about the future of the SI. This debate

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[25] See Chapter 2, Section 2.2

is particularly relevant as evidence shows that when confronted with a crisis, governments are likely to ignore long-term issues of *investments* in favour of addressing the present challenges. For, among other things, it is challenging to advance arguments in favour of investments in an atmosphere of heightened political pressure to cut public spending (Diamond and Liddle, 2012) and reduce the so-called large role of the state. Cost-containment policies of austerity will naturally limit the fiscal space for SI, since the entire welfare budget, and not just SI comes under strain in austerity (Diamond and Liddle 2012: Ronchi, 2018). Ronchi (2018) notes that as a result of the economic crisis, EU countries pursued retrenchment, rather than investment, and with it, a reversal of the gains made by SI. In other words, public spending cuts are likely going to undermine years of progress in tackling child and household poverty, which has dire consequences for the human capital development of a state (Diamond and Liddle, 2012). Paradoxically, however, austerity inspired cuts in public spending, including SI, is happening at the time when the effects of austerity — rising unemployment and poverty — bring to the fore, the importance of SI (Mertens, 2017).

Despite Ronchi's (2018) and Mertens' (2017) arguments above, the reality of austerity in light of public spending on social investment in the EU is more nuanced than they portray. As highlighted in Chapter 2[26], European welfare states came under considerable strain (Taylor-Gooby et al. 2017a) following the 2008 global financial and economic crisis. Under the pretext of reducing budget deficits, many EU states implemented radical welfare reforms (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017a). It is important to note that the context of these reforms is what Taylor-Gooby et al. (2017a: 12) refer to as the 'neoliberal logic of austerity'. Generally speaking, neoliberalism, as discussed in Chapter 3[27], is an economic philosophy that among other things, calls for the rollback of the role of the State through significant cutbacks on public spending, for example. Another way through which the role of the State is curtailed is through the implementation of fiscal adjustment programmes

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[26] See Chapter 2, Section 2.2
[27] See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2

such as austerity. With the rollback of the state, the free-market becomes the primary provider of welfare, as state welfare services are privatised to the extent possible (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017a). Hence, it is through this 'neoliberal logic of austerity' (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017a: 12) that radical reforms were implemented within EU states.

Some commentators in the austerity literature and discourse have rightly described the Eurozone as the epicentre[28] of the 2008 global financial crisis and the resultant neoliberal inspired austerity reforms (see Ferguson and Lavallette, 2013). Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the implementation of austerity (as a policy response to the financial crisis) in the Eurozone has been varied across countries. That is, while an evaluation of the austerity literature shows significant effects of austerity on social policy in the EU, in reality, the nature of the implementation of austerity has been nuanced. For instance, Guillen and Pavolini (2017) note that both Spain and Italy responded to the financial crisis with major austerity programmes. Specifically, as a way of reforming the labour market, Spain in 2012 made it possible for employers to unilaterally vary certain sections of collective bargaining agreements (Guillen and Pavolini, 2017). Similarly, in Greece, Petmesidou (2017) states that austerity inspired labour market reforms have led to a 22 per cent cut of the minimum wage and made it easy to dismiss workers (Petmesidou, 2017). Furthermore, Petmesidou (2017) states that there have been cuts to pensioners' income of up to half for specific categories of pensioners in Greece. In addition, between 2009 and 2015, per capita, spending on health fell by 42 per cent in Greece (OECD, cited in Petmesidou, 2017: 165).

Although these are significant austerity measures, in the Global North, on the whole, the impact of austerity has not been altogether severe, compared to other regions such as the Global South. While countries in the EU have implemented austerity, certain spheres of social policy have been simultaneously protected from austerity. There has been greater protection of social investment programmes, for example. Even though Spain embarked on labour market reforms and

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[28] See Chapter 2 Section 2.2

implemented severe cuts to other areas such as healthcare and social assistance, there has also been an increasing government commitment towards providing access to childcare services for children under three years (Guillen and Pavolini, 2017: 144). Precisely, Guillen and Pavolini (2017) state that the proportion of children under three years in formal childcare in Spain was 2 per cent higher than the EU15[29] average of 35 per cent in 2013. Across the EU as a whole, Taylor-Gooby and colleagues (2017b: 206) also note that between 2005 and 2012, public spending on healthcare, old age, sick and disabled people's welfare increased from 5,400 euros to 6,200 Euros per individual in the EU27[30]; public spending on working-age families also increased from 1,100 to 1,180 Euros.

Thus, while it is undoubtedly the case that austerity has been a dominant force in the reformation of social policies in the EU following the 2008 financial crisis, the impact of austerity has not been severe. A regime of austerity has been implemented alongside an increased commitment towards social investment in education and training, with the aim of generating higher-quality jobs (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017b). Using research and development as an aspect of social investment commitment, Taylor-Gooby and colleagues (2017b: 208) show how EU countries have pursued a policy of increased public spending in social investment and childcare services; even as these countries implement fiscal austerity. For example, while Germany spent 2.3 per cent of its GDP in 2004 on social investment, this increased to 2.8 per cent in 2015; Greece, on the other hand, spent 0.5 per cent of its GDP on social investment in 2004, increasing this expenditure to 1.8 per cent in 2015; and, Slovenia invested 1.3 per cent of its GDP on social investment in 2004, this increased significantly to 2.3 per cent in 2015 (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017b: 208). From these statistics and the discussion above, it is evident that even though some countries in the EU have embarked on neoliberal welfare state reforms by implementing austerity, in many cases, as in

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[29] The number of member countries in the European Union prior to the accession of ten candidate countries on 1 May 2004. The EU15 comprised the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

[30] The twenty-seven member states of the EU without the United Kingdom.

Slovenia, these countries have retained a relatively high level of social investment. Thus, although austerity has been real in the EU, there has also been measures and policies designed to promote childcare services, education and training. Therefore, our understanding of austerity in the EU must be seen in the context of variations and nuances.

Apart from directly analysing government's explicit austerity policies (such as tightening eligibility requirements, increasing sanctioning, cuts in benefit level cuts) towards SI investment programmes, another important — albeit largely ignored — method of understanding the implications of austerity for SI is to examine public programme implementation challenges. That is, to what extent does austerity impact service delivery of those public programmes with a SI rationale? To answer a question such as this, the street-level bureaucrat (SLB) has proven to be a useful analytical tool in the last four decades.

3.5 Service Delivery during Austerity: Through the Lens of the Street-Level Bureaucrat

Michael Lipsky coined the term street-level bureaucrat (SLB) as it has been known for the past four decades. In his widely acclaimed book *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, Lipsky defines SLBs as 'public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work' (Lipsky, 2010: 3). Characteristically, SLBs '… grant access to government programmes and provide services with them' (Lipsky, 1980: 3). Lipsky lists SLBs as including (but are not limited to) teachers, police officers, social workers, health workers, judges, among others (Lipsky, 2010: xvii). Thus, SLBs are frontline workers who directly implement government policies and programmes. Lipsky acknowledges that not all frontline service providers are SLBs. To be described as SLBs, he offers a set of criteria which frontline service providers must satisfy (Lipsky, 2010: xviii). These include *a)* daily face to face interaction with programme beneficiaries — these could be consumers, clients, pupils, patients; *b)* the ability to exercise discretion and autonomy in delivering services; and *c)* the existence of structural challenges (climate of economic austerity and

chronic resource constraints) which define the challenges of their work. Hupe and colleagues (2015) make a further important clarification here. While Lipsky focuses on public sector workers, Hupe and colleagues rightly argue that even service providers working for private sector entities in cases of outsourcing or contracting out are SLBs so long as they are providing a public good, within the boundaries and structures of Lipsky's criteria.

Concerns about how public policies and programmes are implemented and what obstacles impede implementation have engendered a binary theorisation: top-down and bottom-up theories (Hjern and Porter, 1981; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Walker and Gilson, 2004; Evans, 2011; Gaede, 2016). Top-down policy analysts argue that the policy implementation process is a coherent one: political elites and technocrats plan policy. In this context, public policy implementation is said to be about following a series of predetermined rules and guidelines. To these analysts, a failure of public policy implementation then is a result of planning inadequately for implementation (Sabatier and Mazmanien 1979; Hogwood and Gunn 1984). Conversely, bottom-up analysts argue that to understand public policy implementation challenges, it is crucial to examine the decisions and actions of actors who are directly responsible for implementation (Hjern and Porter, 1981). The mismatch between policy design and outcomes is indicative of policy implementers distorting the objectives of policies at the point of implementation (Hill, 1997). Lipsky's SLB framework has made a profound contribution to the discourse on understanding the challenges faced by frontline workers, and the coping strategies they adopt to overcome these challenges as they deliver public services (Courtney and Hickey, 2016). His SLB conceptual framework has advanced the scholarly debate on public policy implementation by following the bottom-up approach. Lipsky contends that to fully understand why there is often a mismatch between policy intents at the national level and how these policies and programmes eventually get delivered on the ground, it is essential to analyse and examine the actions of SLBs — particularly in their interactions with programme beneficiaries. Analysing the decisions and actions of those at the bottom of the policy design and

implementation hierarchy —SLBs — is essential because they have 'considerable discretion in determining the nature, amount, and quality of benefits and sanctions provided by their agencies [to their clients]' (Lipsky, 2010: 13).

Although Lipsky's seminal work primarily focused on public services in America some 40 years ago, it has over the years proved a useful conceptual framework in understanding the actions and decisions of frontline service staff as they deliver public services. As such, public policy analysts concerned with policy implementation challenges continually use Lipsky's framework to study the gaps between policy formulation and implementation in various country contexts (Riccucci, 2002; Carson et al., 2015). For example, in the UK studies have used Lipsky's framework to examine the actions of nursing staff (Hoyle, 2014), social workers (Baldwin, 2000: Sullivan 2009), and homelessness (Alden, 2015a). Similarly, the framework has been used in Canada (Courtney and Hickey 2016), Denmark (Baviskar and Winter, 2017), and South Africa (Walker and Gilson, 2004). Lipsky's framework has proved popular over the years primarily because of the parallels between the context of his research, and that of the subsequent adaptations. While his research was conducted in the context of the 1970s fiscal austerity in the United States (Lipsky, 1980; Carson et al., 2015), its relevance remains evident during this more recent period of austerity.

At the heart of Lipsky's (1980; 2010) theoretical framework is the notion of discretion. Tummers and Bekkers (2014: 529) define discretion as 'the perceived freedom of SLBs in making choices concerning the sort, quantity, quality of sanctions and rewards on offer when implementing a policy…' Lipsky argues that public policy implementation is a messy and complex phenomenon because public bureaucracies are characterised by 'ambiguity and uncertainty of goals and unavailability of appropriate performance measures' (Lipsky, 2010: 40). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that frontline workers operate in an environment of chronically inadequate resource relative to tasks, demands (from clients) exceeding available supply, high caseloads, ambiguous, vague and conflicting agency goals and objectives, performance difficult to measure

and the existence non-voluntary clients (Lipsky, 2010: 27; Sullivan 2009; Evans 2010). To Lipsky, these challenges of policy implementation create a 'corrupted world of service' (2010: 27).

In order to implement the policies and programmes they are tasked to within this context of 'corrupted world of service', SLBs use their autonomy and discretion to develop unsanctioned coping strategies which ultimately undermine policy intent and goals (Lipsky, 1980: xii, 14; Tummers and Bekkers, 2014; Crossley, 2016; Vedung, 2015; Nielsen, 2006; Sullivan, 2009; Ellis, 2007; Maynard-Moody and Mushen, 2003). Lipsky (1980: xii) defines coping strategies broadly as 'the decision of SLB, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures ...' Thus, in the real world of policy implementation, when faced with implementation challenges such as resource constraints, SLBs routinely resort to discretion to 'adapt, subvert, and sometimes even resist elements of policies…' in order 'to make them 'fit'' (Crossley, 2016: 193).

Many coping mechanisms are available to the SLB as they struggle to deliver public services in the context of the 'corrupted world of service'. According to Lipsky (1980: 18), the use of discretion is a coping strategy used to address the challenges of inadequate funding. Additionally, SLBs differentiate and discriminate among clients through stereotyping and bias leading to differential treatment; rationing available services; resort to gatekeeping practices such as time-wasting and withholding information about services and entitlements; insufficient consideration of cases; and monetizing services (Lipsky, 1971: 395-396; Lipsky, 1980: 22, 84; Vedung, 2015; Baviskar and Winter 2017; Nielsen, 2006). These mechanisms eventually undermine policy objectives and intent (Nielsen, 2006). When frontline workers adopt these coping mechanisms, it results in differential treatments of clients, despite requirements to provide services equally to beneficiaries (Lipsky, 2010). It must be highlighted that SLBs feel bad about the coping strategies they adopt as they have high ambitions (Vedung, 2015; Nielsen, 2006). SLBs are 'forced to handle

clients differently than she ideally wants to, and clients are too weak to get what they want, the way they want it' (Nielsen, 2006: 864).

Lipsky's theory is not so much about the individual agency of service providers. Instead, he chose to focus on the structural conditions that define and constrain their actions (Baviskar and Winter, 2017). Thus, when Lipsky used the notion of discretion, he used it in a negative sense. Frontline workers only use discretion for negative purposes, principally due to the structural constraints within which they operate (Lipsky, 1971: 393-395). Although Lipsky's framework heavily focuses on frontline workers' discretion and autonomy, he is quick to point out that this does not mean frontline workers work in a context of no rules or regulations regarding their work. Rules exist all right, but he notes that these rules are usually voluminous and contradictory to the extent that they can only be used selectively. For example, is the job of welfare officers to provide income support or reduce dependence, Lipsky's asks?

Despite the popularity of Lipsky's work, it has not garnered universal appeal. Some commentators have critiqued its structural determinism outlook — arguing that the framework is no longer relevant — taking cognisance of the changes that have taken place in the policy implementation arena in the last four decades. For instance, they contend that the emergence of the neoliberal initiatives of New Public Management [NPM] (the shifting of the responsibility of direct service delivery away from state bureaucracies to outsourced private sector organisations) has rendered Lipsky's framework redundant (Carson et al., 2015). The argument here is that due to the rise of NPM, outsourcing, and managerialism, the effects of discretion and autonomy has been minimised, with the activities of subordinates increasingly regulated (Taylor and Kelly, 2006; Lawson 1993; Langan 2000).

On the other hand, Brodkin (1997) and Hoyle (2014) among others have argued that Lipsky's framework is still relevant for many reasons. First, the context of Lipsky's work — fiscal austerity — and chronic underfunding, alongside cost-cutting measures, are still prevalent today (Hoyle,

2014; Evans 2010). Furthermore, while is it true that outsourcing the delivery of public programmes has been on the rise[31] especially following the 2008 banking crisis (Carson et al., 2015), this has not reduced the discretion of frontline staff. Brodkin (2006) argues that discretion cannot be wholly eradicated from SLB's activities as several studies confirm that discretion and autonomy still play central roles in the activities of SLBs (Baldwin, 2000; Wright 2003; Evans 2010, Grant 2013). Thus, whereas the contemporary policy implementation arena and situation has changed in the last four decades, it still has not been able to effectively eliminate the discretion of service providers. In light of the preceding arguments for the continued relevance of Lipsky's framework, this thesis draws on his conceptual framework in understanding how frontline service providers are dealing with service delivery in the context of austerity.

3.6 Conclusion

A feature of the welfare state since its post-war formalisation has been the constant pressures of reform. As such, the welfare state over the decades has transformed from its Golden Age of expansion, to the neoliberal era of retrenchment, then back to expansion through social investment, and finally to the present era of austerity. The pre-austerity debates about the need to reform the welfare state into the social investment state is a complete departure of what the initial pre-war understanding of what the welfare state's focus should be. With emerging risks unique to the post-industrial services and knowledge-based economy, the social investment paradigm aims to support the future economic growth potential of states by focusing primarily on human capital. This way, the SI perspective holds an enormous promise of helping reform social policy by making it relevant to the times. However, the ongoing austerity programmes globally, and the Global North in this particular context brings to the fore genuine concerns about the future or survival of the social investment ideas. In effect, austerity poses a severe threat to the successful restructuring of the welfare state through the SI perspective. Therefore, it is critical to examine the effects austerity is

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[31] For instance, Vize (2013) reports a 47 per cent increase in outsourced contracts in the UK between 2010 and 2014.

likely to have or is indeed having, on the social investment perspective. In the next chapter, I examine the diffusion of the social investment ideas beyond the Global North to the Global South, following years of austerity in the form of Structural Adjustment.

CHAPTER 4

The Diffusion of Social Investment 'Ideas' from the Global North to the Global South

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced and discussed the nature and origins of the conceptual framework of the social investment paradigm. In this chapter, I explore the diffusion of social investment ideas from the Global North to the Global South through international development organisations such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank (WB). The chapter starts with a brief historical account on the origin of the 1980s debt crisis in the Global South and then connects it to the adoption of the neoliberal policy reform tools of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The next section examines the emergence of safety nets as a policy alternative to SAPs. Subsequently, I focus on the emergence of social investment as a development policy through the implementation of social programmes such as Conditional Cash Transfers and School Feeding Programmes in the Global South. Additionally, some of the most critical challenges to the implementation of social investment programmes are examined. The last section of the chapter discusses Ghana's refocus on social investment, following a period of impressive growth post-2000.

4.2 The 1980s Global South Debt Crisis

Development Studies scholars often refer to the 1970s and 1980s as the *lost decade,* due to the low human development outcomes in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (European Report on Development, 2010; Cook, 2017; World Bank, 1990a). There is some consensus that the imposition of SAPs by the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) led to a decline in the quality of life in these regions. SAPs has its roots in the 1980 debt crises of developing countries. Between 1973 and 1974, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled the cost of crude oil (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2017) which led to a significant revenue windfall for members of the OPEC. The windfall

from these oil hikes flooded the international capital market as low-cost petrodollar loans. These petrodollars were recycled to Latin American and SSA countries as loans. Many SSA countries experienced a severe economic decline in the late 1970s. Consequently, debt repayment started faltering in the 1980s. Furthermore, the US government at the time increased interest rates, affecting the lending rates of American financial institution and therefore triggered the 1980s debt crisis in several Latin American and SSA countries (Midgley, 1997; Barrientos and Hulme, 2009; UN DESA, 2017). As Mexico declared its inability to pay its debts in 1982, many more countries followed the same path.

In the Global South, the neoliberal ideology became prevalent as a direct response to the 1980s debt crisis highlighted above. Under the pretext of helping address the issue of sovereign defaults[32], the IMF and the WB offered loans to developing countries and imposed a misguided one-size-fits-all (Midlgey, 1997) 'radical free-market economic conditionality' (Labonte and Stuckler, 2016: 313). SAPs, Ruckert and Labonte (2017) note, were the policy instruments used by the IMF and the WB to implement the neoliberal reforms. At its core, SAPs were economic policy reforms imposed on developing countries in order to reduce fiscal deficits through a series of measures such as privatisation of state-owned enterprises, trade liberalisation, foreign exchange stabilisation, deficit reduction (through the reduction of public expenditure by cutting social spending), deregulation, tax reforms (lower corporate and income tax to attract foreign capital), and the introduction of revenue-generating schemes (such as user-fees) to achieve cost recovery, among others (Wiman et al., 2007; Marangos, 2009; UN DESA, 2017; Ruckert and Labonte, 2017).

The neoliberal economic philosophy believes that social spending (welfare) and economic development are inherently antithetical (Midgley, 1999; Jenson, 2010). In other words, economic policy and social policy mainly involves a trade-off, with public welfare expenditure seen *consumption*, therefore unproductive (Cook, 2017). In this sense, social spending, neoliberals

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[32] Latin America's and SSA's inability to pay their creditors.

argue, undermines economic growth. Accordingly, SAPs were designed to significantly reduce budget deficits to create fiscal space for economic growth (Ruckert and Labonte, 2017). With a Growth First Agenda, neoliberalism contends that by prioritising economic policy over social policy, economic growth is bound to happen with the expectation that the benefit of growth will *trickle down* to everyone (Wiman et al., 2007: 21). However, notwithstanding the widespread implementation of SAPs across SSA, SAPs not only failed to improve economic growth (Labonte and Stuckler, 2016), they resulted in increased poverty and worsening social conditions. This is hardly surprising as, in hindsight, SAPs meant that 'less attention was paid to issues of income redistribution, living standards, education, health, and environmental degradation' (UN DESA, 2017: 52). Achieving the goal of low budget deficits implied, *inter alia*, a *'reduction in spending on public services was considered inevitable, acceptable and even* [a] *necessary consequence of adjustment'* [emphasis in original] (Bhattacharya et al., 2002: 149). Thus, extensive publicly-funded welfare programmes were impossible in SSA and Latin America.

It is important to stress that the calls for fiscal discipline and austerity in developing countries led to budget cuts in the already narrow and selective provision of essential social services of healthcare and education with dire consequences (Townsend, 2004; Midgley, 2017). Midgley (1997) and Mkandawire (2001) report that by the 1990s, essential social services were not being met due to massive retrenchment in health, education and other social programmes, playing out in rising levels of malnutrition, poverty and worsening health outcomes. In fact, in some countries, Labonte and Stuckler observe that SAPs 'slowed-down or reversed earlier health gains' (2016: 313). For example, Bhattacharya and colleagues show that social spending in Mexico fell drastically in the 1980s and 'did not regain its pre-adjustment levels until ten years later' (2002: 151). Additionally, the federal spending on education in 1983 (compared to 1982) fell by as much as 40 per cent (Bhattacharya et al., 2002: 151). Not only were there social spending cuts, government employees were retrenched, and salaries also slashed and paid in arrears (Townsend,

2004). Furthermore, price subsidies on consumer products such as cooking oil and bread were reduced (Townsend, 2004), with subsidies on agricultural inputs also slashed (Devereux, 2016). Chile, Colombia, and Argentina all implemented the most extensive reforms (Barrientos, 1998). These countries extensively embarked on pension reforms, relaxation of the labour laws — making it easier to fire workers — and health and education reforms. In SSA, an estimated 176 million people fell into destitution between 1981 and 2005 (UNDESA, 2009: 16). Further across SSA, the preoccupation with economic growth led to a marginalisation of social policy. In short, SAPs 'turned into a protracted economic misery for large proportions of the population' (Townsend, 2004: 46).

4.3 Social Safety nets and Poverty Reduction

Mounting evidence of the failure of SAPs to promote economic growth as well as the social costs of adjustment prompted calls for a rethink of development policy (Taube, 1993; Barrientos and Hulme, 2009). For instance, UNICEF in its 1987 *Adjustment with a Human Face* report provided compelling evidence of the deleterious effects of adjustment on children's lives in the Global South (Jenson, 2010). Additionally, in 1990, the campaign to re-examine SAPs gathered more steam with the publication of the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development* Report. Furthermore, even the World Bank — one of the neoliberal ideologues — in 1990 published a report [33] dedicated to addressing poverty. In these three reports, calls to mainstream poverty reduction into development policy were the central argument. Nonetheless, the WB's immediate response to the growing critique of the failure of SAPs was to launch the Social Dimensions of Adjustment programme (SDA) (World Bank 1990a; Adesina, 2011). The SDA was not a radical rethink of development policy. Instead, it 'involved the use of 'safety nets' to address the 'social cost of adjustment' (Adesina, ibid: 456). In the words of the World Bank (1993: 1), the main aim of the SDA programme was to help countries 'integrate poverty and social concerns in the design

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[33] World Bank., (1990b). World Development Report 1990: Poverty.

and implementation of their adjustment programmes to mitigate the burden on the poor'. That is, the SDA programme was to help developing countries design and implement policies to lessen the burden of adjustment programmes on the poor (World Bank, 1990a). Thus, the 1990s poverty reduction agenda was primarily a minimalist approach to social protection — through the safety nets — (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007). Safety nets are 'non-contributory interventions designed to help individuals and households cope with chronic poverty, destitution, and vulnerability' (World Bank, 2018: 5). A major disadvantage of the social safety nets approach was the 'strict targeting' of the most destitute (Adesina, 2011). Townsend (2004: 46) further critiques safety nets as being poor in coverage and administratively expensive to implement. Predictably, after implementing the SDA safety nets programmes, there was 'little to demonstrate that the tide of severe impoverishment was turning' (Adesina, 2011: 456). The SDA social safety nets intrinsically contained vestiges of the neoliberal philosophy (in the sense that social policy continued to be subordinated to economic development because of the enduring argument that social spending constitutes a cost, not an investment).

4.3.1 Social Protection Programmes

At the turn of the millennium, social protection emerged as the new development orthodoxy in the Global South. This was a marked departure from the 1980s era of budget cuts under SAPs and the 1990s minimalist safety nets approach. Although there had been calls since the 1980s for a paradigmatic shift in development policy, arguably, the 1997 East Asian financial crisis was the catalyst in changing development policy focus. The crisis 'brought home the message that [economic] growth was not enough…' (de Haan, 2014: 313). Bolstered by the emergence of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals three years later, social protection became an important development strategy.

Conceptualisations of social protection abound. The OECD defines social protection as 'policies and actions which enhance the capacity of poor and vulnerable people to escape from poverty and

enable them to better manage risks and shocks' (2009: 12). The European Report on Development 2010 offers a more comprehensive definition. They understand social protection as:

> A specific set of actions to address the vulnerability of people's life ***through social insurance***, offering protection against risk and adversity through life; ***through social assistance***, offering payments and in-kind transfers to support and enable the poor; and ***through inclusion*** efforts that enhance the capability of the marginalised to access social insurance and assistance [empasis in the original] (2010: 1).

Inferring from these two definitions, social protection programmes can be categorised into three broad types:

(i)   *Social Insurance*: example, disability insurance and contributory pension scheme;

(i)   *Social Assistance*: non-contributory social transfers (cash and kind transfers) for tackling poverty, examples being cash transfers, child support grant, and

(ii)   *Minimum Labour Standards*: government legislation on minimum labour standards.

Together, these three categories of social protection provide protective, preventive, promotive, and transformative functions (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: 9; OECD, 2009). Social assistance programmes provide protection from poverty, social insurance programmes prevent deprivation, promotive social protection programmes build peoples' resilience and enhance livelihoods; and transformative social protection aims to address issues of discriminations against the vulnerable, promote social cohesion and exclusion.

Some notable events and ideas (apart from the UN MDGs) reinforced the shift towards social protection in the Global South. First, concerns about rising and widening income inequality at the time of increasing growth rates reaffirmed the urgency of social protection in making growth pro-poor. Social protection, it is argued, can make economic growth pro-poor. Pro-poor growth 'aims to improve living standards and share the benefits of increased prosperity more evenly across social groups' (OECD, 2014: 8). The evidence of inequality of income and opportunity undercuts the argument that the benefits of economic growth will automatically *trickle down* to everyone. The

reality is that in many countries, the benefits of growth invariably inures to the benefit of a select few (OECD, 2014). Social protection thus shows that social policy and economic policy are complementary rather than antithetical terms (Wiman et al., 2007). A body of evidence demonstrates these complementarities by showing the contributory potential of social protection (an instrument of social policy) to economic growth. Social protection programmes have been showed to stimulate demand for local products, spurring economic activities. For example, Samson (2009) reports that 80 per cent of social transfers in Zambia were spent on locally produced goods. Additionally, social protection can facilitate people's entry into the labour market. In country contexts wherein a job search can be expensive, social transfers can help with the cost. In South Africa, for instance, people who received social transfers were found that put in more effort into looking for work, compared to those who did not (Samson and Williams, 2007).

Second, due to favourable export market terms, the post-2000 era was a period of impressive economic growth in developing countries generally, inclusive of Latin American countries. Between 2000-2010, average growth rates for Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela were 6.62, 3.99 and 5.01 per cent, respectively (Pribble, 2013: 15). This strong economic growth effectively expanded the fiscal space for increased expansion of social protection programmes from selective targeting towards universal provision.

The shift in focus towards social protection is not to deny the importance of economic growth in the poverty alleviation equation. Social protection, far from being a substitute for economic growth, is instead a realisation that growth is necessary but alone, it is insufficient in dealing with vulnerability, social exclusion and poverty (OECD, 2009). In sum, social protection and economic growth are mutually reinforcing. The OECD (2009: 38) notes that there are five central pathways through which economic growth can be pro-poor: human capital investment, risk management, empowerment and livelihood, pro-poor macroeconomic strategy, and social cohesion and nation-

building. In the next section, I discuss a significant weakness of social protection programmes in general for the Global South, which is relevant to this research as well.

4.3.1.1 Challenges of Social Protection Programmes: Political Clientelism

A significant weakness of social protection programmes is how easily it can be co-opted for political purposes. Until quite recently, the political implications of social policies in the Global South had not received due attention in the social policy literature (Hickey, 2008). For instance, a search for literature on the politicisation of social programmes yields remarkably scarce results (Barrientos and Pellissery, 2012). This is quite surprising as political considerations can affect both the design and implementation of social programmes (Hickey, 2008). Admittedly, part of the problem is the fact that different forms of politics affect various aspects of the same programme differently. As Hickey (2008) explains, the political considerations that go into establishing social protection programmes can be substantially different from the kinds that would identify beneficiaries, for example. Furthermore, analysing political clientelism is not straightforward due to 'the secretive and shadowy nature of clientelistic practices' (Berenschot, 2018: 2). Thus, 'surprisingly few systematic comparative studies on clientelism' exist (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007: 3). Despite these challenges, there is some literature examining the relationship between politics and clientelism in the Global South. Nonetheless, this literature on political clientelism almost exclusively focuses on exploring the relationship between clientelism and voting behaviour or electoral consequences (Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni, 2003; Bohn, 2011; Sandberg and Tally, 2015; Swamy, 2016).

The discourse on the politicisation of social protection programmes in the Global South has shown that such programmes are usually designed as a tool for clientelistic allocation (Swamy, 2016). It must be noted, however, that although clientelism exists in virtually every political system worldwide (van de Walle, 2007), political clientelism in SSA is notably different in the sense that, politics is 'systematically and inherently clientelistic' (Wantchekon, 2003: 399). Simply put,

political systems in SSA are characteristically clientelist (Young, 2009). Commenting on the nature of political clientelism in most parts of SSA, van de Walle (2001: 51) explains: 'political authority in Africa is based on the giving and granting of favours, in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state'. Although political clientelism is a feature of countries across the globe (Berenschot, 2018), the difference is that in some countries democratisation has rendered clientelism 'less exploitative' (Berenschot, 2018: 1). In Latin America and SSA, comparative political commentators argue that the exploitative nature of clientelism is as a result of several interrelated factors: low productivity, high inequality, a low middle-class, and starkly hierarchical relations (Wantchekon, 2003; Berenschot, 2018). The historical antecedent of clientelism in SSA mostly has to do with the region's post-colonial authoritative leaders (Young, 2009). This era saw the emergence of *Big Man*[34] politics, wherein autocratic leaders offered jobs to politicians in exchange for loyalty and servility to the ruler (Young, 2009).

Political clientelism 'refers to the practice of providing personal favours — jobs, contracts, welfare support, money, and so forth — in exchange for electoral support' (Berenschot, 2018: 2). In patron-client relationships, the patron, in this case, the politician, uses their power and control over state resources, to 'favour' the client, in exchange for political loyalty, usually reflected in voting or political support (Alcazar, 2010). Patron-client relationships are thus about providing resources in exchange for personal loyalty and political support (Wantchekon, 2003; Lindberg, 2003). As resources are limited, political clientelism is usually about the exchange between politicians and campaign supporters, rather than between politicians and voters in general (Berenschot, 2018), although both can coexist.

Politicians routinely abuse social programmes because these programmes inherently have several 'opportunities' for abuse. The procurement processes, storage and distribution of items are all, for

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[34] See Meredith, M., (2006). *The State of Africa: A History of fifty years of since independence*.

example, avenues for abuse (Alcazar, 2010). The politicisation of social programmes happens in a variety of ways. First, programmes are deliberately designed to target geographic regions that are known to favour a particular political party (Hickey, 2008). In this particular instance, political considerations rather than need, informs policy implementation, rendering policies incapable of achieving desired goals. Thus, welfare programmes do not necessarily reach the neediest. Second, studies show that in Latin America and SSA, politicians who wish to influence voters abuse social protection programmes by either expanding programme or increasing programme benefits deliberately designed to coincide with elections (Alcazar, 2010). For example, Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi is reported to have distributed food aid by selectively targeting his base, rather than those in need in deprived areas (de Waal, 1997). Similarly, user-fees for health services utilisation in Uganda was abolished at the 2001 elections (Holland and Yeats, 2005). These political manipulations have sometimes worked in favour of incumbent governments. Manacorda et al. (2011) observe that in Uruguay, beneficiaries of social programmes were likely to support the political party than those who were not in receipt of it. Similarly, Bohn (2011) has attributed Lula's 2006 re-election success mainly to the expansion of the social protection programme *Bolsa Familia.*

The discourse on political clientelism rose and fell between the 1960s and 1970s. However, interest in the topic peaked in 2000 over fears that political clientelism (through vote-buying) has the potential to weaken emerging democracies in the Global South (Berenschot, 2018; Swamy, 2016). Thus, in the literature, as I have already stated, the effects of clientelism and social protection have been narrowly focused on vote-buying, voting behaviour, and electoral outcomes in general for political parties. The problem, however, is that the impact and manifestation of the politicisation of social programmes go well beyond electoral outcomes or vote-buying. For instance, (as it will be demonstrated in this research) politicisation can lead to programme inefficacy through the lack

of monitoring or supervision of service providers for example, and a lack of clarity or transparency in the recruiting process (employing unqualified personnel).

4.3.1.2 Politicisation of the Ghanaian State: Party Politics and Patronage

Politics in Ghana is intimately interwoven with clientelism, to the extent that political scientists describe Ghana's political system as *competitive clientelism* (Whitfield, 2011; Oduro et al., 2014; Appiah and Abdulai, 2017). Intense political rivalry in Ghana has produced competitive clientelism wherein political parties engage in distributional politics to reaffirm their base and gain political support (Appiah and Abdulai, 2017). Ghana first experienced multiparty democratic elections in 1951 and 1954 (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008). However, starting in 1966, several *coup d'états* truncated Ghana's nascent multiparty democratic system, with the country experiencing its longest military dictatorship from 1981 to 1992 (Kopecky, 2011). A new constitution in 1992 returned the country to multiparty democracy (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Appiah and Abdulai, 2017). Since 1992, general presidential and parliamentary elections have been held every four years, with a *de facto* two political party system emerging (Appiah and Abdulai, 2017). Elections between the two dominant political parties, the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party are increasingly intense, manifested in the slim margins of electoral victories. For instance, Appiah and Abdulai (2017) report that while in 1992 the NDC won the elections by almost 30 per cent of the valid votes, this gap had narrowed to less than 0.5 per cent in 2008 when the incumbent party the NPP was beaten. This climate of intense political competition, coupled with a general election every four years has meant that politicians resort to meeting the short-term needs of voters to gain their support (Whitefield, 2011). The effects of this system are straightforward. Politicians focus on distributional policies 'designed to deliver resources and economic opportunities to patrons and clients of the ruling government' (Appiah and Abdulai, 2017: 10). In practical terms, both political parties have produced a political system which has 'developed into a source of patronage where parties provide job opportunities and in some case cash … in their bid to win power' (Oduro et al.,

2014: 8). In a sense, joining a political party in Ghana 'has become a source of economic empowerment' (ibid: 8).

A practical demonstration of political clientelism can be seen through the typical Member of Parliament (MP)-Constituent relationship. In Ghana, it is quite common to see long queues of constituents each morning, expecting the MP to address their concerns and needs (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008). These concerns include, *inter alia,* jobs, request for contracts, payment of school fees, funeral and wedding expenses and electricity bills (Lindberg, 2003; Lindberg and Morrison 2008). An important caveat is warranted here. These requests are not considered vote-buying per se by the constituents, but it is an 'institutionalised behaviour signifying a willingness to take care of 'your [MP's] people', namely, constituents' (Lindberg, 2003: 124). As it has already been argued in the previous chapter, clientelism is a feature of virtually every political system in the sense of politicians needing to satisfy their 'base' and the needs of constituents. However, it is the pervasive and predatory nature of it as it happens in African politics that makes the practice worrying.

The second effect of competitive clientelism in Ghana has been a high degree of polarisation of the state through patronage politics (Appiah and Abdulai, 2017). This is best manifested during political transitions. When a ruling government loses its power, the transition process becomes 'chaotic' (Gyampo, 2016). In most transitions, there is a 'wholesale removal of public servants perceived to be associated with the previous regime' (Appiah and Abdulai, 2017). The dissolution of boards of SOEs, to appoint members of the new government to these positions are usually one of the first acts of a new government (Gyimah-Boadi, 2010). These appointments, with no exception, are done by 'presidential fiat, largely on the basis of partisan political consideration, rather than merit' (Gyimah-Boadi and Yakah, 2012: 3). Due to this high degree of politicisation in Ghana, the political system is said to be a *Winner-Takes-All* [WTA] (Abotsi, 2013; Attafuah, 2013; Gyampo, 2016). WTA politics essentially is a zero-sum game view of politics which translates into:

> Compulsory retirements; termination of appointments; cancellation and withholding of entitlements; forcible ejections from duty-post accommodation; wanton seizure of state vehicles and property in the care of political party apparatchiks without recourse to due process of law; reckless abrogation of contracts; and wanton persecution of some real and perceived political opponents (Gyampo, 2016: 3).

Within this political context, it has been rightfully argued that the transition to democratisation, from a post-independence *Big Man* neopatrimonialism[35] dictatorship, has intensified patronage politics in Ghana (Lindberg, 2003: 123; Lindberg, 2003). In a subsequent chapter[36], this thesis demonstrates in detail, the adverse effects of the politicisation of the GSFP.

4.4 Moving Beyond Theory to Practice: Social Protection Programmes with Social Investment Rationale

Whereas fighting poverty and other socio-economic inequalities were the development goals in vogue post-2000, the social investment (SI) perspective centred on human capital development was seen as the primary route to achieving these goals. The SI perspective, contrary to neoliberalism's calls for a rollback of the role of the State, justifies an increased role for the State in the economy and development through public spending. Nonetheless, public spending, according to the SI perspective, should be channelled into schemes with the potential of contributing to economic growth. Therefore, the SI's central plank is that education or learning is the foundation of the economic future of the State (Jenson, 2010). Hence, there is a need for some public spending and policy attention towards human capital development, right from early childhood (Jenson, Ibid). In this way, the future survival of the state's economy is assured, while there is the possibility of breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and disadvantage from poor parents to their children. As already discussed extensively in the previous chapter, the SI perspective emerged in the Global North during the mid-1990s as a way of reforming the

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[35] Neopatrimonialism is an 'informal political system based on personalised rule and organised through clientelistic networks of patronage, personal loyalty and coercion' (Quote no 12 in Lindberg, 2003). Using state resources to perpetuate stay in power.

[36] See Chapter 6, Section 6.3.5

Welfare State (Hemerijck, 2017). The SI perspective, therefore, arose as an intellectual alternative to the neoliberal dominance on social policy; arguing that social policy and economic growth are not antithetical notions (Nolan, 2017; Hemerijck, 2017).

In the Global South, countries 'do not explicitly frame their social policies around the notion of social investments as defined in Northern Welfare states' (Patel, 2017: 105). The discourse on SI in the Global South is different in the sense that, the debates are not framed around attempts to comprehensively restructure welfare as in establishing a *Third Way* (Giddens, 1998), *Towards a Social Investment Welfare Stat*e (Morel et al., 2012), or *Why We Need a Social Investment State* (Esping-Andersen et al., 2002). Instead, the discourse is shaped around the notion of mainstreaming SI *ideas* into social policies and programmes. Accordingly, in examining SI in the Global South, it would be helpful to think about SIs in terms of not only what SI generally is, but more importantly, the *objectives* and *goals* of SI. This way, we can delineate social protection programmes with SI *ideas* from those without. Moreover, whereas policy definitions help paint a broad picture of what SI is, there are still problems with this approach to understanding SI because 'many (if not all) social policies can include elements of social investments …' (Garritzmann et al., 2016: 20).

Garritzmann and colleagues (2016: 20) argue that the goal of SI is to 'prepare, support, and equip individuals in a way that increases their chance to participate in the knowledge-based economy and reduce their future risks of income loss and poverty'. The functions of SI then are to create skills for human capital formation, mobilise these skills to assist people to participate in the labour market and to preserve the skills acquired through income support (ibid). Hemerijck (2015) provides a more accurate explanation of the functions of SI using the concepts of *flow, stock,* and *buffers*. He explains that the functions of SI are to: raise the quality of the *stock* of human capital and capability (through lifelong learning, education and vocational training); assist the *flow* of contemporary labour-market and life course transitions (helping school leavers and lone parents for example, to

participate in the labour market through activation policies); and finally, *buffering* policies which provide income support in times of transitional shocks. In short, the functions of SI are to create human capital, harness this human capital by helping people transition from school into work, and then provide income support and safety nets for those who need it in temporal periods of shocks. Hemerijck (2015) however concedes that these three functions overlap. Therefore, we cannot neatly compartmentalise each social policy programme into under *stock*, *flow*, and *buffer* categories. For example, SI policies on early childhood education helps parents to combine parenthood and work (which represents *flow*, since it helps people participate in the labour market), income earnings of parents create a *buffer* against shocks, while the provision of early childhood education helps to stimulate and improve the cognitive ability of children, thereby fulfilling the *stock* functions of social investment (Hemerick, 2015: 249). Concluding on the functions of SI, therefore, I argue that when we talk about social investments in the Global South, we should move away from broad policy definitions towards identifying those social policies and programmes that have elements of the three functions of *stocks, flow,* and *buffers*.

4.4.1 Social Investment Programmes in the Global South

There is the belief that the SI perspective emerged in the Western Welfare States and then diffused to the Global South through international development organisations (Mahon, 2010; Jenson, 2010; Cook, 2017; Midgley, 2017). For instance, Midgley states that the 'social policy literature on social investment [is] essentially Eurocentric', and that only a handful of writers have examined 'the emergence of social investment in the Global South where social investment ideas have featured prominently for many years' (2017: 18). UNICEF and the WB are believed to have been the main organisations responsible for diffusing the ideas of human capital accumulation through early childhood education and care to the Global South (Mahon, 2010; Jenson, 2010). The WB's 1995 report, *Investing in People: The World Bank in Action* made a case for human capital as: 'Investing in people — through education, health, nutrition, and other aspects of human development — is

crucial to the struggle to raise living standards and reduce poverty in the developing world' (World Bank, 1995: 3). Arguing further for a child-centred approach to human capital development, the WB explained that 'investing in people means helping people invest in themselves and their children. It means empowering households, especially low-income families, to increase the quality and quantity of investment in children (ibid: 3). Thus, it can be demonstrated that some international organisations played a critical role in pushing for the adoption of SI in the Global South. Nonetheless, if we agree that the theoretical basis of the SI perspective rests the concept of *human capital*, then it could be argued that the SI perspective has its roots in development studies' concept of human capital. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, (2018) trace the human capital theory to Adam Smith in his 1776's *The Wealth of Nations*. However, it was not until the 1950s that the concept received considerable academic attention. Before the 1950s, labour was not seen as a capital requiring investment as a factor of production (Krasniqi and Topxhiu, 2016). It was the pioneering works of Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) which showed that public spending on education, healthcare, and nutrition among others constituted investments which *required deliberate investment* as it contributes to economic growth. For instance, Schultz, contributing to the discourse on human capital theory, argued that '... skills and knowledge are a form of capital that, that this capital is in substantial part a product of *deliberate investment* [emphasis mine] ...' (1961: 1).

Human capital is 'the stock of skills, traits, and knowledge that an individual possesses' (Burgess, 2016: 6). The central plank of the human capital theory is that spending on educational outcomes has the potential to increase future productivity (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2018). Therefore, the provision of education is seen as the primary channel through which public policy can affect human capital accumulation (Burgess, 2016). Education affects productivity. This, in turn, affects one's employability and levels of income. Furthermore, high-income earners are more likely to have improved health and fertility rates and increased social mobility for poor people, especially

— effectively reducing poverty (Barro and Lee, 2013; Burgess, 2016). Admittedly, the human capital theory is not perfect. Critics argue that the expansion of access to education in the Global South has not led to improved economic conditions (Hanushek, 2013). Access to education should not be the only overriding concern. The quality of education also matters, especially in developing cognitive skills.

With regards to the specific programmes with SI outlook, conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have been the policy of choice for international development organisations diffusing the SI perspective to the Global South because of the need to invest in children's health and education (Jenson, 2017). The logic of CCTs is quite straightforward. The high incidence of poverty within certain households is due to lack of sufficient investments in their human capital which then 'leads to a low worker productivity and depressed incomes in the future' (Lomeli, 2008: 479). Yet, the existence of a healthy, skilled and knowledgeable people is more likely to contribute to economic development (Midgley, 2017). CCTs are cash transfers generally made to poor households with the condition that the households would make pre-specified human capital investments in their children; usually but not limited to school participation and healthcare utilisation (Fiszbein et al., 2009; Merrien, 2013). The conditionality on education, for example, could be as high as demanding 80 to 85 per cent of school attendance in a term (Fiszbein et al., 2009). CCTs have two broad goals: *(a)* immediate household poverty reduction, and *(b)* long-term human capital investment through education and skills formation, to break the intergenerational transmission of (Merrien, 2013; Nelson and Sandberg, 2017). By providing cash transfers on condition of school enrolment and health care visitation, CCTs incentivises human capital investments at the household level. This way, CCTs are thought to address present poverty while investing in the future productive skills of children. Therefore, CCTs are a type of social protection programmes with SI ideas because while it addresses present household poverty (through social assistance or cash transfers), it also helps build the human capital base of a country (Hall, 2017). CCTs thus fulfil the *stock* functions of SI

through the investments in the human capital of children, for future productivity, and *buffer* functions of helping families attain an appreciable level of living through consumption.

Since Brazil, Mexico and Colombia introduced large-scale[37] CCTs in the mid-1990s, CCTs have proved popular as they expanded rapidly across the region (Papadopoulos and Leyer, 2016) and to SSA and other areas of the Global South (Fiszbein et al., 2009). With varying sizes and benefits packages, CCTs have now spread to many countries in the Global South: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan (Fiszbein et al., 2009). As of 2014, Latin America had 19 conditional and 25 unconditional cash transfers, with SSA having 13 and 37, respectively (WB, 2014 as cited in Hall, 2017). Ghana's CCT — the (LEAP) — started in 2008. From a small size of 1,654 households in 2008, the programme had grown to 140,000 households by 2015 (FAO/UNICEF, 2016: 149). LEAP has two broad goals: increasing households' consumption in the short term and investing the human capital development of the poorest of the poor in Ghana.

CCTs have proliferated because the documented empirical evidence shows that a well-designed, appropriately targeted and generous CCT programme can lead to reduced poverty, increased school enrolment among programme beneficiaries, and improved health care access (Fiszbein et al., 2009). Reviews and evaluations of social protection programmes — particularly social assistance schemes with a SI outlook in the form of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) — in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe have showed that social protection programmes do achieve the twin goals of poverty reduction and human capital enhancement through significantly increased utilisation of health care and education (Lomeli, 2008; Fiszbein et al., 2009; Hanlon et al., 2010; ILO, 2014a). For example, according to the 2010 European Report on Development (2010: 2), Mexico's CCT *Oportunidades* reduced the poverty gap in rural areas by 19 per cent. Additionally, the *Oportunidades* programme led to an 85 per cent increase in the number of children enrolled in

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[37] Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*, Mexico's *Oportunidades* (now *Próspera*) and Colombia's *Familias en Acción* are some of the largest scale CCTs in the world (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

primary education in rural areas, an 11 per cent decrease in maternal mortality rate, as well as a 16 per cent increase in height and weight of children under three years (SEDESOL, cited in Bradshaw 2008: 192). Elsewhere in South Africa, the country's Child Grant has been reported as being successful in poverty alleviation, increased school enrolment, and improved children's health (Patel et al., cited in ILO, 2014a; Luiz, 2013: 116). In sum, CCTs with their promise of addressing the present poverty through increased consumption and future poverty through increased human capital and labour participation has proved immensely popular in the Global South.

4.4.2 The Limits of Social Investments in the Global South

The SI perspective is not without its critics. As already discussed in the previous chapter, some of the sharpest critics of the SI perspective have been social policy academics in the Global North. As a brief recap, feminist scholars criticise the SI perspective as being instrumentalist. By placing a great deal of emphasis on assisting the transition of women into the labour market, the SI perspective '... push women into highly feminised jobs, reinforcing, rather than reducing existing gender gaps' (Hemerijck, 2015). Cantillon (2011) also accuses the SI perspective of perpetuating a perverse *Matthew Effect*[38]. She argues that the middle-class (those comparatively better off), are the ones who disproportionately benefit from SI programmes. Using childcare services as an example, these services are usually used more by 'high-income, dual-earning parents' (Hemerijck, 2017: 16).

Within the context of the Global South, however, a different set of criticisms are levelled against the SI perspective. First, the reported successes of the CCTs are often based on the assessment of the short-term goals of school enrolment, improved healthcare and poverty reduction rates (Jenson, 2010; Jones 2016). An examination of the long-term goal of CCTs reveals severe shortcomings of the SI perspective. The promise of long-term poverty reduction through labour market participation

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[38] Matthew Effect is a term for the concept of accumulated advantage. That is, the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. This is taken from the Gospel of Matthew 25 verse 29: 'For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them'

'relies not on empirical evidence but on theoretical assumptions' (Nelson and Sandberg, 2017: 28). Expectedly then, the long-term benefit of enabling labour market participation mostly remains unproven for some reasons. For instance, there is simply a lack of data for rigorous examination (Nelson and Sandberg, 2017). Accordingly, 'evaluations now to date are based on simulations and *ex-ante* models and rather dubious assumptions about the adequacy of education services and future labour market insertion' (Nelson and Sandberg, 2017: 28).

Supporting Nelson and Sandberg, Jones (2016) contends that by focusing solely on enrolment and retention dimensions of education, CCTs miss out on an essential component of education — the quality of education. CCTs make no explicit assumptions about the quality of education needed (Jones, 2016). In other words, while evidence shows that CCTs do significantly increase school enrolments, increasing school enrolment rates do not automatically mean children are afforded quality education (Hanushek, 2009). Indeed, Morley and Coady (2003) and Lomeli (2008) observe that CCT programme designs usually ignore the quality of education dimension. Therefore, while CCTs show that school enrolments increase, there is the need to focus on improving the quality of education provided through these programmes. The quality of education is especially relevant in the Global South as the evidence on the poor quality of teaching (reflected in overcrowding, unqualified teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, and striking levels of disinvestment in quality education in general) in the Global South is expansive. CCTs are unlikely to achieve the future goals of human capital formation in this situation. For, merely going to school is not a guarantee of learning. Focusing on improving access to education overly concentrates efforts into the supply-side constraints by assuming children do not go to school only because of poverty. In Latin America, the quality of education, rather than the lack of access, has been blamed for the region's low human capital stock (United Nations Development Programme, 2010). Consequently, there has to be a comprehensive planning process when designing or implementing CCTs (or other

social protection programmes with SI ideas for that matter) to take cognisance of the bigger picture of policy contexts of the intended programmes.

Third, the SI ideas in CCTs rest on the understanding that the high incidence of poverty within households is fundamentally as a result of under-investment in the human capital of children. Therefore, to break this intergenerational transmission of poverty, investments in education would build the human capital for labour market participation. This position is overly optimistic in the real world. Several factors account for people's lack of, or limited participation in the labour market, other than the absence of inadequate skills or knowledge. For example, theories of social capital argue that the existence of social networks may influence access to labour markets in certain countries and for particular groups such as migrants (Brook 2005; Piracha et al., 2016). Moreover, we cannot discount the potential impact of discrimination — on the basis of gender, sex, ethnicity, religion — in determining access to the labour market (Jones, 2016). Still, on the labour market, the SI perspective again assumes there would be readily available jobs in the future for the present generation. If people are not able to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, by being able to improve their chances of getting a job, then the intellectual foundation of the SI argument falls apart. Using the *stock, buffer* and *flow* functions of SI, it can then be argued that, if there are no jobs available for people who have acquired the *stock* of human capital, then 'burdening small policies like CCTs with unrealistic expectations [such as labour market participation] guarantees policy failure…' (Nelson and Sandberg, 2017: 32).

Finally, it has been argued that the adoption of the SI perspective is displacing the traditional redistributive and compensatory functions of social protection (Smyth and Deeming, 2016). This is a critique against the SI's approach of prioritising economic development goals over traditional social policy goals of redistribution through consumption support. This argument is made in the light of people having social rights. Nolan (2013) makes the case that recasting the attention from consumption to human capital formation is a direct assault on social policy's traditional aim of

delivering social services because of people's inherent social rights. Midgley (2017) also argues that by reallocating public spending away from consumption to production-oriented policies, the adoption of the SI approach will likely worsen poverty rates as it strips the present poorest of protection ostensibly to protect the future poor.

4.5 Hunger, Food Insecurity and School Feeding

Although CCTs have been the policy choice in helping build countries' stock of human capital for future productivity in many countries in the Global South, it is by no means the only type of programme. One other programme which has received tremendous attention in the literature and development practice is School Feeding (SF) programmes. The adoption of SF programmes as part of the Global South's SI strategy has been informed by the challenges of food insecurity in the region. Both Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) affirm the right to food as a human right. Also, multiple World Food Summits (1974, 1996, and 2002) have highlighted the dire nature of hunger, with governments upholding their commitments in tackling hunger. Decades later, the record of achievement has been unimpressive. Despite the World Food Summits and Universal Declaration, the number of hungry people is on the rise (Swaminathan, 2010).

Hunger is a development problem worldwide, but much more severe in Latin America, Southern and Western Asia and SSA (Morgan and Sonnina, 2008). Notwithstanding the millennium development goal (MDG) of reducing hunger in half by 2015, the phenomenon persists after the end of the MDGs. There were approximately 820 million undernourished people in 2000 when the MDG on halving hunger was agreed on (Swaminathan, 2010: 454). In 2016, 16 years later, 815 million people were estimated to be undernourished worldwide (FAO, 2017a). Of the 815 million people globally suffering from inadequate food intake, over 243 million live in SSA, and almost 520 million in Asia, with more than 42 million in Latin America (FAO, 2017a: 7). Perhaps, apart

from droughts and conflicts, a more important reason for the pervasive nature of food insecurity in the Global South can be traced to the agricultural liberalisation of the 1980s due to SAPs (Devereux, 2016).

Although food insecurity affects different strands of people, the harmful impacts of food insecurity are particularly significant for children for a number of reasons. Compared to adults, children are: more vulnerable to food security challenges due to their physical size; incomplete cognitive development; as well as the fact that they live in an adult-dominated world where they often have to rely on adults for their sustenance; and due to their lack of experience in dealing with scarce resources (Bernal et al., 2012; Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003; Ke and Ford-Jones, 2015). One in four children under the age of five is stunted, affecting their cognitive abilities and academic performance by inhibiting learning (FAO, 2017a; Winicki and Jemison, 2003). In other words, food insecurity impacts children's physical growth (stunting), intellectual development, school attendance, academic performance, and health (Belachew et al., 2011). Thus, the effects of hunger on children can be irreversible.

Apart from the effects of hunger on children, eradicating hunger matters enormously for a number of reasons. Food security matters for economic growth and productivity as an undernourished population are less economically active (Jones et al., 2013). Hunger can severely impact the economy through lost labour productivity and GDP in the long run (between 6 and 10 per cent) (United Nations Millennium Project, 2005: 2). Also, food insecurity caused by soaring food prices can trigger riots — as the 2007/2008 food prices did[39] — effectively threatening national security (Jones et al., 2013).

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[39] In 2007, rising food prices triggered Food riots in at least 14 countries in the Global South (for example, in Guinea, Morocco, Senegal, Cameroon, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh etc) (Barrett, 2010; Berazneva and Lee, 2013). The food riots were exacerbated by 3 simultaneous crises in 2007 to 2008: the financial, food and climate change (Rajaonarison, 2014). For a comprehensive account of food riots worldwide, see (Walton and Seddon, 2008).

Initially, concerns about food security emerged in the 1970s with a narrow focus on a countries' ability to have in stock, the needed quantities of food (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009; Jones et al., 2013). However, as food security at the national level did not necessarily automatically translate into food availability at the household level, the focus of food security has since moved from national production targets to household-level consumption (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009; Nyariki and Wiggins, 1997). This change of focus in part was on account Amartya Sen's 1981 *Poverty and Famine*s, wherein Sen argued that:

> Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat (Sen, 1981).

In other words, the availability of food is not a guarantee of food access for households (Barrett, 2010). Access to food at the household level is a function of unemployment, price hikes, or loss of livelihood (Barrett, 2010). As food insecurity is more about food access and less about food availability, the issue of food insecurity then is related to poverty and vulnerability (Nyariki and Wiggins, 2006; Devereux, 2016).

Definitions of food security abound. However, the most widely used in the literature is the 1996 World Food Summit's definition of: 'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.' Therefore, food insecurity is 'the inability of households and individuals to access food of adequate quantity and quality' (FAO, 2017a: 23). From the definition of food security, it is evident that the concept has three interrelated components: *food access*; *food use*; and *food availability* (Barrett, 2010; WFP, 2012). Food availability is the 'ability to have sufficient quantities of food on a consistent basis' while [food]

access is 'the capacity to have sufficient resources (physical and economic) to obtain appropriate food for nutritious diet' (FAO, 2017b: 2).

Food security as a concept is diverse and has undergone tremendous evolution. As of 1999, there were about approximately 200 definitions and 450 indicators of food security (Hoddinott, 1999: 2). Currently, many measurements of food insecurity still exist. Some of the most widely known and used measures are the *Global Hunger Index*, *Food Intake Survey*s, *Household Income and Expenditure Surveys*. Qualitative researchers, however, concerned with people's lived experiences of food security, have established experience-based measurements of food insecurity. The experiential approach to the study of food insecurity is based on a Cornell University's 1980 qualitative research into understanding food insecurity experiences among women in New York (Radimer, 2002). This approach assesses families' reported subjective experiences of food insecurity in four domains: anxiety about food, people's perception about food quality and quantity, and reduced intake by children and adults (Jones et al., 2013: 497). Thus, the qualitative methodological approach to studying food insecurity focuses on four components:

a. *Food Quality* [a focus on how varied the consumed food is in terms of diet using themes such as healthy and varied meal, cheap foods, balanced diet, nutritious diet];
b. *Food Quantity* [reflected in the amount of food consumed, cutting the size of the children's meal, not eating enough, less quantity of food];
c. *Psychological Aspects* [whether or not research participants have been or are anxious, stressed, or worried about the non-availability of food];
d. *Social Dimensions* [People's use of social networks as a coping mechanism, borrowing money or food, sending children away to eat elsewhere] (Connell et al. 2005; Smith et al., 2006; Hromi-Fiedler et al. 2009; Vargas and Penny, 2010; World Food Programme, 2012: Jones et al., 2013).

This qualitative methodological approach has been widely adapted in various countries in Latin America, South Asia and SSA. For example, concerned about the paucity of research 'conducted to assess children's perceptions of, or experiences with food insecurity' (Connell et al., 2005: 1683),

Connell and colleagues (2005) designed a qualitative study exploring children's perceptions and experiences of food insecurity using the categorisations of food quality, quantity, psychological and social aspects. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews, they found children as young as 11 years describing behaviours associated with food insecurity from their experience. Similarly, Oldewage-Theron and colleagues' (2006) qualitative research examining the coping strategies of households in South Africa in the face of food insecurity shows that female caregivers cook limited varieties of food, adopt maternal buffering by limiting their own intake for the benefit of their children, skipping meals, and limiting portion sizes.

4.5.1 School Feeding as Social Investment: The Global School Feeding Programme

As already stated, in addition to CCTs, SF programmes are the policy choice in helping build countries' stock of human capital for future productivity (in the Global South). SF programmes in the broadest sense are programmes that provide food to school children (Bundy et al., 2009). More theoretically, SF is 'a set of interventions supporting both medium-term nutritional and long-term educational objectives that are being implemented with food as the primary resource' (Bennett, 2003: 7). Generally, there are two broad categorisations of SF programmes: *(a)* in-school feeding programmes with children being fed while in school; and *(b)* take-home rations (THRs) where food is given out to the parents/caregivers of children on condition that children — particularly girls — will be enrolled in school (Bundy et al., 2009). These two types of SF programmes are not mutually exclusive as they are routinely used separately or together depending on the country's objectives. The meals served could be breakfast, mid-morning meals or lunch. It could also be fortified biscuits or high energy snacks for addressing short-term hunger and micronutrient deficiencies.

SF programmes have proved popular due to the realisation that food insecurity in many countries in the Global South is a significant barrier to children's active participation in school. The World Food Programme [WFP] estimates that every day more than 66 million children attend school hungry with fewer girls attending schools compared to boys (World Bank, 2012b: 1). Furthermore,

about 300 million hungry children globally are less likely to attend school due to hunger; and when they do attend, they are unlikely to concentrate in class (World Food Programme, 2004: 1). Hunger and undernutrition among children undermine their cognitive performance by reducing their ability to participate in learning (Bundy et al., 2009; Rutledge, 2016). Children who go to school hungry have great difficulty concentrating in class as well as performing complex tasks (ibid). Hungry children are more likely to be less attentive in class and have lower cognitive abilities (Simeon, cited in Molinas and de la Mothe, 2010). It has also been reported that undernutrition is the leading cause of child death (Rutledge, 2016).

Providing food for children in school then plays a role in addressing food insecurity challenges in children. Poverty and hunger have dire implications for a child's education performance (World Food Programme, 2004). Poor households routinely rely on their children's labour and are therefore sometimes unable or unwilling to send their children to school. In this regard, take-home-rations and SF programmes can act as opportunity costs for poor households (who instead send their children to the fields than in school) to get their children into school (World Food Programme, 2004). Some children also decide by themselves, to opt-out of school for various reasons that are outside the focus of this research (see Okyere, 2012a; 2012b). Nonetheless, in these situations, the inability of children to participate in schooling almost guarantees the perpetuation of poverty in the household and thereby lowering the children's social mobility potential.

SF programmes are believed to be powerful tools for breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and disadvantage. To realise this long-term ambition, SF programmes 'can help to get children into school and help to keep them there [by obviating the need to leave school in search of food], and once the children are in school, the programmes can contribute to their learning, through avoiding hunger and enhancing cognitive abilities' (Bundy et al., 2009: 20). In other words, once children are in school (schools that offer SF), the expectation is that both their nutrition and education needs are addressed. In the long-term future, SF programmes — by enhancing learning

and thus, building human capital and skills — ultimately can boost the human capital base of the countries (World Food Programme, 2010). For example, the WFP (2016: 1) states that by examining the returns on investment in SF programmes, there is compelling evidence showing that SF is an investment, not a cost. Using a sample of 10 countries implementing SF programmes, the WFP shows that for every US$1 invested in SF, a return of US$3 to US$10 is realised in economic returns from improved health and education and increased productivity (World Food Programme, 2016: 1). Consequently, SF programmes are seen as a means of improving human capital by children, so that they can become productive adults in future.

Regarding the scale of provision and funding, SF programmes are enormous. Almost all countries provide one form of school feeding or the other (Molinas and de la Mothe, 2010). Specifically, about 368 million children worldwide are fed daily in schools with the most extensive programmes in India (114 million), Brazil (47 million), US (45 million) and China (26 million) (World Food Programme, 2013: 11). SF programmes are mostly government-funded, with a global annual budget estimated between US$47 billion and US$75 billion (World Food Programme, 2013: 14). There are significant variations of the programme implementation in countries. The primary basis of differentiation is the nature of the provision. It is instructive at this point to note that SF programmes compete with other government programmes for fiscal space in the government budget. Accordingly, countries adopt one form of targeting or the other. SF programmes are provided universally to all schoolchildren in countries such as Sweden, Finland, Botswana, Burkina Faso, and Brazil; or, it is geographically targeted — only children in select schools of particular provinces or states are provided meals — as it happens in Ghana, Nigeria, Russia, China, and Australia; or, as in the final set-up, only explicitly identified children — using proxy means testing such as family income — are provided free meals in school, with other pupils paying for it at a subsidized rate as it happens in the UK, Spain, USA, and Namibia (World Food Programme, 2013: 27). These aforementioned provision strategies inherently have their pros and cons.

Nonetheless, social policy commentators mostly agree that individually targeting SF programmes — and indeed other social policy instruments — is the most efficient and judicious use of public funds, since, in contrast with universally provided programmes, individually targeted programmes benefits the neediest people. However, the main drawbacks of individually targeted programmes are that they are both complex and cumbersome to administer as designing a system that reasonably identifies and implements an inclusion/exclusion criterion is not effortless.

Governments worldwide and in particular, developing countries have embraced SF due to its multiplicity of demonstrated benefits. The WFP (2010) argues that SF alone can assist countries to both directly achieve 3 of the MDGs of hunger and poverty alleviation, universal primary education and, gender equality, as well as indirectly achieve child mortality and maternal health goals. For example, when girls go to school, they are less likely to be married off at an early age. Preventing child marriages, in the long run, impacts maternal health as they will be in a better to position to bear the burden of childbirth. A growing body of evidence shows that SF programmes are indeed capable of achieving their set objectives — notably increased school participation and enrolment rates. For instance, India's Mid-Day Meal has increased female participation rates by 15 per cent in schools running the programme, compared to those schools not running the programme (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001). Furthermore, an evaluation of the same programme found that girls were 30 per cent more likely to complete school (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001: 18). Similarly, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] (2015: 2) reports that the Ghana School Feeding Programme has not only increased enrolment by 16.7 per cent from 2008-2013, the programme has also enhanced the health and nutrition status of pupils on the programmes. Thus, SF programmes incentivise households to enrol children in school.

In spite of its almost universal appeal, SF programmes have been variously criticised. In many contexts of the Global South, SF programmes have partial coverage, thereby ignoring a substantial number of children not in school (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). Furthermore, Morgan and Sonnino

argue that if school feeding programmes are to make maximum impact, then in several countries in the Global South, they target the wrong year group. In terms of cognitive development, the literature shows that children's first and second years are the most critical years; however, these cohorts are unlikely to be in school then. Additionally, the argument that SF programmes improve educational outcomes through enhanced literacy and cognitive development has also been questioned. Whereas increasing enrolment, retention and attendance are critical requirements in the pursuit of educational outcomes, they are insufficient. Quality education matters — this component requires perhaps, more significant attention. Finally, in some respects, SF programmes can worsen quality education. SF programmes can have detrimental effects on education through crowding (Rutledge, 2016). Specifically, SF programmes are usually associated with an explosion in enrolment figures. Therefore, when increased enrolment figures do not have a corresponding increase in school infrastructure, the result is that classrooms are overcrowded, making teaching and learning more tenuous.

4.6 Ghana's Post-2000 Poverty Reduction and Its Implications for Social Investment

Ghana is often held up as a model of development success in SSA, due to the country's impressive record of economic growth post-2000 and its vibrant and stable democratic credentials. Since the 1990s, Ghana's economic growth rates have persistently surpassed that of many of her peers in the region (Honorati and de Silva, 2016). From 2008, Ghana has grown faster than many other SSA countries, and since 2010, more quickly than the average developing countries (World Bank, 2015a). Between 1991 and 2000, Ghana's GDP averaged 4.3 per cent, with a slight rise to 5 per cent between 2000 and 2005, increasing further to 8 per cent between 2006 and 2012, and finally reaching an all-time high of 14 per cent in 2011 (World Bank, 2015a; Honorati and de Silva, 2016). This strong record of economic performance led the country to achieve middle-income status in 2010, a decade earlier than had been anticipated (World Bank, 2015a).

What explains this impressive growth rate? First, the World Bank (2015a) contends that Ghana's economy underwent a structural transformation post-2000. The structure of Ghana's economy shifted from agriculture to services, in the same way that many countries are also transitioned from manufacturing towards knowledge and services-based economies in the Global North (McKay et al., 2016; Codjoe, 2017). As in many African countries, the manufacturing sector has also been in decline in Ghana. As a share of GDP, the agriculture sector has fallen by almost 50 per cent, from a third of GDP in 1991 to 23 per cent in 2012; conversely, the services sector's share of GDP has increased to nearly 50 per cent of GDP in 2012, from 34 per cent in 1991 (World Bank, 2015a). The growth of the services sector in Ghana has been on the back of increased growth in ICT, finance, banking and real estate (World Bank, 2015a).

Second, China's economic boom post-2000 was another source of Ghana's steady growth. Due to the sustained growth of the Chinese economy[40] in the 2000s, demand for primary commodities at the global level surged, and with it, a rise in the commodity prices of Ghana's exports. Between 2000 and 2010, the export prices of Ghana's chief export commodities — Gold and Cocoa — increased by more than 300 per cent (Honorati and de Silva, 2016). This hike in the value of Ghana's export commodities created a significant fiscal space for investment. At the bilateral level also, China became a vital international trading and investment partner to Ghana in 2001: granting concessional loans, cancelling debts owed to China, funding roads, telecommunications infrastructure and energy. For example, Tsikata, and others (2008: 3) confirm that in 2007 China agreed to write off US$25 million of Ghana's debt that had accumulated since 1985.

Third, on January 7th, 2001, Ghana for the first time in its political history peacefully transferred political power from a democratically elected administration to an elected opposition party. Confronted with the macroeconomic instability and mounting debts, the Kufuor[41] government

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[40] China's growth has been impressive as for a decade. Since 2000, China's GDP averaged 10 per cent. While for example Europe, on the average was growing at 5.8 per cent in 2007, China grew at 11.5 per cent (GoG, 2008).
[41] President John Kuffuor was Ghana's democratically elected president from 2000 to 2008.

opted for debt relief by applying for the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Country [HIPC][42] programme (Agyeman-Dua, 2005; Whitfield, 2005: Government of Ghana [GoG], 2007). Although there were varied reasons for going HIPC status, the prime rationale was to reduce the government's debt service burden. Debt servicing placed severe constraints on the governments' ability to tackle the incidence of poverty, which had exacerbated under SAP. The proportion of government spending allocated to debt servicing was, in some cases, about 500 per cent more than the spending on some social services. For instance, in 1991, while public expenditure on health care in Ghana was 1.2 per cent of GDP, debt servicing represented 6.2 per cent of GDP (Foster and Zormelo, 2002 cited in Jones et al., 2009: 23).

Like in many other SSA countries, to benefit from debt relief, the regime had to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Hence, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper I (GPRSP I) was formulated for the period 2003-2005. The GPRSP I's centrepiece was:

> Enhancing human development through increasing access and utilisation of basic and essential services generally; and, designing special social protection programmes targeted at the vulnerable and socially excluded (GoG, 2007).

The Kufuor government's decision to apply for HIPC paid off as the country's debt burden reduced considerably. Ghana's external debt dropped from 189 per cent of GDP in 2000 to 52 per cent of GDP in 2007 (Ackah et al., 2009). In actual terms, Asante and Owusu (2013: 7) state that the government saved US$2 billion due to debt relief in 2004. Under the terms of HIPC, the government was required to spend 80 per cent of the US$2 billion on funding poverty-related expenditure. Consequently, according to the GoG's (2008: 6) *Budget Statement*, these savings from debt relief led to a sharp rise the country's poverty-related expenditure from GH₵233.9 million in 2002 to GH₵1237.4 million in 2006. A robust economic growth together with significant savings from debt relief engendered the fiscal space for substantial social spending in Ghana. Hence, the

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[42] HIPC was a joint WB and IMF programme that was designed in 1996 to relieve poor countries by offering debt relief and cancellations from their unmanageable debt.

period between 2003 and 2008 witnessed unprecedented social protection and social investment programmes in Ghana's history. Although the government initiated a host of social programmes, it must be noted, however, that the priority was on spending on healthcare, education and social safety nets (Awal, 2012).

4.6.1 Ghana's Social Investment Approach

Even though there exists no single comprehensive national document on Ghana's goal towards social investment, nonetheless, as in many other countries in the Global South, ideas of social investment inform and underpin the development the implementation of many of the country's post-2000 social policies. Both public pronouncements by successive governments as well as national development policy frameworks have copious statements about government's commitment to invest in the future productive capacity of the state, through education in order to enhance and sustain economic growth. Since 1995, national development policy frameworks have either included thematic areas that explicitly target human capital investments, or, have a broad human development focus. For instance, both the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I, 2003-2005) and Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II 2006-2009) expressed commitments to ensuring productive and gainful employment through a focus on human resource development (National Development Planning Commission, 2010). Even more explicitly, the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRSII 2006-2010) has a key focus on education, arguing that 'the single most crucial key to the attainment of economic success is the educational quality of a nation's workforce' (National Development Planning Commission, 2005: vi). Moreover, the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda [GSGDA] II also has *Human Development, Productivity and Employment* as a key thematic section, with this thematic section contending that 'the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in solving problems in society have remained essential to achieving growth and equity ...' (National Development

Planning Commission, 2014: 100). The medium-term objective of the thematic area is set at pursuing:

> Policies and programmes that will lead to the development of knowledgeable, well trained, disciplined, highly productive and healthy population with the capacity to drive and sustain the socio-economic transformation of the country over the long term (National Development Planning Commission, 2014: 100).

The strategy to achieve this will be a focus on education, healthcare, child development, social protection, and poverty reduction (National Development Planning Commission, 2014). The current president of the country, Nana Akuffo Addo in 2017 reiterated the government's commitment to social investment by stating that:

> Leadership is about choices. I [the government] have chosen to invest in the future of our youth and our country. We have decided to use the proceeds from our natural resources to help educate the population to drive our economic transformation…' (*GraphicOnline*, 2017).

Therefore, Ghana has committed itself over forthcoming years to restructuring the country's development and educational objectives in order to reflect its economic development, human capital development and poverty reduction goals. After previous attempts[43], the government in 2002 commissioned the Prof Anamuah-Mensah Committee to review the entire educational system in Ghana 'with the view to making it responsive to current challenges' (Anamuah-Mensah Committee Report, 2002: xx). The fundamental challenge identified by this committee in their report, *Meeting the Challenges of Education in the Twenty-First Century (2002)* was the 'formation of human capital for industrial growth and for ensuring competitiveness in the global economy' (Anamuah-Mensah Committee Report, 2002: xxvii). Accordingly, the Anamauh-Mensah Committee Report (2002: xxxi) recommended a revision of the country's educational system to:

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[43] Prior to this, the government of Ghana had been reforming the education reforms with major ones being Kwapong Report (1967), Ozobo Report (1972), and Anfum Report (1986).

Promote the culture of lifelong learning for all citizens who will continue to develop their intellectual capacities, technical skills and their abilities, to enable them cope with technological and other changes in the global world. [The country had to start preparing citizens for the future based on the realisation that] in the current knowledge-based economy … education plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of the nation.

Following the recommendations of the Anamuah-Mensah Committee, the government introduced the Education Strategy Plan (ESP) 2003-2015. The ESP has been hailed as a 'forward-looking plan … that will assist in delivering civil service reform and poverty reduction through activities in the education sector' (Ministry of Education, 2003: 14). The ESP was grounded in the Ministry of Education's philosophical position:

... [to] provide relevant education to all Ghanaians at all levels to enable them to *acquire skills* that will assist them to develop their potential, to be *productive*, to facilitate poverty reduction and to *promote socio-economi*c growth and national development (Ministry of Education, 2003: 7 emphasis mine).

The focus of the ESP is to 'assist in the poverty reduction process through the development of a learning society, thereby enhancing Ghana's human resources…' (Ministry of Education, 2003:13). Having set these objectives, the government has been establishing programmes and policies that seek to:

- Increase access to and participation in education and training

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for enhanced students' performance
- Improve and extend technical/vocational education and training, and
- Promote and extend pre-school education.

(Ministry of Education, 2003: 15).

The implication of these policy objectives has been an increase in the government's investment in the education sector. Starting in 2005, the government's spending on education saw an increase with the introduction of the Capitation Grant (CG). The CG programme was launched to increase

enrolment in primary education by giving meaning to the 1992 Constitutional objective of Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The CG removes the financial barriers of school fees and other levies (registration fees, costs of textbooks, and supplies) by abolishing these fees altogether. Under CG, the government absorbs these costs by paying an amount of money (US$3 at its inception in 2005) per pupil enrolled per year to the administrators of the school (Osei et al., 2009) instead of parents having to pay these fees.

Regarding government spending designed to directly reduce the incidence of extreme poverty and increase investments in the human capital of poor households especially, the government in 2008, launched its flagship cash transfer programme known as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) with substantial donor support. The WB provided US$20 million, while the Department for International Development (DFID) contributed £36.4 million for its implementation and UNICEF provided US$2.5 million for monitoring and implementation (ILO, 2014b: 25). The government of Ghana has also consistently provided and increased financing for the LEAP programme. In 2010 and 2011, the government of Ghana provided GHS12 million for each of the years; while in 2013, the figure rose to GHS30 million (ILO, 2014b: 28).

Even though 28.5 per cent of Ghana's population is known to be poor, the LEAP programme is explicitly designed as a safety net targeted at the 18.2 per cent of those considered *extremely poor*[44] and marginalised (Abebrese, 2011). The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2013) identifies these *extremely poor* and vulnerable as people over 65 years; people with disabilities and orphans and/or vulnerable children who either have a disability or are infected with HIV/AIDS. Selected beneficiaries receive bi-monthly cash payments of GHS24 per beneficiary to a maximum of GHS45 for four or more dependants in a household per month (ILO, 2014b: 27). Payments to over 65-year-olds and people with disabilities do not have conditions attached. Conversely,

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[44] People described as extremely poor in this context are 'those who are unable to meet their basic nutritional requirements if even they were to devote their entire consumption budget to food' (ILO, 2014: 20).

payments to beneficiary households with orphans and or children with disabilities are conditional on the household agreeing to send those children to school, enrolling them onto the NHIS, birth registration of all new-borns, and non-trafficking of children. This condition is intended to enhance the human capital of these households with the hope of breaking the future intergenerational transmission of poverty from parent to child.

4.6.2 Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP)

The GSFP, in addition to the LEAP, are the government's flagship social investment programmes. As part of efforts to achieve the UN MDGs of universal primary education and reducing hunger, the GSFP was launched in 2005. With a US$25 million funding from the Netherlands government in 2005, together with funding from the government of Ghana, children from deprived communities in public kindergartens and primary schools were served one hot and nutritious meal a day, prepared from locally grown foodstuff (Abebrese, 2011; GSFP 2011 Annual Operating Plan, 2011). It must be noted, however, that school feeding (SF) programmes in Ghana predate the GSFP. As far back as 1959, the Catholic Relief Services was providing take-home rations to school children in some parts of northern Ghana ostensibly to increase enrolment and improve the nutritional status of children (World Food Programme, 2007; Morgan and Sonnino, 2008).

To sustain SF programmes, address food security challenges, and stimulate local economies in SSA, the NEPAD[45] and the WFP in 2003 launched the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) (Bundy et al., 2009; Partnership for Child Development, 2011; Drake et al., 2016). Additionally, in 2005, the UN World Food summit also recommended 'the expansion of local school meal programmes, using home-grown foods where possible' to achieve the MDGs, describing HGSFPs as 'quick impact' programmes (UN World Food Summit, 2005). The logic of

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[45] In July 2001, African leaders, through the African Union adopted NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) [NEPAD] as a blueprint for the socio-economic development of Africa. The objective is to work collectively to reduce poverty, achieve sustainable growth and development, as well as halt the marginalisation of Africa in a highly globalised world.

the HGSFP is to connect local agricultural production to the SF programmes. Linking SF to local farming in Africa is important because 'low farm productivity, poor agricultural market and poor educational and national outcomes are mutually reinforcing and key aspects of national hunger and poverty' (World Food Programme, 2007). Small-scale farmers can thus directly benefit from SF programmes by providing these farmers with a structured and predictable demand for their produce, as SF programmes run for a specific period each year using specific local foodstuff (Drake et al., 2016). This way, jobs are created, and the local economy is stimulated for growth.

With this rationale and apparent benefits, Ghana adopted the HGSFP concept and launched the GSFP in 2005 piloted in 10 schools (Partnership for Child Development, 2011; Drake et al., 2016). The GSFP is a marked departure from the SF of the Catholic Relief Services in two main ways. As a result of the HGSFP component, the GSFP aims to rely on homegrown food production, rather than imported food. Consequently, there is a target of buying 80 per cent of the foodstuff used for the GSFP from local farmers (GSFP 2011 Annual Operating Plan, 2011: 6). Secondly, the GSFP is national, covering every district in Ghana, unlike the CRS's focus on the north. The GSFP has grown steadily regarding coverage from the ten pilot schools in 2005 to 713,590 in the 2010/2011 academic year. In 2012 the programme covered approximately 1,642,271 children in 4,952 primary schools [38 per cent of the total school population] (Drake et al., 2016: 221). As of 2015, the programme had reached 1,693,698 in 4881 schools, engaging 20,000 service providers (Government of Ghana, 2015: 12). The reason for these steady increases (although comparatively, coverage is less than 50 per cent of public schools) is that the GSFP is one of the few publicly funded programmes that enjoys overwhelming public and political support[46]. The GSFP's long-term goal is to contribute to improving the human capital base of the country with the following immediate objectives: *(i)* reduce hunger and malnutrition; *(ii)* increase school enrolment, attendance, and retention, *(iii)* increase domestic food production, and *(iv)* increase the income of

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[46] Unlike Ghana's cash transfer programme LEAP which is seen by some as encouraging laziness, the GSFP is extremely popular in Ghana because the programme is seen as an investment into the future of the country.

rural poor households (GSFP, 2006; GSFP 2011 Annual Operating Plan, 2011; Government of Ghana, 2015).

The GSFP is important not least because of the programme's potential to contribute to improving Ghanaian children's nutritional status. The 2011 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS, 2011) reports that 23 per cent of children in Ghana under five years are stunted, as well as 13 per cent of children underweight. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2012, about 24 per cent of all child mortalities were directly associated with undernutrition (MICS, 2011). Undernutrition is a severe issue in Ghana as US$2.6 billion (about 6.4 per cent of GDP) was lost in 2012 as a result of child undernutrition in Ghana (MICS, 2011). Children who are undernourished before age five are more likely to repeat grades, compared to those who are not, with 12.3 per cent of all repetitions in schools associated with stunting (MICS, 2011).

4.6.2.1 The Structure and Implementation of the GSFP

The implementation of the GSFP involves a complex web of actors and institutions. At the national level, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is the lead government ministry with oversight responsibility for policy direction. However, the Ghana National SF Secretariat is the agency responsible for the implementation of the programme. This secretariat provides a budget to the Ministry in charge, which, in turn, approves it before forwarding the request to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning for the release of funds. The secretariat then makes transfers, based on payment schedules, to each district assembly for the assemblies to then make transfers directly to the caterers (World Food Programme, 2007: Drake et al., 2016).

In each of the ten administrative regional capitals in the country, there is a Ghana SF programme regional office which liaises with the various districts assemblies under the region to run the programme. At the district level, there is a District Implementation Committee (DIC) which is headed by the District Chief Executive (DCE) with representatives from the district directorates of education, health, agriculture, and district coordinating director as well as the district budget officer

(World Food Programme, 2007). The district assembly selects schools for implementation; awards service providers' contracts; supervises payments from the National Secretariat; and funds the construction of cooking areas and platforms for water tanks (Partnership for Child Development, 2011). The selection criteria of beneficiary schools are based on the rate of dropout, low level of literacy, high community spirit, low school enrolment and/or attendance, gender parity index, the poverty status of districts, willingness of the district assembly to provide basic infrastructure of kitchen and dining halls, among others (World Food Programme, 2007). At the school level, the School Implementation Committee (SIC) made up of a PTA representative, the headteacher, one member of the school management committee, one traditional ruler from the community, an assembly member, the male and female prefects of the school, oversee:

- The daily implementation of the programme;
- Collaborating with caterers to provide nutritious food;
- Preparing reports on school feeding activities at the end of each term;
- Liaising with the district assemblies to develop a locally driven menu;
- Oversight and direct supervision of caterers and report any challenges

Ghana runs the GSFP on the 'caterer model' where the caterer purchases, processes, and delivers the food to the students (Drake et al., 2016). Caterers are not explicitly paid for delivering the service. Instead, they meet their expenses and make their margins on the cost per head payments to students (World Food Programme, 2007).

Although SFPs are incredibly diverse in scope and benefits package, a joint World Bank and World Food Programme, in collaboration with Partnership for Child Development, published *Rethinking School Feeding* (Bundy et al., 2009) wherein an analytical framework was developed to assess the sustainability and quality of SF programmes using five quality standards (Bundy et al., 2009: 83). These five-assessment frameworks are:

- A strong policy framework: the existence of a specific strategy about SF.
- Strong Institutional Structure and Coordination: the presence of inter-sectoral coordination.

- Stable Funding and Planning: the existence of budget lines for school feeding programmes.
- Sound Design and Implementation: the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation units.
- Strong Community Support: community contribution to programmes.

Accordingly, the most viable and sustainable SF programmes are those that conform to the above five benchmarks. Although promising, the GSFP is not without challenges. Some evaluative reports have shown that, for example, there is poor coordination between the various Ministries. The poor coordination is due to power struggles among the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and the Ministry of Health over the control of the programme (WFP, 2007). This power struggle has led to the sector Ministry in charge of the GSFP changing from Ministry of Education, to Ministry of Women and Children, and then to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, to its present ministry, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. At the district level also, the DICs are not functional. No formal meetings about the implementation of the GSFP are held. Consequently, DCEs run 'one-person committees' (WFP, 2007: 41), making decisions about the implementation of the GSFP for the entire districts as the DICs do not function. At the school level, some schools have no SICs. The caterer is virtually under no monitoring or supervision from the school. The Haas School of Business and GIMPA's study on the implementation of the GSFP in 2011 found out from the caterers that seasonal variation in the cost of foodstuff, between harvest and lean periods, could go as high up as 400 per cent. Coupled with the general inflation levels in Ghana, this is a source of great worry to caterers. Finally, monitoring and evaluation of the programme have been weak over the years. According to the World Food Programme report, there is no system designed to monitor the quality and safety of the food prepared. In fact, according to a World Food Programme report on the implementation of the GSFP concludes that the 'monitoring and evaluation aspect of GSFP is completely absent' (World Food Programme, 2007: 38).

4.7 Conclusion

The chapter has showed that the adoption of SI as a means of reforming social policies is a phenomenon that has happened in both the Global South and North — albeit through different routes. The path to SI in the Global South has been a long-winded one. Starting from structural adjustment programmes to safety nets, social policy in the Global South has evolved through social protection to SI ideas. Although SI has been criticised in the Global South, it nonetheless remains a useful tool for rethinking the future and goals of social policy. This is especially true as resource constraints in the Global South imply that a comprehensive publicly funded universal income maintenance and other redistribution schemes in these regions is virtually unfeasible. Instead, publicly funded investments in *quality* education, skills training and a radical restructuring of the labour market have the potential of addressing some of the most pressing challenges in the Global South: rising unemployment and inequality, food insecurity, low literacy rates, poverty and social exclusion among others. The chapter has also highlighted the importance, as well as challenges, of the two main SI policies of choice in the Global South: CCTs and SF programmes.

This chapter also discussed the emergence of social investment, as the central objective of a number of Ghana's post-2000 social policies, following an era of fiscal reforms in the 1980s. Whereas the phenomenon of austerity is not new in Ghana, nevertheless, this current era of fiscal austerity can threaten the both the government's commitment and the sustainability of the plethora of social programmes embarked upon during Ghana's post-2000 growth period. In other words, austerity in Ghana has potentially severe ramifications for the country's social investment objective. Nonetheless, a search of the literature reveals that no previous study has investigated the relationship between Ghana's austerity and social investment. The GSFP is a crucial programme in the country's shift towards SI. While research on the GSFP is vast, the extant literature invariably focusses on demonstrating whether or not, SF programmes achieve its stated objectives of enhancing school enrolment and improving the nutritional status of children. Also, no research

exists investigating the nature of service provision of the SF during periods of austerity, and what austerity means for service providers. This research, therefore, aims to fill these gaps.

CHAPTER 5

Research Design and Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter is structured in the following way. It starts by justifying the rationale for adopting a constructivist ontological perspective and an interpretivist epistemological orientation as the research's philosophic underpinnings. Subsequently, the next section dwells on the defence for the choice of a mixed-methods qualitative case study design. In the succeeding section, the research objectives I aimed to address and how I addressed them are highlighted. Specifically, I discuss the rationale behind the choice of participant observation, focus group discussions (FGD), and one-to-one semi-structured in-depth interviewing as data collection methods in this research. After that, the chapter provides an overview of purposive sampling, why it was used, and what informed the selection of the specific participants in the study. Next, I examine some of the challenges I experienced during my fieldwork and how these challenges were resolved. Afterwards, the steps undertaken to ensure that this research report is rigorous is discussed. Part of my research involves gathering data from child participants (8 to 15-year-olds). As such, the succeeding section discusses the potential pitfalls to avoid bearing in mind the many contentious and practical challenges involved in researching with children. Following this, I examine the ethical considerations we as researchers need to be aware of and how to address ethical concerns related to our research. Finally, I conclude the chapter by justifying why this research used a thematic analysis framework for data analysis.

5.2 Philosophical Underpinnings

An essential component of social science research is the careful selection of methodology and research strategy as well as a justification of the chosen methodology and strategy (Crotty, 1998). The decision to select a particular research strategy and methodology is invariably informed by a confluence of factors such as *(i)* the research question(s); *(ii)* the researcher's ontological and *(iii)*

epistemological perspectives and *(iv)* the researcher's positionality. Broadly, these variables will inform the need for a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method as a research approach.

Ontology refers to the researcher's assumptions of what constitutes social reality/truth — in other words, *what is* out there for us to know? (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Grix, 2002; Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014). Blaikie (2000: 8) explains ontological claims as 'claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like …' Within the social sciences, there are two dominant ontological positions — *objectivism* and *constructivism* (Grix, 2002). Objectivism is 'an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors' (Bryman, 2001: 16). Objectivists argue that reality/truth exist *out there,* and this existence is independent of our experience or knowledge (Gray, 2014). In other words, the objectivist ontological perspective believes that reality/truth is *out there* to be *discovered.* Consequently, the researcher's beliefs and views are inconsequential in the process of *discovering* this reality/truth. Therefore, the researcher should eschew bias in his/her research since meaningful reality exists independently of our knowledge. To illustrate this perspective, Crotty (1998) points out that the tree in the forest exists independently of our knowledge of its existence. Our ignorance of its existence does not mean it does not exist. What we can do in this regard is to *discover* its existence.

In stark contrast with objectivism, constructivism rejects the view that objective truth/reality *exists out there* to be *discovered* (Maxwell, 2013). The constructivist ontological perspective argues that objective truth does not exist independently, waiting for us to *discover* it (Crotty, 1998; Sumner and Tribe, 2008). Instead, there are only meanings; and meanings may be different depending on who is interpreting (Sumner and Tribe, 2008). Accordingly, no single objective reality exists. Rather than being *discovered,* truth/reality is *constructed* because 'there is no meaning without a mind' (Crotty, 1998: 9). That is to say, because different people have different minds, people can produce different constructions/interpretations about even the same phenomenon. Our

understanding of a phenomenon is the product of our construction or interpretations. Therefore, according to the constructivist ontological position, truth/reality is the product of the interaction between the subject (individual) and object (their social world) (Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2014). Researchers do not *discover* knowledge; they *construct* it. In summary, to the constructivists, multiple realities (not objective truth) exist in the social world because different people experience and perceive the world differently.

Hay (2002: 5) notes that 'ontology logically precedes epistemology' in the sense that the researcher's view of the world comes before deciding on how to go about acquiring knowledge. Seen in light, ontology is the philosophical position that undergirds the researcher's choice of epistemological perspective (Crotty, 1998). Thus, the next step then is to discuss what epistemology entails. Tuli (2010) and Creswell (2014) explain epistemology as the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the study of the source, nature, limits, and validity of knowledge. According to Blaikie (2000: 8), epistemology is 'the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is assumed to be.' In other words, the epistemological perspective of the researcher serves as a basis for evaluating what kind of knowledge counts as legitimate knowledge. Epistemology seeks to answer questions such as: *How do we know what we know? What constitutes valid knowledge, and how can we obtain it? What is the relationship between the researcher and his/her participants?* The two dominant ontological perspectives discussed above have produced two polar opposite epistemological positions: *Positivism* and *Interpretivism* (Grix, 2002; Gray, 2014). Each of these epistemological perspectives essentially makes different assumptions about reality, the position of the researcher *vis-a-vis* the researched, and how to acquire truth/reality.

Positivism is the epistemological paradigm that argues for the adoption of natural science methods in the study of social phenomena (Bryman, 2008). Positivism, as an epistemological perspective, follows from the objectivist ontology in the sense that, it believes objective truth/reality *exists out*

there and is observable and measurable using scientific methodologies (Merriam, 2009; Gray 2014). Additionally, this objective reality exists independently of the researcher (Sumner and Tribe, 2008). Therefore, positivists argue that truth/reality is *discovered* by strictly adhering to the methodologies of the natural sciences with the researcher bracketing out his/her views, values, or preconceptions due to the quest for the *discovery* of objective knowledge (Bassey, 1995; Thompson, 1995; Crotty, 1998). Thus, the researcher with a positivist epistemological outlook should be objective and neutral during the research process. Both the researcher and the researched should not influence one another; much like the case in natural science research.

Conversely, interpretivism as an epistemological position is the exact antithesis of positivism. Interpretivists reject the positivist argument — adopting the natural science methodology — in favour of focusing on 'understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretations of the world by its participants' (Bryman, 2008: 366). For interpretivists, adopting the natural science methodology to the study of social phenomena is problematic because social reality and scientific reality are dissimilar and therefore require different kinds of methods (Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2014). People and their social world — the focus of social science research — are different from the focus of the natural science research — molecules, atoms, and metals (Bryman, 2008). While molecules, atoms, compounds among others are unable to attach meanings to events and their environment, humans, on the other hand, are capable of, and do, attach meanings and interpretations to events and their social world (Bryman, ibid).

5.3 Research Strategy: Qualitative Mixed-Methods Case Study

Following on from the discussions on philosophical underpinnings, this study adopts a constructivist ontological perspective as well as an interpretivist epistemological approach. Accordingly, the research is mainly a mixed-methods qualitative study because of the assumption that the answers to the research questions do not 'exist out there to be discovered'. Instead, the

questions can be answered by actively engaging key stakeholders who have in different ways interfaced and interacted with the phenomena of interest (fiscal austerity and school feeding).

Thus, the data collection methods for this study were one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the GSFP's service providers, students, parents, school staff and experts; participant observation in two public schools; and focus group discussions with teachers. With quantitative research, the focus is usually on the quantification of data, testing theories/hypotheses and establishing cause/effect relationships (Merriam, 2009; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2014). Conversely, qualitative research is a strategy for systematically 'explaining and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon' (Creswell, 2014: 4). Qualitative research is focused on the *meaning and understanding* participants attach to their experiences and events (Merriam, 2009; Mason, 2010; Maxwell, 2013). Since qualitative research is allied with the interpretivist epistemology, qualitative research is predicated on the belief that reality/truth is socially constructed by individuals as they engage with their social world. Thus, this thesis is grounded in the assumption that the impact of austerity on the GSFP can pre-eminently be studied by engaging the key stakeholders at the centre of the school feeding programme. As such, this thesis is designed as a case study of the GSFP. Punch (2005) and Yin (2009) state that a case study can be an overall research strategy and a research method as well. Yin (2014: 2) sees a case study as a research method which 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in its real-world context. The overarching benefits of using a case study as a research method is that case studies 'presents an in-depth understanding of the case' (Creswell, 2013: 98). An in-depth understanding of a phenomenon using a case study approach is possible because the researcher typically collects multiple types of data, from interviews, observations, document analysis. Likewise, examining the implication of austerity through the prism of interviews, observations, and FGDs did help to flesh out critical dimensions of the subject matter in question (fiscal austerity).

The field sites were both rural and urban communities from the Northern region of Ghana. The decision to focus on this region is primarily because of the discussions in Chapter 2[47].That is, the three regions of Ghana disproportionately account for the highest rates of poverty. Ghana's impressive poverty reduction efforts — from 52 per cent in 1990 to 24.2 per in 2012— have been uneven across the ten administrative regions. In some districts of the Northern region, for example, over 80 per cent of the population live on less than US$1.25 a day (ILO, 2014b). Similarly, the Ghana Statistical Service (2014: 14) reports that while 50.4 per cent of the population of the Northern Region is poor; 5.6 -, 18.8 – and 21.7 per cent of Greater Accra, Central, and Eastern Regions respectively are considered poor.

The primary data collection lasted about eight months (from December 2016 to August 2017). Specifically, the data were collected during two terms of the academic calendar where each term is three months. In each of the two terms, data were collected from 1 public school[48]. Briefly, the research objectives were addressed in the following manner[49]:

1. Identify and explain in what ways fiscal austerity affects the implementation of the GSFP.

To address this objective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with different stakeholders to ascertain the impact of austerity on service delivery. Specifically, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with: *(a)* 15 service providers of the GSFP (eight service providers from the urban area and the seven from the rural area); *(b)* two headteachers of the two public primary schools (1 urban, 1 rural); *(c)* twelve students in two primary state schools (5 urban, 7 rural); and *(d)* three experts from UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and SEND-Ghana. Additionally, two FGDs with seven teachers in the urban school and eight in the rural school were conducted.

2. Demonstrate how the impact of austerity on the GSFP impact the lived realities of children, their families, and school staff.

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[47] See Chapter 2 Section 2.6.1
[48] Public schools are state owned, funded and run schools.
[49] The detailed processes are discussed under 5.4 Data Collection.

This objective was addressed through *(a)* Two FGD with school staff in the two schools to examine the implications of austerity on teaching and learning as far as the GSFP is concerned, and how school staff respond to and deal with, pupils' interaction with the GSFP during the period of austerity; *(b)* 11 semi-structured interviews with caregivers/parents revealed the lived experiences of families, as well as the responses of these respondents to the effects of fiscal austerity on the GSFP; *(c)* participant observations were conducted during one term each in the two participating primary schools *(d)* 12 interviews were conducted with the students of the two schools, in addition to one group discussion with them. Table 1 below provides an overview of the various respondents and the corresponding data collection approach.

Table 1. Overview of Primary Data Collected.

Time/Place	Data Collection Methods.		
	Semi-Structured Interviews	*Focus Group Discussion.*	*Participant Observation.*
Term 1 (Urban Area School).	8 Service Providers. 2 Experts. 5 Caregivers. 5 Students. 1 Head Teacher.	1 Focus Group Discussion with 7 Teachers in the School.	1 Academic Term (3 months) of Participant Observation in School.
Term 2 (Rural Area School).	7 Service Providers. 1 Expert. 6 Caregivers. 7 Students. 1 Head Teacher.	1 Focus Group Discussion with 8 Teachers in the School.	1 Academic Term (3 months) of Participant Observation in School.
Total	43 Semi-Structured Interviews.	2 Focus Group Discussions with 15 Teachers.	6 months of participant observation in 2 schools.

5.4 Data Collection

5.4.1 Purposive Sampling.

Before data can be collected, a target population has to be identified. However, since it is impractical to study entire populations, researchers select a sample from a target population. While quantitative researchers typically use probability sampling to make sure everyone out of the target population has a fair chance of being represented, qualitative researchers prefer purposive sampling

(Grix, 2001; Bryman, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Gray, 2014; Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Purposive allows us to 'obtain insights into particular practices that exist within a specific location, context and time' (Gray, 2014: 174). Purposive samples are comparatively smaller and non-random (Marshall, 1996: Merriam, 2009; Gray, 2014) because choosing people who can help answer your questions is the most critical criteria in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, in purposive sampling 'the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions' (Bryman 2008: 458; Gray, 2014). Thus, purposive sampling means that the respondents, research sites, and documents are carefully and intentionally chosen because they are uniquely able to help the researcher answer and better understand the aims of his/her research (Bryman, 2008; Maxwell, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the smaller sample sizes are justified on the basis saturation (Bryman, 2008; Mason, 2010), which occurs when the collection of more data does not necessarily help elucidate the phenomenon being studied.

Having discussed the sampling approach adopted in this research, let us now turn our attention to how the research participants for the study were approached, and access granted. The participants and sites for the data collection were purposefully selected on the basis of their perceived interactions with the GSFP and phenomenon (austerity). Hence, they are distinctively well-positioned to help answer and better understand my research questions. The expert from UNICEF was selected because the organisation (as a development partner) has over the years been providing SF specific technical and financial support to the government of Ghana. Concerning the WFP, the organisation has been directly running SF in northern Ghana which predates the GSFP. Furthermore, the WFP has also been proving both resources (food supplies) as well as technical support for the implementation of the GSFP since its inception. Together, the WFP and UNICEF are part of the key stakeholders of the GSFP. SEND-GHANA is an advocacy NGO that has been providing periodic programme evaluation reports for the government. Finally, the service providers are the frontline staff who are directly responsible for implementing the programme, while school

children and parents are the target beneficiaries. Together, the service providers and their clients are prominently placed to discuss the GSFP. The above were not the only participants invited to this research. I tried to interview the Chief Director of the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection (ministry with oversight responsibility for the GSFP), but this request was declined. Both the Regional Director of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the then immediate past-northern Regional Coordinator of the GSFP programme (whose appointment had just been terminated due to the change of government) also declined to take part in the research.

As the GSFP is run in only public primary schools, the GES was able to furnish me with data on all public schools which run the programme, their location, the number of students served daily in each school by the service provider, and how long each school has been running the programme. Thus, from these data, the two school sites were selected. The overriding considerations informing these selections were the number of students served daily in the school, and how long the school had been running the service. The aim was to engage with schools and service providers who are better placed to give a detailed account of the current situation of running the service, compared to when the programme started in 2007 so that I could get a sense of how the GSFP has run pre- and post-austerity times.

Having identified the two schools, clearance was sought from the Regional Director of Education (see Appendix 6) in order to gain access. After some initial predictable back and forth spanning two weeks, I eventually had an introduction letter (see Appendix 15) from the Regional Director of Education, copying all the district directors of education in the northern region. With the clearance from the Director, I still had to gain access from the heads of the specific schools I had selected for the data collection. This part was quite tricky. From prior personal experience, as well as the experiences of my colleagues who had to seek clearance from heads of schools, I believed I might experience some resistance as some of the headteachers become suspicious of the real motives and intentions of researchers in their schools. Some headteachers are reported to have

suspected doctoral students of being undercover agents (for the GES) sent to their schools to spy on general school administration and teaching practices. Nevertheless, letters (see Appendix 7) introducing the research project were sent to the headteachers of the two schools seeking access. A date was then fixed for me to go to the school to meet the management team. After this meeting with the management, I was introduced to the teachers and other school staff, as well as the service providers. I was then allowed to address the staff and explain why I was in their school.

Regarding the selection of the experts, an email with an attached information leaflet (see Appendix 2) was sent to the expert at UNICEF in Accra asking for an interview. Following a positive response, a date for the interview was scheduled. However, regarding the experts at WFP and SEND-Ghana, I sent in applications for the interview together with Appendix 2 to their respective offices. After they agreed to participate in the research, a date and venue were scheduled to conduct the interview.

Two of the service providers were recruited in their respective schools. As already discussed above, while I was being introduced to the management of the two schools by the headteachers, the service providers were invited to be part of that initial meeting. Later in the term, I approached the service providers and invited them to participate in the interview. Although I had all the contact details of the service providers in the Northern Region, all the non-school based service providers turned down my request for an interview when I called and introduced my research to them. The political climate of uncertainty about the termination of their contracts had forced the service providers — as well as the other stakeholders of the GSFP — to be genuinely concerned about talking to strangers concerning the GSFP. When I started my data collection, the country had just gone through a general election (7th December 2016) with the incumbent party the National Democratic Congress losing the election to the main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party. Politics in Ghana heavily influences most of the government's social programmes. For example, as it will be demonstrated from the data collected, the appointment of service providers as well as Regional

Coordinators of the GSFP are all political. With the GSFP, members of the women's wing of the two dominant political parties are usually the ones who provide the service. As a result, a general election brings much anxiety to service providers. At the time of my data collection, the incumbent party losing the elections meant the service providers would not have their contracts extended. In fact, while collecting the data for this research, several times the GSFP suffered negative media reportage. Impatient party members from the incoming party routinely attacked service providers in schools across the country, suspending the running of the programme in those schools. In one instance, the Northern Regional Chairman of the party that had won the elections was engaged in a media tussle with the newly appointed Minister of State in charge of the GSFP over which of them had the authority to appoint the Northern Regional Coordinator of the GFSP. This negative media reportage and the constant threats of terminating the contracts of the service providers meant that the service providers were not willing to speak to people they did not know. Nevertheless, since I did not experience resistance from the service provider in the schools (probably because the headteachers had assured them I was not in the school with political motives), I had to adopt a snowballing approach of recruiting the other service providers. That is, I relied on the two service providers to help recruit the remaining service providers. After my interviews with the two service providers, I asked them to recommend a fellow service provider to me for an interview. This worked out for me because the service providers had just finished an interview with me and were aware the interview was non-political. As such, it was easier for a service provider to convince fellow service providers to take part in the research. The service providers declined to sign the consent forms. As a result, for this category of interviewees, I took oral consent on tape with their permission.

Concerning the caregivers, they were recruited through parent-teacher-association (PTA) meetings. In both rural and urban areas, the headteachers organised PTA meetings to discuss issues bothering on truancy and school activities in general. At the meetings, the headteachers introduced me to the

parents and asked me to explain my research to them. Thus, I had a discussion with them about my research and why I was inviting them to take part in. Having done that, I asked for parents to volunteer to be part of the interview. Parents who decided to participate gave me their telephone numbers to contact them later to schedule a suitable date. Due to different commitments, we agreed that the interviews should be conducted in their homes at agreed dates and time. On the said days, I reminded them again what the research was about, why I wanted them to participate. All of them did not object to being recorded, but some of them were nervous (continually staring at the recorder). I, therefore, had to put the recorder into my breast pocket. This approach worked as they became more relaxed.

5.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviewing

The data collection methods available to qualitative researchers are broadly three: *(i)* they talk to other people (semi-structured interviewing); *(ii)* they watch other people (observation); and, *(iii)* they examine and analyse documents (Creswell, 2014: 185). While interviews are the dominant data collection method of qualitative research (Mason, 2002), Grix (2001) cautions against using interviews as the *only* data collection tool. Moreover, Yin (1994: 92) argues that findings are 'likely to be much more convincing and accurate if … based on several different sources of information'. Qualitative researchers usually adopt a semi-structured interviewing approach as they seek an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon from their participants (Bryman, 2008). The semi-structured interview is very flexible in the sense that *(a)* researchers can probe deeper based on answers received from the interviewee, and *(b)* researchers do not have to follow a rigid approach (Gray, 2014). In conducting qualitative interviewing, the researcher starts the interview with what Bryman (2008) describes as an *interview guide* — a list of questions or broad themes and topics to cover in the interview in a non-standardised manner, instead of a set of predefined questions as it is the case in structured interviews. In my particular case, as has already been stated, using a semi-structured one-to-one interviewing with my participants proved a useful approach. Although the interviews

were conducted with interview guides (see Appendixes 10 to 14), as Bryman (2008) highlights, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews meant that I was able to probe further by asking for clarifications. The rationale behind the interview questions was to get the participants to narrate their experiences of the phenomena being studied: mainly about the funding regime and programme implementation challenges as well as the coping strategies adopted by the participants. The interviews with the service providers lasted between one hour and an hour and thirty minutes. While the interviews with the two service providers in the urban and rural schools were conducted in the schools, the interviews with the other service providers were conducted in their homes. It was the service providers agreed on the time and venue for the interviews, which turned out to be their homes. Similarly, the interviews with the caregivers were conducted in their homes, lasting between forty minutes to an hour. The interviews with the elite from SEND-Ghana was comparatively longer. The interview with the expert from SEND-Ghana lasted two hours in his office. This participant had a lot to say on every issue since his organisation has been conducting programme evaluation reports for the government of Ghana for the past seven years now. The interviews with the experts from UNICEF and the World Food Programme, on the other hand, lasted about thirty-five minutes in their offices, as each of them claimed to have other meetings right after our interview. Finally, as already stated, the headteachers of both schools were interviewed for this research. They were interviewed in their offices on campus. The interviews with the headteachers were also quite long, lasting one hour thirty minutes (headteacher in the urban area) and one hour forty-six minutes (headteacher in the rural area). The interviews with the headteachers were that long because many times, their responses to questions drifted to other areas such as school management. These headteachers had many challenges confronting their schools, and sometimes my impression was that they just wanted to bare them out. Accordingly, they shared many experiences; experiences which nonetheless were not relevant to my study. I struggled a lot trying to steer the conversations back to my main focus. In the end, I decided to leave the headteachers narrate their experiences, both relevant and irrelevant with the knowledge that when

the interviews are transcribed, the portions that are irrelevant to this study would be edited out before analysis.

Using a voice recorder helped me to focus on the respondent's replies before probing further and asking follow-up questions (Bryman, 2008). It must be noted that the participants were informed (both in the information leaflets and orally again before the commencement of the interviews) about my desire to record the interviews. All the participants, except the expert from UNICEF, agreed to be audio-taped. In sum, qualitative interviewing helped to elucidate on other obscure aspects of the research I had not initially considered while preparing the interview guides. I must add that the data collection process, especially the interviews, did not go smoothly all the time. The main challenge I experienced in relation to the interviews was the interview with the expert from UNICEF. Having agreed to participate in the research, we had significant challenges getting her to stick to the agreed interview dates, as the dates were changed three times consecutively. At one point, I flew from Tamale to Accra (the national capital the venue of the agreed meeting) for the meeting only to be informed that the meeting had to be rescheduled. Even when the meeting finally came on, she declined to be audio-taped. Thus, I had to simultaneously listen to her while writing down her responses. Another layer of complexity was added as I was trying to make sense of her responses (while listening and writing) for possible follow-up questions. I found this interview particularly stressful and tiring, although I had initially anticipated that some of the experts would decline to be recorded. Therefore, I did practice with some of my fellow doctoral students (that is, asking questions, listening to responses, writing them down and trying to process all that for follow-up questions if needed) to prepare myself for such eventuality. However, when I finally experienced it, it proved to be more difficult in the field than practising with friends in a classroom. The challenges I experienced in this research is not limited to the above-highlighted challenges. There were other challenges too. For instance, with respect to the interviews with caregivers, the atmosphere/setting for the interviews (which were chosen by the respondents), were sometimes

not conducive. Occasionally, there were onlookers who were very curious and kept staring at us, as we conducted the interviews. Sometimes these onlookers were the husbands of the respondents, making a conversation with the participants more challenging that they ought to have been. Some of the respondents also displayed nonchalance or disinterest in the interview, although they had agreed to participate willingly, and they had even selected the venue and timing of the interviews. Reflecting on the interviews with a non-cooperating caregiver after the interviews, the following was captured in the field diary as thus:

> *The interviews with the caregivers today were particularly boring and sometimes annoyingly frustrating. Two of them today were not helpful in their responses. The answers were mostly 'yes' or 'no'. It was as if they had been forced against their will to participate in the interview. Meanwhile they had consented to the interview. They actually chose the time and venue of the interviews today. So frustrating. Also, their body language suggested that they were uncomfortable when I started audio recording the interview. Hence, I had to turn them off the recorder. Even then, the respondents were not forthcoming with information. Realising that these interviews were heading nowhere, I politely cut the interviews short by skipping the other questions on the interview guide* (Field Diary B, May 17th, 2017).

Thus, as can be seen from the above, there were instances when I felt extremely frustrated with collecting data. Section 5.8.1 below discusses further, some of the challenges I encountered during the data collection phase of this research.

5.4.2.1 Interviewing Children

Children are an important group in this research because of the recognition that they are active social agents who actively interact with and shape the event and processes around them (James and Prout, 1997a, 1997b; Punch, 2002). In other words, children can make sense of and attach meanings to their experiences in the social world. As such, children are competent research participants whom we can involve in social science research (Morrow, 2008). Nonetheless, research with children is a contentious and challenging practice, not least because it raises several practical and

ethical concerns (Punch, 2002). First, seeking access to schools is both complex and time-consuming. This is usually because of bureaucratic procedures involved and concerns for children's safety (Holmes, 1998). Access to children in schools is often sought through adult gatekeepers — the Heads of these institutions and the teachers (Punch, 2002; Morrow, 2008). Holmes (1998) suggests that the researcher should write a letter to the head of the school explaining their mission, goals, and perhaps offering assurance to use pseudonyms for the schools and the children. Accordingly, as already discussed in section 5.4.1, I sought access to the schools in this research from two levels. At the regional administrative level, a letter was written to the Regional Director of Education (see Appendix 6) explaining the purpose of my research and seeking permission to conduct this research in the two schools. After access was granted at the regional level, an application for access was written to the headteachers of the schools. Having secured access at these two levels, the teachers in the upper primary classes (Classes 3 to 6[50]) introduced me to their students, informing the students of my mission in the school. Since I was going to be in the schools the entire term, I started the data collection by observing teaching and learning in the identified classrooms. This was to help me familiarise with the students. Later in the term (two weeks later), the teachers allowed me to address the pupils in their classrooms again. In this discussion, I informed them again about my research using an information leaflet I had designed for the students (see Appendix 5); requesting for some of them to volunteer to take part in my research; explaining why I wanted to solicit their views and experiences and how this research can be of benefit to them. Their right not to take part in the research, and to opt-out at any time was also explained to them. Those who wanted to take part were asked to approach me during break time. These students were then given opt-out letters (see Appendix 8) to be sent to their caregiver/parents seeking their consent to engage their children in the research. In all, three parents opted out. Of those whose parents agreed that they could be part of the research, a date was

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[50] These upper classes were selected because of the assumption that they had experienced the GSFP for at least 3 years, and at most 6 years.

scheduled with them for one-on-one interviews with the pupils. However, before these one-on-one interviews were conducted, all the children who had indicated an interest in the study came together for an hour's discussion about food, healthy eating and a balanced diet.

Researchers have been urged to either use data collection strategies that are based on children's skills or adapt adult strategies to children. To this end, researchers are increasingly using innovative methods of data collection (e.g. drawings, diaries, pictures) when working with children (Punch, 2002). In my case, the initial plan was to include some pictures and drawings of their daily experiences of the GSFP. However, I had to abandon this data collection approach as the service provider expressed discomfort about the children having cameras around the food. As a result, my interaction with the pupils was limited to the group discussion and one-on-one interviews. While not ideal, it had some positives too. Avoiding these child-friendly methods in favour of using standard research methods such as interviews with children can have the advantage of ensuring that children are not patronised and then actually get treated as competent social actors (Punch, 2002). This was empirically true as the overwhelming majority of the child participants were aged 13-15 years.

Second, Punch (2002) contends that research with children is different from research with adults in the following ways. Children are not used to being treated as equals. They are instead used to having their life dominated and controlled by adults. Also, children have different capacities and skills — for example speaking and writing — compared to adults. Lansdown (1994) and Punch (2002) further add that due to the asymmetrical power relations between the adult researcher and child participant, children are more vulnerable to exploitation. Bearing these issues in mind, therefore, the adult researcher should guard against the tendency of assessing adult knowledge as being superior when researching with children while discounting children's knowledge (Alderson and Goodey, 1996). This is crucial on epistemological grounds because qualitative researchers should refrain from imposing their views on their participants (Punch 2002) as they seek to

understand the world through the participants' eyes. Furthermore, research conducted in schools is potentially problematic because children under the school system 'may feel pressure to give 'correct' answers to research questions' (Punch 2002: 9). Additionally, children 'often find it difficult to dissent, disagree or say things which they think may be unacceptable' (Greene and Hogan, 2005: 15) partly due to the unequal power relations between adults and child respondents. I tried to mitigate this potential risk associated with researching with children in school by dispelling the need to lie, or the pressure to answer any question put to them by assuring them that there are neither right nor wrong answers as suggested by Punch (2002). The child participants were informed that the questions being asked did not look for right or correct answers because their experiences were unique to them. Every other child participant would have a different set of experiences, which are all equally valid. This reassurance seemed to work, as the children felt more at ease during the interviews. The interviews with the children were quite short, compared to the interviews with the service providers, for example. The interviews with the students lasted about thirty minutes, although a few of the interviews lasted twenty minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded. Since the interviews were conducted in school, the students did not have enough time to sit for the interviews, as they were always either in class learning or having their thirty minutes lunch break. The interviews were conducted after they had had their lunch. I was, however minded about the fact that the students had to join their colleagues in class, so the interviews were shortened.

5.4.3 Focus Group Discussion

For Bryman (2008), a FGD is basically a group interview. Typically, in a FGD, quite a few people — usually 8 to 10 (Mack et al., 2005) — come together at a given location to discuss an issue. In this situation, the researcher plays the role of a moderator (and less of an interviewer) as the participants discuss what they feel is important to them bearing in mind the theme or issue under discussion (Punch, 2005; Bryman, 2008). The basis for selecting these participants, (similar to purposive sampling) is because of their involvement or experience of a particular situation or

programme (Merton et al., 1956 cited in Bryman, 2008: 474). In each of the two schools, I organised a FGD with seven to eight teaching staff so that the teachers could share their experiences and knowledge on the GSFP. As I have already discussed above in 5.4.1, at my meeting with the school staff, I explained to the teachers why I wanted them to take part in the FGD, the potential benefits and risks, and the voluntary nature of the participation. After which I handed out information leaflets to them (see Appendix 3). On the day of the discussion, all the participants were given consent forms (as well as a request to record the session), which they duly signed. The FGDs were conducted with a guide containing the list of topics (see Appendix 11) and issues I wanted to discuss with them. In order not to disrupt school activities, the FGD was conducted after class. The FGDs in both schools were audio recorded. In the urban school, the FGD lasted an hour and ten minutes, while the FGD in the rural school lasted an hour and thirty minutes.

5.4.4 Participant Observation

Participant observation is another useful data collection tool mainly used by researchers within the qualitative tradition and which was also used in this research project. I spent the entire term (in each of the two schools) conducting participant observation in order to get a sense of the real situation at hand. As a staple of anthropological and ethnographic studies, participant observation has been used for data collection for over a century (Kawulich, 2005). Schensul and colleagues (1999: 91) understand participant observation as 'the process of learning through exposure to or involvement within the day-to-day routine activities of participants in the research setting'. For Gray (2014: 413), observation 'involves the systematic viewing of people's actions and the recording, analysing and interpretation of their behaviours'. Participant observation as a data collection method thus 'provides an opportunity to get beyond people's opinions and self-interpretations of their attitudes and behaviours, towards an evaluation of their actions in practice' (Gray, 2014: 413). This data gathering method is unique in the sense that, as Mack and colleagues (2005: 14) explain, 'there is no substitute for witnessing or participating in phenomena of human

interaction — interaction with other people, with places, with things...' Researchers gain first-hand information — not from the participants, but they observe it themselves. The primary goal of observation is to 'learn what life is like for an 'insider' while remaining, inevitably, an 'outsider' (Mack et al., 2005: 13).

The term 'participant observation' implicitly connotes some level of engagement with participants. However, there are different levels at which researchers can engage with participants. Extending the work of Buford Junker, Gold (1958) suggests four possible roles for researchers observing participants. First, Gold (1958) proposes that researchers can adopt the role of a 'complete participant'. Here, the researcher is a member of the group being studied, while concealing their identity and purpose from the other members of the group. Therefore, the researcher engages in covert research. Second, the researcher can also adopt the role of a 'participant-as-observer'. With this role, the participants are aware of the researcher's presence and objectives. The researcher is a member of the group and participates in group activities. Nonetheless, the overall objective of the researcher is to observe, rather than to participate. The third possible role for researchers to adopt is the position of a 'complete observer'. In this role, the participants do not know the researcher; neither do they know about the researcher's goals and aims. In many cases, researchers adopting the 'complete observer' role are totally hidden from their participants. Finally, researchers can adopt an 'observer-as-participant' role. With this role, the researcher is not a member of the group but can participate when they need arises. Thus, the participants are aware of the researcher in their midst, as well as their objectives and mission. These four roles have their inherent weaknesses and advantages. For instance, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that adopting a 'complete participant' role or a 'complete observer' role can help reduce the influence of the researcher in the research.

The variations in the four roles above show that the nature of involvement with participants can differ from being on the margins as an observer to other times being actively engaged with the

participants and their activities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In this research, however, I adopted the 'observer-as-participant' role primarily because, in my estimation, that role is the most ethical approach to adopt. Since the observation was carried out in a school setting and given the fact that researching with children comes with extra ethical requirements as result of the vulnerable nature of children and the power dynamics between the adult researcher and child participants, the most ethical way of conducting observation was to make sure the students were aware of my presence and objectives. Thus, as already stated[51], the pupils were informed of my mission in their school as well as the data collection method being employed in their school. Apart from the ethical considerations, adopting the observer-as-participant role was very useful in this research for practical reasons. As Johnson and colleagues (2011) have noted, adopting an observer-as-participant made it easier for me to detach and/or engage with the participants when the need arose. In other words, adopting this observer role allowed me to interact with participants, as compared to adopting a complete observer role, for example. The observer-as-participant role allowed me to ask participants follow-up questions (for clarification) about the issues I had observed. I must say, however, that the decision to adopt the observer-as-participant role was not the first role I intended to adopt. Initially, at the early stage of observation, I intended to adopt a complete observer role so that I could stay back and observe their activities. However, it quickly became evident in the field that I had to move between being an observer and a participant. Thus, this reality forced me to change the observer role from a complete observer to the observer-as-participant role. Nevertheless, overall, the peripheral role (observer, rather than participant) was mainly used.

The next major issue with observation research is **_what_** to observe. Relatedly, Merriam (1998: 97) proposes that that 'where to begin looking [observing] depends on the research questions.' In other words, the research questions and objectives should be the main guiding principles in deciding on what to observe in the field. On the other hand, Kawulich (2005) proposes that researchers should

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[51] See Chapter 5, Section 5.4.2.1

engage in 'focused observation'; that is, an observation that is guided by insights and comments from participants (example through prior interviews). Following these broad two guidelines, the observation in this research was directed by two main objectives: (a) To understand children's daily experiences with the GSFP and food insecurity, and the strategies they adopt to address these challenges; and (b) To explore service providers' coping strategies in the delivery of the GSFP within the context of austerity. Consequently, during the participant observation, I gained first-hand knowledge about how the programme is run daily; how the students interface with the programme; what strategies the service providers adopt in times of funding fluctuations; what funding fluctuations mean to students who come to school hoping to get fed; and how all these factors impact teaching and learning. Also, the participant observations allowed me to confirm some of the responses I had from the interviews with the child participants, school staff and experts.

Aside from the need to adopt an 'observer role', recording field notes is another distinct characteristic of participant observation (Wolfinger, 2002; Johnson et al., 2011) as using field notes is the traditional means for recording observational data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Although writing fieldnotes seem 'straightforward' (Wolfinger, 2002: 85), in practice, it is not. For a start, there are varied ways of writing fieldnotes. Wolfinger (2002) identifies two approaches to writing them; the Salience Hierarchy Approach and Comprehensive Note-Taking Approach. First, the salience hierarchy approach is when the researcher describes whatever they feel as 'sticking out', 'most noteworthy', among others. Conversely, the comprehensive note-taking approach 'systematically and comprehensively describes everything that happened during a particular period of time' (Wolfinger, 2002: 90). Since what constitutes 'noteworthy' or 'interesting' is hugely subjective, in this research, I adopted the comprehensive note-taking approach. I did not specifically look for issues that stuck out. Instead, I noted down all the observations comprehensively, filling out two field diaries for the research. For instance, every day, I noted down the time the service provider came to school, the time she started serving the pupils, my

impressions about the quantity and quality of meals served, the number of students going for the meals, the number of students not going for the meals, the reaction of the students to the meals, the students sharing meals with their colleagues, the number of teachers buying meals for the pupils, among others. A clarification is warranted here. Comprehensively note-taking should not be construed to mean all activities were noted down. For, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note, it is not possible to capture everything during observation. At the very least, simultaneously observing and noting multiple events by several actors is physically impossible. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) recommend that researchers should document events as soon as they happen since people usually have challenges recollecting events when significant time passes after the events. Writing down observations immediately is crucial because there is the possibility of losing details and even some of the episodes when relying on recollection. Consequently, with this advice in mind, during the observation (and since this research was not covert research), I wrote down notes in the field diary instantly as the events were unfolding. Having taken these fieldnotes, they were read and re-read thoroughly at the data analysis stage. Following Reeves and colleagues' (2008) suggestion, the field notes were examined to identify, collate, and categorise key issues that emerged from the data[52]. Sections of the field notes that contained key themes relevant to the overall themes used in this thesis were typed into the computer to easy access and retrieval. Typing them was useful because the notes were handwritten, and at times they were not legible (as I wrote them down while simultaneously observing other events).

The observation did not always go according to plan. In the first week, I received an unusually cold and curious reception from the school staff and the service providers, although the headteacher had introduced me to them, and allowed me to inform them of my research. After a critical analysis, I noticed that the headteacher and some school staff rode motorbikes to school while I drove a car

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[52] For a detailed data analysis approach, see Chapter 5, Section 5.8

(some of the school staff did not have motorbikes). Consider the following extract from Field Diary A:

> *Today (11th January 2017) is my third day in this school [Urban Area]. The headteacher and only three teachers ride motorbikes to school. There are twelve teachers who teach at the primary level. The rest of the nine primary school teachers have been walking to school. Today, the headteacher came to school late at 9 am, rather than his usual 8 am. He came to school in a 'yellow yellow' [the local name for bright yellow coloured Tuk-Tuks; motorised rickshaw]. When I went in to greet him, he told me his motorbike broke down and he tried to get it fixed before coming to school. He said to me: 'my brother, I have been using this bike for six years now, it is time to change it as you can see yourself [the motorbike emits smoke and is very noisy], but where is the money? I have been headteacher for eight years now, and I can't even change my motorbike'* (Field Diary A: 11/01/2017).

Within the socio-cultural context of this research, driving a car is a status symbol which can also be a source of alienation. Hence, in the subsequent days following this realisation, I resorted to parking my car at a location far from the school (1 mile away from the school) and then walking to the school. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) contend that the personal appearance of the researcher within a certain context is necessary. They argue that there are certain times when the researcher ought to dress in a way that is similar to the people being studied. Consequently, I changed my dressing also, dressing to 'fit' the context of a public primary school in northern Ghana. After I started 'walking to the school', and then changed my type of dressing (from formal to casual), my relationship with the school staff was greatly improved, as they became friendlier and more receptive. To consolidate this bond of friendship, I socialised with the teachers even more during break time, by buying and eating the same food they bought and ate.

5.6 Rigour and Validity of Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers continuously experience the resistance of positivists to their research on the basis of the so-called rigour and validity criteria. There is a general misrepresentation that valid, rigorous, or scientific research is one that is capable of generalising its results and findings

(Marshall, 1996). However, whereas quantitative research aims to generalise findings to a population, qualitative researchers seek after detailed and thick descriptions, emerging themes, in-depth analysis, meanings and understanding (Bryman, 2008; Mason, 2010; Gray, 2014). Accordingly, generalisations are less relevant to the qualitative researcher. Qualitative data findings are usually sufficiently detailed and in-depth enough to provide a broad outlook of what aspects of the phenomenon the researcher is focused on. Moreover, it must be noted that much of the benchmarks for assessing social science research were initially designed with a positivist epistemological outlook with concerns of replicability, validity and reliability being central (Bryman, 2001). Hence, concepts such as validity or reliability are originally rooted in the positivist paradigm/quantitative research (Bryman, 1988). This has stimulated debates about the relevance of these concepts for qualitative research (Norris, 1997) since qualitative research has a different ontological and epistemological outlook. To this end, Bryman (2008) calls for different criteria to be used assessing qualitative research. Some qualitative researchers have gone as far as abandoning the term validity in qualitative research altogether because of the assumptions that they are congenitally quantitative/positivist (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative researchers and commentators have thus developed alternative assessment benchmarks — discussed further below — (Boaz and Ashby, 2003) in order to foreground qualitative researcher's ontological and epistemological concerns. Becker and colleagues (2006: 7) argue that alternative criteria relative to the traditional assessment benchmarks should be developed to assess qualitative research. So, for example, they argue that *validity* should be replaced with *credibility* — whether or not findings are believable. Also, *reliability* should be replaced by *transferability* — the extent to which your findings are relevant to other settings different from the one which you studied. Furthermore, *generalizability* should be replaced by *confirmability* — the extent to which the researcher has not allowed personal values to influence the research design, collection, and analysis of the data. That being said, triangulation has also been used to improve the credibility, transferability and confirmability of qualitative findings.

5.6.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is one of the ways whereby qualitative researchers address concerns of reliability and validity. Denzin (1978: 291) defines triangulation as 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon'. Triangulation means the researcher uses multiple sources of data (data triangulation); methods (methodological triangulation); participants or sites in the study to reveal diverse viewpoints in order to eliminate potential bias associated with relying on one method (Jick, 1979; Grix, 2001; Olsen, 2004; Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2011; Gray, 2014). Triangulation can reduce the probability of error and bias because using different methods serves as a check against each other (Maxwell, 2013; Gray, 2014). Yin (2011: 88) advises that researchers should select a wide range of respondents, including participants whom you feel might hold contrary views, to avoid bias arising from choosing sources to reaffirm your views (looking for data to confirm your views or data mining). To this end, the research findings were based on three main distinct sources of data: in-depth semi-structured one-to-one interviews, FGDs, and participant observation. This allowed the researcher to examine the phenomena in question from multiple angles. Furthermore, multiple categories of participants — children, teachers, parents and experts — were used in this research to allow for different and wide perspectives to be shared about the object of study.

5.6.2 Researcher's Positionality

One of the essential variables that impact research is the researcher's positionality. For Sikes (2004: 18), the researcher's positionality or 'where the researcher is coming from' impacts his/her choice of methodology. According to Mantzoukas (2005: 284), 'all research starts not from just anywhere, but from somewhere specific, and that is the specific individual researcher.' Thus, the researcher's beliefs, experiences, biases, socio-economic status, among others are likely to play a pivotal role in influencing the nature and direction of research (Bourke, 2014). For qualitative research, commentators affirm the centrality of the researcher in the research process (Mantzoukas, 2005). The researcher in a qualitative study is intimately connected to the research process as s/he is the

primary source of data collection and analysis. Therefore, qualitative researchers have been routinely accused of bias. Nonetheless, all research is prone to bias because for example, 'all researchers have opinions about what they are researching' (Griffiths, 1998: 129) and 'all research has to start from somewhere' (Norris, 1997: 173). Researchers are expected to explicitly state their positions/assumptions to clarify biases due to the understanding that all research can suffer from bias. In the end, while these suggestions and processes (triangulation and positionality) can help improve rigour and validity, it does not do so automatically. Valid research is one that systematically and accurately collects and interprets data (Yin, 2011). When you incorrectly or misleadingly apply both quantitative and qualitative methods to your study, they can all provide wrong conclusions (White, 2002).

I do not come to this research as a complete outsider. I am a Ghanaian who hails from the Northern Region of Ghana (the field site). I speak the predominant local language (*Dagbaani*) and in the three years before the commencement of this research, I lived and worked in the northern region of Ghana. My experience working at the University for Development Studies — one of the country's publicly funded universities — led to my interest in conducting a doctoral study on Ghana's austerity and its implication for the country's social policies. Starting in 2012, the government placed a ban on recruiting both academic and non-teaching staff into all the public universities in the country. Furthermore, government subventions to the universities started faltering. Public universities receive quarterly subventions from the government for the running of these institutions. The payments of these subventions became erratic and unpredictable, with the universities' management resorting to loans from commercial banks to pay salaries, for example. Additionally, public universities have had to cut down budgets from different units. For example, requests from the examinations office for exam materials are now critically scrutinised with the aim of removing 'unnecessary items.' However, this has not always been the status quo — especially before 2012. Ironically, while these austere policies were being implemented, the

narrative from the Ghanaian political elites was that the education sector was not affected by the regime of fiscal austerity. Thus, the motivation to carry out this research is based on the view that there is no special reason for us to think that indeed child-centred programmes such as the Ghana School Feeding Programme have been uniquely insulated from the effects of Ghana's fiscal austerity.

My professional, social and educational status put me in a position of advantage and disadvantage, relative to this research. On account of working as a teacher in a public university in the Ghanaian society, this places me in the middle-class social stratification. However, as one of the first two university graduates in an extended family of two generations, I have not lost touch with the daily realities of the 'ordinary' Ghanaian. Furthermore, living and working in the northern part of Ghana — one of the most deprived regions in the country — means that on a daily basis I interact with, and understand, the realities and challenges of the average Ghanaian. In fact, another propelling motivation why I decided to carry out this research in the first place was due to my long-standing belief in social justice and determination to help create a more just and egalitarian Ghanaian society — particular when you consider the level and scale of deprivation in the north, manifested in the inequality of opportunity and outcome. Although I had views about my research, when I started collecting data, I quickly realised the views I held did not reflect the reality on the ground. A lot of the findings came to me as a surprise, considering the anecdotal information I held about the GSFP and austerity. Therefore, to me, this research was quite as revealing as it was informative.

As already stated, in the three years before the commencement of this doctoral programme, I lived and worked in Tamale, the northern region capital. This reality shaped my research in a fundamental way as the decision to use the north as the field site for data collection was informed by my familiarity with the location. Hailing from the north, and conducting the research in the same region had some benefits. The most important being my ability to rely on established social and professional networks in the course of the data collection. For example, when I applied for

access to the Northern Regional Director of Education, I tried and failed for two weeks to have an audience with the director. Eventually, I had to rely on a senior colleague at the University for Development Studies to facilitate my meeting with the director. Thus, I was able to address this challenge of access easier than a stranger would have. Similarly, in the urban school, when I approached the headteacher for access, the initial reception I had from him was one of indifference and uncertainty. On the third day of visiting the school, however, while in the head teacher's office discussing my research, I received a local phone call. When I return to the office, the headteacher was smiling, saying 'ah, so you are one of us' and started speaking the local language with me. He initially thought I was a foreigner, but when it became clear that I was 'one of them', he opened up. I believe this played a role in granting me access.

In terms of disadvantages, my status as an adult male did affect my interactions with caregivers and service providers, especially. The northern region of Ghana is mostly a conservative, patriarchal and hierarchical society. There are clearly defined roles and social rules about what young people can and cannot in the midst of adults. All the service providers and caregivers interviewed for this research were women, and all of them (it was apparent) were significantly older than me. In fact, a couple of them were old enough to be my mother. Thus, in the interviews, there were questions I could not ask, as a young man interviewing his 'mothers' in a traditional northern Ghana context. For instance, I could not ask for personal details such as their age. Furthermore, in my interviews with the caregivers, they were reluctant to discuss in detail what austerity meant for them in their households. This was understandable, as the interviews would have required details into household finances and coping strategies. Knowing the social norms of the place, therefore, I could not politely persist in asking questions they were either evading or not prepared to answer. Questions which would have shed more light on this research, nonetheless.

5.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research is about 'the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair' (Sieber, 1993: 14). De Vaus (2001) notes that there are four fundamental ethical principles that social science research should conform to — voluntary participation, informed consent, no harm to participants, and anonymity and confidentiality. Participants should be told very clearly that participation is optional. Even when they have agreed to participate, they must be informed that they are at liberty to opt-out at any stage. Voluntary participation in research is particularly important since 'unwilling participants can undermine the quality of the data in the study' (De Vaus, 2001: 84). Furthermore, as stated by Sagarin (1973: 80 cited in Hammersley and Traianou, 2012), people have 'the right not to be researched'. Informed consent is another key concern of ethical research — arguably the central plank of research ethics in my view. Research participants must be fully informed about: *(i)* the purpose of the study; *(ii)* the identity of the researcher and the sponsor; *(iii)* the use to which the data will be put; *(iv)* the description of the likely benefit of the study; *(v)* an explanation of the risks involved in participation (if any); and *(vi)* why the participants have been selected to take part in the study (De Vaus, 2001). Following De Vaus's advice, all the participants in this research were supplied information leaflets (see Appendixes 2,3,4,5) explaining in-depth about the aims and objectives of the research. Also, they were informed that participation is optional and that they were free to opt-out at any time.

Calls for ethical considerations in research originated from the medical sciences, where medical trials and procedures inherently contained potential harm implications to research participants (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). While this kind of harm naturally does not arise in social science research; nonetheless, other forms of harm exist (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). Physical and psychological harm, as well as damage to the respondent's reputation or status, are the kinds of harm participants are likely to face in social science research (Hammersley and

Traianou, ibid). Thus, a great deal of personal commitment to protect the identities of the participants is needed by the researcher (Mack et al., 2005: 13). Considering the highly politicised nature of the GSFP, as well as the far-reaching powers and influences of politicians, anonymising potentially embarrassing or contentious information can prevent harm to participants (especially the service providers and school staff). Accordingly, the participants were provided assurances of anonymity and confidentiality to their participants. As such, I have used a high degree of anonymisation in this research. For example, the names of the schools, service providers, pupils, and experts and school staff are all anonymised. Service providers are only referred to as Service Provider 1, Service Provider 2 (reflecting the order in which the interviews were conducted).

5.7.1 Payments

In research, payments can be made to compensate for expenses incurred in coming for the research; reimburse for lost time or income; show appreciation for the participants' willingness to help take part in the research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). It is undoubtedly the case that payments can incentivise participants. However, this is a contested area primarily because giving monetary payments, and other forms of payments can be seen as indirectly inducing the participants to consent to the research. Nonetheless, researchers can offer gifts or financial rewards before the start of the research, while making it very clear to the participants that they can opt-out at any stage and no questions asked while retaining their gifts (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Only two groups of participants were offered gifts in this research. I offered to buy the child participants lunch after the interviews were concluded. Also, with the FGDs, the teachers were made aware, before the start of the discussion, that I had provided refreshments for them. After the FGDs, each of the teachers who took part in the FGD was provided snack and refreshments as a way of thanking them for their time, as the discussion was about an hour long.

5.8 Data Analysis

Analysing qualitative data is not a straightforward matter (Bryman, 2016). Silverman (2013: 110) rightly points out that analysing qualitative data can be a bit of a 'mystery', akin to 'exploring a new territory without an easy-to-read map.' For Spencer and colleagues (2014: 269) qualitative data analysis can be seen as an 'esoteric process.' The complexity of qualitative data analysis is primarily due to two main reasons. First, unlike analysing quantitative data, universally accepted clear-cut rules about how to analyse qualitative data has not been developed (Bryman, 2016). Second, qualitative data collection usually produces comparatively large volumes of textual and visual data. Nevertheless, analysing qualitative data does not mean it should be any less methodical and systematic.

The objective of qualitative data analysis is describing a phenomenon; generating theory about the phenomenon being studied; or explaining differences (Flick, 2014; Spencer et al., 2014). In order to realise these goals, some of the systematic approaches to analysing qualitative data are thematic analysis, narrative analysis, analytic induction, grounded theory, discourse analysis and content analysis, among others (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Flick, 2014; Spencer et l, 2014; Bryman, 2016). The approach adopted in this thesis is thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) explain thematic data analysis as a 'method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.' Similarly, Spencer and others (2014: 269) see thematic analysis as data analysis approach, which 'involves discovering, interpreting, and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning in the data.'

My choice of thematic analysis was for a number of reasons. Initially, I had thoughts about using grounded theory, for example, to analyse my data. However, I realised that grounded theory requires much time due to a key feature of grounded theory, *constant comparative*. Here, data collection and analysis happen simultaneously. The newly collected data are constantly compared against the previous data, for differences and similarities. This serves as a basis for more data

collection until the researchers get to the point of saturation, where theory is generated. This obviously is time-consuming, given the various sets of respondents I had to deal with. Thus, thematic analysis was more suited for my needs as it is an inductive research approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). A necessary clarification has to be made here. Braun and Clarke (2006) rightly argue that in adopting thematic analysis, the researcher has to make some fundamental choices. While researchers typically make these choices, the choices are often not acknowledged and discussed, although these choices need to 'be explicitly considered and discussed' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82) to situate the research findings in a proper context. First, researchers adopting a thematic analysis have to choose whether or not data analysis will be either inductive or theoretical. In other words, the process of identifying themes can either be a*)* inductive bottom-up, or *b)* theoretical, deductive or top-down (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This thesis adopted an inductive, bottom-up approach of thematic analysis rather than the theoretical deductive. In the inductive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006: 83) note that the emergent themes are strongly linked to the data set, and in a way, 'bears some similarity to grounded theory.' Thus, inductive thematic analysis is 'data-driven', and the emergent themes are not influenced by the researcher's theoretical interests or pre-existing labels, concepts or theories. The choice of inductive thematic data analysis was essential and practical for me in the sense that, while austerity and its effects have taken centre stage of both the political and academic discourse on the Global North, the same cannot be said of the Global South. As such, there is a paucity of research examining the impact of austerity on the social policies of the Global South. Current literature and research on the school feeding programme in Ghana and the Global South are also mainly evaluative. That is, seeking to determine, to what extent, SFPs live up to its goals of increasing school enrolment, retention, and reducing dropout rates.

Second, another crucial decision a researcher has to make, and declare, is a choice between having an overall objective of providing a 'detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme, or group

of themes within the data', or providing 'a rich thematic description of your entire dataset' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 83) to inform the reader of the key themes in the data set. This research approach is to provide a rich thematic description of the themes from the entire data set, particularly the important ones, and not a nuanced account of one particular theme. In sum, this thesis provides a rich thematic description of the entire data set, using themes that emerged inductively, and is data-driven.

While qualitative data analysis processes have not reached 'the degree of codification and analytic process' (Bryman, 2008: 538) used in quantitative data analysis, nonetheless, there are some approaches and guidelines. In terms of the practical step by step processes, different authors suggest different steps/processes to follow to analyse qualitative data using thematic analysis. In my case, however, I adapted the processes suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Spencer and colleagues (2014). To analyse qualitative data using thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six steps: familiarisation with your data; generating initial codes, searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing the report. On the other hand, Spencer and others (2014) suggest four main steps: familiarisation with the data; constructing an initial thematic framework; using the framework to sort and index your data; and reviewing data extracts for coherence. These two approaches were used to analyse the data I collected. For instance, at the familiarisation stage, all the textual data (recorded interviews and FGDs) were transcribed verbatim. These transcripts were read, and reread initially without taking notes, to get a 'general sense' of information (Creswell, 2009: 185). Then the transcripts were reread, making notes to derive initial codes. What was of importance to me, during the coding process was, as Spencer and colleagues (2014: 296) suggest was 'identifying topics, issues that are of interest, recurrent across the dataset' and most importantly to me, 'relevant to the research questions.' After these topics were identified, they were used to sort the data into similar themes. The similar themes were then grouped to produce higher-order themes. Some of the pertinent higher-order themes that emerged

are: Rationing Services; Client Differentiation; Inadequate Funding; Irregular Reimbursements; Politicisation of Social Programmes; Food Insecurity; Absenteeism and Truancy; Academic Performance; and Coping Strategies (Households). The higher-order themes were then rechecked for consistency and potential overlapping themes.

The higher-order themes that were generated are linked in the following ways. As a result of Ghana's fiscal austerity, the government of Ghana for the past six years has frozen the feeding rate paid to the service providers. Calls by the service providers for the government to increase the feeding rates have not been heeded. The inadequacy of the feeding rate, which has been fixed for six years, has been further exacerbated by the country's high inflation rate. Ghana's inflation rate of 16.6 per cent, and particularly food inflation (8.9 per cent)[53] has been rising as a result of the governments' increase of VAT and the abolishment of fuel subsidies. The abolition of fuel subsidies and the increase in revenue-generating instruments such as VAT have only increased the cost of living. Despite these increases, the feeding rates paid to service providers have been frozen; thus, the service providers argue that the rate is inadequate and unrealistic. In addition to this challenge of inadequate funding, the service providers also experience irregular and unpredictable reimbursement patterns. The total debts owed the service providers are never repaid in full. Also, the date for reimbursing these arrears are unknown to the service providers. Consequently, at the time of this research, some service providers were owed up to a year after service delivery, and they did not know when the arrears would be paid.

As a result of the funding and reimbursement challenges, the service providers have been forced to adopt unsanctioned coping mechanisms in the form of rationing services and differentiating among their clients (the students). The service providers, among other measures, reduce the quantity of meals served to each student. They also discriminate among the student by refusing to serve the older students, focusing on the younger ones. The service providers can adopt these

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[53] See Chapter 6, Section 6.2.3

strategies because they wield considerable discretion and autonomy in the discharge of their duties. An essential source of this autonomy is that the service providers are politically recruited. That is, at any time, the service providers are members of the political party in government. As a result, there is no supervision of the activities of the service providers.

The coping strategies adopted by the service providers have a profound impact on the students in school. First, the students experience food insecurity challenges in school, manifested in not having enough food to eat, poor quality of diet served to them, continually worrying about food, among others. These challenges of food insecurity affect the children's academic performance as they cannot concentrate in class, and often leave school in search of food. To help address these challenges, some of the school staff have had to alter their teaching methods and strategies to accommodate the disinterested and hungry students, while some of the parents have also resorted to providing food or money to their children when they are going to school.

5.8.1 Some Reflections

This thesis suffers from what I describe as bad timing. That is, the fieldwork coincided with the 2016 General Elections in Ghana. Conducting fieldwork about the GSFP right in the context of a General Election, and its ensuing 'chaotic' political transition proved challenging on several fronts. As already discussed in Chapter 4[54], due to the disorganised transition processes that usually characterises Ghana's General Elections, the GSFP was a topical issue. Members of the incoming government (in January 2017, a week after swearing in the new president) attacked some service providers known to belong to the outgoing political party, ostensibly for 'their' party members employed. This brought news reports about the GSFP into the limelight, while simultaneously creating a heightened sense of fear and anxiety among stakeholders of the GSFP. Consequently, some of the critical informants/participants (especially elites) declined the interview invitations. I approached the GSFP secretariat as well as the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection for

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[54] See Chapter 4 Section 4.3.1.2

interviews, both at the national and regional levels. At all fronts, the requests for interviews were declined. Of those elites who agreed to be interviewed, both the WFP and UNICEF experts were cautious in responding to questions during the interviews. Take for instances these comments:

> *We are a development partner, and we are a UN agency, so we are pro-government. So, we always want to make this clear. Even though we are international, we are not an NGO because we work with the government. This [working with the government] affects or is translated in the nature of answers I will give to your questions ... For us [WFP], everything [we do] is diplomacy, working in the background, we don't aggressively engage government. We do a lot of dialogue and negotiation* (WFP Northern Regional School Feeding Programme Coordinator).

> *UNICEF works with the government and must be careful [in how we go about things]. We cannot publicly criticise the government because of our mandate* (UNICEF Expert Interview).

Right from the start, these expert interviewees from UNICEF and WFP above issued disclaimers when I referred to them as international NGOs. They stressed the point that they are development partners, working together with the government. As such, this presents constraints on their ability to talk freely about the GSFP. The service providers were also cautious and unsure of my real motives. Many of those I invited for the interview initially were hesitant and nervous (as news reports then had it that the incoming government was planning to terminate their contracts). Ultimately, the unwillingness of elites to participate, especially employees of the GSFP secretariat, as well as the Ministry with oversight responsibility for the GSFP, meant that experts who declined could have explained the rationale behind freezing the unrealistic feeding rate paid for almost two years in the midst of economic uncertainty for example.

Relatedly, the political atmosphere impacted the study design as I had to revise the data collection approach with the child participants. Initially, the research with the child participants was designed to be more child-friendly, informal and entertaining with disposable cameras given to them to document and explain their expediencies with school food. However, the service providers (who

in the beginning were suspicious of my motives anyhow) saw this as 'evidence gathering.' Thus, they expressed their well-founded fears (within the political climate of transition) to the headteacher about the pupils using the cameras. Although prior permission was sought from the headteacher for the pupils to use the cameras, in the interest of calming down the service provider, the headteacher asked that I stop using the cameras. In the end, it became evident that the best time to do fieldwork was long before a general election (when the GSFP would not be so topical). If I could change a particular aspect of this research, it would have been the timing of the fieldwork.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the research strategy adopted in this thesis. It has justified the epistemological and ontology assumptions underlying this study as being constructivist and interpretivist. Social reality is constructed, not discovered. The construction of this reality is achieved through the adoption of interactive qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, FGDs, and participant observations. The chapter has also provided an in-depth discussion of the processes and procedures involved in the data collection process. Additionally, the challenges the researcher experiences, as well as the solutions devised, have been discussed. The chapter ends by discussing the rationale for adopting a thematic analysis as the analytic procedure for analysing the data collection. In all, this chapter provides the basis for the next two data chapters.

CHAPTER 6

Delivering the Ghana School Feeding Programme in the Context of Austerity

6.1 Introduction

The central argument of this thesis is that the impact of austerity on the Ghanaian society and economy has been profound — through public sector job freezes, social spending cuts, the imposition of new taxes and the abolishment of subsidies, among others (see Chapter 2[55]). However, the implications of fiscal austerity on Ghana's social policy programmes are neither discussed nor highlighted either in academic or political discourses. Whereas news reports, political discussions, and academic discourses on austerity have blanketed the Eurozone and UK, and the Global North in general (Ortiz and Cummins, 2013), as discussed in Chapter 3[56] of this thesis, such discussions are almost non-existent in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly at the micro-levels of the school, family and community. Given the potential lasting impacts of austerity on the lives of ordinary people, these implications have to be identified, examined, discussed and, hopefully, addressed.

In a sense, Ghana is not an isolated case. On the national macro-level, there are some references to the government of Ghana's policy of budget cuts to address concerns about high fiscal deficits. However, what these budget cuts specifically mean, and austerity in general, at the micro-level of school and households, and on the lives of poor and vulnerable people, and in relation to stated objectives of social investment, are not emphasised. Whatever the effects of fiscal austerity are, they are happening quietly and silently. Consequently, this chapter addresses the first research objective of the study, which seeks to examine the pathways through which austerity affects the implementation and delivery of the Ghana School Feeding Programme. To achieve this objective,

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[55] See Chapter 2, Section 2.5
[56] See Chapter 3, Section 3.4

I first present and then discuss the major themes that emerged from the data analysis (mainly of the service providers and teachers).

This chapter draws on Michael Lipsky's (1971, 1980, 2010) Street-Level Bureaucrat (SLB) conceptual framework in understanding how frontline service providers of the GSFP are experiencing and dealing with service delivery in the context of austerity in Ghana. Specifically, the focus is on what austerity means to service providers in their line of work, and the measures and devices they adopt to cope with the challenges. The SLB conceptual framework was chosen due to its relevance in understanding the activities of frontline service providers of the GSFP in the context of austerity. Moreover, since Lipsky published his seminal work, the SLB framework has been adapted into various country contexts (discussed below) by researchers seeking to understand, for example, the impact of austerity on the activities of frontline service providers as they implement public policies and programmes.

As pointed out in Chapter 3[57], Lipsky's SLB conceptual framework has made a profound contribution in understanding the challenges — and measures adopted to deal with these challenges —frontline service providers experience as they deliver public services (Courtney and Hickey, 2016) particularly in the context of severe fiscal challenges. In his widely acclaimed book *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (1980), Lipsky presents a theoretical framework for understanding the role and impact of service providers in public policy implementation. While political elites and technocrats enact public policy, they nonetheless are not the implementers (Crossley, 2016). SLBs are the 'final implementers of public policy' (Kelly 1994: 119). Consequently, to understand the mismatch between policy intentions and its implementation on the ground (Crossley, 2016), it is essential to examine the actions and decisions of public policy implementers — SLBs. One needs to study the direct policy implementers and their interactions

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[57] See Chapter 3, Section 3.5

with citizens if we are to appreciate how citizens experience public policy (Courtney and Hickey, 2016).

Not all the themes in Lipsky's theoretical framework are covered in this thesis. The themes from the framework that are used in this thesis are chosen due to their relevance to the research questions and context. In Lipsky's framework (Figure 2.0), discretion plays a foundational role as it is interrelated with the coping strategies such as service rationing, gatekeeping, monetisation of services and client differentiation. Figure 2.0 below, graphically illustrates Lipsky's framework by breaking it into a few themes.

Figure 2.0 The Street-Level Bureaucrat Conceptual Framework.
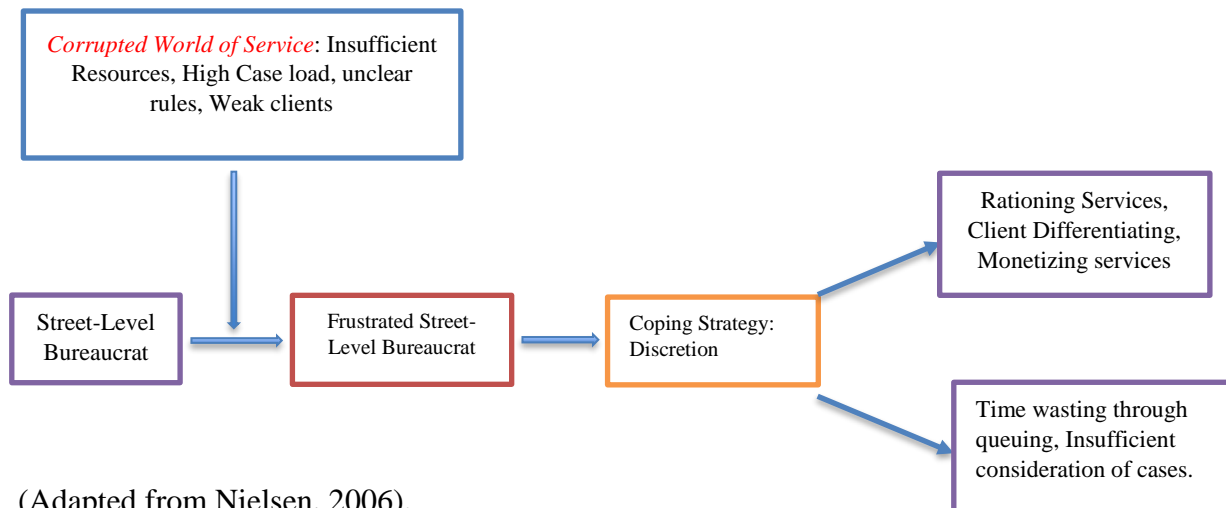
(Adapted from Nielsen, 2006).

Of particular interest to the focus of this chapter is Michael Lipsky's notion of service provision in a 'Corrupted World of Service' and 'Coping Strategies' (Lipsky, 2010: 27, 40). In Lipsky's theoretical framework, frontline service providers deliver public programmes in a 'corrupted world of service' — defined as the unideal context of chronic financial challenges, high caseloads, unclear and confounding agency goals among others. Consequently, in order to implement the policies and programmes they are tasked to — within this context of a 'corrupted world of service' — SLBs use their autonomy and discretion to develop unsanctioned coping strategies, which ultimately undermine policy intent and goals (Lipsky, 1980: xii; Nielsen, 2006; Tummers and

Bekkers, 2014; Vedung, 2015; Crossley, 2016). Using Lipsky's framework, this chapter shows that *a)* the context of service provision of the GSFP is one of a corrupted world of service — as a result of fiscal austerity — which ultimately places a burden on service providers to *b)* adopt various unsanctioned coping strategies that undermine the policy intent and goals of the GSFP.

6.2 The 'Corrupted World of Service' of the Ghana School Feeding Programme

Lipsky (2010), Sullivan (2009) and Evans (2010) note that frontline service providers operate in an environment of chronically inadequate resources along with demands (from clients) exceeding supply among other things. This context becomes the 'corrupted world of service' delivery since these conditions combine to frustrate the frontline service providers as they struggle to deliver public services. In this section, two themes from Lipsky's framework are presented and discussed because they are directly relevant to the Ghana experience. The section demonstrates that in terms of the GSFP, several factors, not least Ghana's ongoing fiscal austerity, have created a 'corrupted world of service' of service provision, both directly and indirectly. The corrupted world of service delivery of the GSFP is one of chronically inadequate resources and demands for services exceeding available supply.

6.2.1 Chronically Inadequate Resources

Research in various country contexts has confirmed the continued relevance of fiscal challenges in Lipsky's 'corrupted world of service' theme in the SLB conceptual framework. These studies show that fiscal austerity has had varied and significant implications for service delivery at the frontlines. Broadly, the implications are direct and indirect. Ridge (2013), O'Hara (2014) and Loopstra and colleagues' (2018) research report the direct effects of austerity on some welfare programmes and service provision. From cuts in benefits to strict eligibility requirements, and caps on the value of benefits, public officers working in government departments have had to deal with dwindling government resources in the face of a rising number of clients in the UK for example. Similarly, as an example of the indirect effect of austerity on social programmes, Fletcher (2011) finds that

due to pressure from central government to reduce operating costs and obtain value for money, the UK's Jobcentre Plus has reduced the number of staff, which increased the workloads of, and pressures on frontline staff. This echoes Courtney and Hickey's (2016) findings in Canada. Strict cost containment policies in the long term resulted in low wages, retention challenges, and growth in part-time, casual work in the Department of Human Services in Canada. In the case of the GSFP, it was found that the impact of austerity has been largely indirect. A recurring theme from the data analysis is the concept of fiscal crisis and funding gaps. All the service providers interviewed in this study decried the current funding gaps and challenges they experience, which they say have worsened in the last five years. This theme is made up of sub-themes, which are presented herein: Funding Arrears, Irregular and Piecemeal Repayments; Stagnant Feeding Rate; Credit Purchases (Increased Cost, Interest, Rising debts) and current macroeconomic context.

6.2.2 Funding Arrears, Irregular and 'Piecemeal' Repayments

This theme can be understood to mean that service providers currently face the grim reality of pre-financing the GSFP for several terms without reimbursement from the government, a situation they say has steadily worsened in the recent years, following the government's austerity programme. The data show that service providers of the GSFP operate in a context of chronic financial challenges in the form of funding reimbursement arrears and irregular repayments.

> *Instead of paying us once, [the] government divides it into three parts and pays only one part of the arrears. We are currently owed **three [acadmic] terms**, which is equal to **one year**. We still have arrears on some of the days of the first term, last term [second term] none of the days have been paid, and this third term too has not been paid. That is one year of arrears…. In spite of the size of debt on the part of government, when they are going to pay us, it is just for a small number of days which would be inadequate to settle our past debts. Government will pay ten days or 20 days…* (Service Provider 3, Urban).

Another service provider also noted that:

> *The government does not pay us for a long time and when it decides to pay us, we are usually paid for only 20 days or 25 days of cooking. Even as we speak,*

we heard we had been paid 2 weeks ago. Yet, till date, we haven't received any payment… (Service Provider 1, Rural).

The service providers interviewed described a situation where they have had to provide the service to school pupils in an atmosphere of uncertain reimbursement dates. This situation they say is compounded by what they describe as 'piecemeal reimbursement'. That is, even though payments due them for service delivered are left unpaid for long periods of up to one year, when these repayments are eventually made, the outstanding debts are never paid in full. Instead, payments are staggered.

> *We are never paid all the arrears. Out of X number of days [service provider hypothesizes], government pays for example 25 days. Last year second term there are arrears of 35 days. [The] third term of last year has not been paid yet. Not a penny. And we have started a new term…* (Service Provider 6, Urban).

Confirming this status quo, Service Provider 5 observed:

> *They don't pay you all your money so that you can also pay your debts and then keep the balance. They will pay 20 days, or 25 days, out of our number of days owed. Currently, we have 75 days outstanding arrears unpaid, plus this current term and the last term…* (Service Provider 5, Rural).

It is essential to point out that the service providers made these claims bearing in mind their past reimbursement experiences. With nostalgic feelings, they recounted past repayment regimes, which they say was significantly better than the present state of affairs. They argued that although before the start of austerity they had reimbursement arrears — primarily due to the nature of programme design of pre-financing[58] — nonetheless, these arrears were paid within shorter time spans, helping them plan and stock foodstuff.

> *During our time, when we started, we were told government will be paying us at the end of every month, but this is not the case. Sometimes we are paid after a term [3 months]. But those who started before us told us they were paid*

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[58] Per the programme design of the GSFP, service providers are supposed to pre-finance and deliver the programmes, to be reimbursed later.

every 2 weeks, or 3 weeks because the Danish government[59] was supporting them. Even later, when Atta Mills [Former President] came [to power in 2009], those who came before us tell us in meetings that they were paid every 2 to 3 weeks. But then later, payment became difficult for government… (Service Provider 1 Urban).

When we started the service eight years ago, the payments were much more regular, predictable and frequent than we currently experience. Previously, it was better. This period is worse because in those days, the payments were not delayed as they currently are. It is just that I cannot remember exactly when things started getting this bad (Service Provider 3, Rural).

All the service providers interviewed, bemoaned the present funding and reimbursement regime of unpredictability and fragmentation, opting for, or expressing preferences over the previous repayment system of two months at the very longest. That way, they contend, makes it easier for them to plan their service provision stockpiling foodstuff for the entire term. When they have enough foodstuff, they do not have to worry about looking for other funding to provide the service.

6.2.3 Inadequate, Stagnant Feeding Rate

Another important theme that emerged from the data analysis is the feeding rate paid (GHS 0.80[60]) to service providers per child per day of service provision. This theme can be seen in two ways. First, some service providers interviewed argued that their financial situation is weak, primarily due to the daily feeding rate paid for each student. As such, providing the service with the feeding rate has meant they have to cut corners or not adhere to programme implementation guidelines on the quality and quantity of meals. Second, the service providers argued that while the feeding rate is inadequate, this rate has been fixed for a long time, in an economic climate of a continually rising cost of living. Thus, they have to contend with a regime of inadequate and frozen feeding rate paid to them. According to Service Provider 4:

It [feeding rate] used to be GHS 0.29 pesewas, then it went to GHS 0.50 pesewas in 2012 and recently in 2015 it went to GHS 0.80 pesewas. The

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[59] The GSFP started with part funding from the Danish government.
[60] £1 = GHS 6.40p (XE Currency convertor, 11/11/2018)

amount is very small and inadequate because the food the child is going to eat is significantly more than GHS 1 (Service Provider 4, Urban).

Service Provider 3 provides some useful context by way of explaining that:

When your child is going to school you give her GHS 2 and the child even complains. Yet, we are being paid GHS 0.80 pesewas to serve children. The GHS 0.80 pesewas is not enough to serve one child… (Service Provider 3, Rural).

The service providers universally shared these sentiments. From the interactions with the service providers, all of them are mothers themselves who have primary school children. As such, they can tell first-hand, from experience in dealing with their own children, that the amount given is inadequate to serve children meals in school. Providing an example of the inadequacy of the feeding rate paid to service providers, Service Provider 1 recounted a meeting wherein requests from the GSFP administrators to the service providers to alter the cooking ingredients was flatly rejected by the caterers present in the meeting.

...And they [school feeding administrators] told us [at the meeting] to try and, once in a while, add eggs [to the food served to pupils). But today, a boiled egg is GHS 1. So, just imagine if I have to buy an egg and add it to the food, how much will I make? So later on, they told us to put some eggs into the stew if we cannot give each child an egg so that at least the children will get some protein. But we are unable to do this. Yes. Because if we buy the eggs, we can't provide the service (Service Provider 1, Urban).

Service Provider 1 Urban argues that the total amount paid for each pupil's feeding is inadequate to buy a boiled egg in the open market (at GHS 1). Thus, requests for service providers to add an egg to the meals served would mean that right from the start; service providers will be running the programme at a deficit of GHS 0.20 pesewas per child if they were to serve *only* boiled eggs to the pupils. Here, it is instructive to note the cost of one boiled egg (GHS 1) is about 20 per cent more than the feeding rate the government pays per student. Thus, the service providers argue that they are cautious about what ingredients they add to the meals they serve to the students. In one of the

expert interviews conducted, the Northern Regional Programme Manager of SEND-Ghana[61] also argued that the feeding rate paid for service providers undermine the overall programme objective of the GSFP.

> *One of the issues we raised [at an annual GSFP stakeholder meeting with the government] was the inadequate amount allocated per head. So we felt that the government had actually taken that [our suggestion] on board. And it is in recognition of the fact that that amount was quite [respondent breaks off] ... if you like, not sufficient to provide a good meal in terms of quality and quantity. So, if you had visited the schools you would have realised that for [in] some schools the quantity was very small. Where the quantity is better, quality is largely if you like, compromise[d]. So, in terms of if you were to hold GHS 0.80 pesewas and go to any food vendor, I doubt if you can buy food with GHS 0.80 pesewas in most of our districts. It will be difficult. These days the lowest is GHS 1. So yes, the amount is woefully inadequate and that translated in the number of times a caterer would cook per week and, the quality but also the quantity served* (SEND-Ghana Expert Interview).

It must be noted that the overall macroeconomic and market conditions in Ghana serve as exacerbating factors for the service providers. Here, two key themes emerged. First, credit purchases and second, extra costs due to inflation. Before presenting these, it is important to note that service providers are not paid to provide the service in the schools. They are supposed to meet all their expenses, and then make a profit out of the GHS 0.80 pesewas paid per child. This is problematic as from observation on the two campuses the service providers employ at least two cooks in each school. These cooks are directly responsible for preparing and serving food to the pupils. Second, the service providers in the rural areas especially, argued they have to rent tractors, in order to transport potable water from the urban centres to the rural areas due to severe water shortages. Finally, the service providers argued they also have to buy other items such as firewood. All these costs (direct and indirect) including foodstuff, have to be met from the GHS 0.80 pesewas

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[61] SEND-Ghana is an international NGO that has been running programme evaluation reports on the school feeding programme since its inception

paid per child. Hence, these two issues of credit purchases and rising inflation only make a bad situation worse.

A binary dichotomy exists regarding why countries adopt the neoliberal policy prescription of austerity. Countries such as Britain (McKee et al., 2012; Oxfam International, 2013) adopted austerity as 'best practice', and on the other hand, countries such as Greece, Ireland, and Portugal adopted austerity as externally imposed by the IMF and other International Financial Institutions as a proviso for financial assistance (Blyth, 2013). In Ghana's case, the country falls in the latter category. As Clarke and Newman (2012) argued (see Chapter 3[62]), austerity started in the EU and North America and quickly morphed into a global neoliberal tool of addressing budget deficits, with the IMF using its financial strength and political influence, as the chief ideologue of austerity globally — imposing the ideology of countries in the process. Thus, in Ghana, the latest round of austerity has been externally imposed as a condition for an IMF bailout.

As a precondition for the IMF bailout, the government of Ghana, agreed to 4 major policy prescriptions[63]: Front Loaded Fiscal Adjustment (Cutbacks in government spending); Entrenched Structural Reforms (Public sector payroll cuts, right-sizing of the civil service); Strengthened Monetary Policy (Improving interbank forex market, effective inflation targeting) and, Preservation of Stability (Targeted social safety nets) [Minister of Finance Government of Ghana, 2015b]. Accordingly, austerity in Ghana in many ways bears a striking resemblance to the findings of a review of austerity programmes of 187 countries between 2010 and 2015 by Ortiz and others (2015). Specifically, phasing out of subsidies, slashing or capping wage bills, reforming payroll, Increasing sales tax especially VAT, pension reform and rationalising welfare programmes. Thus, as described in Chapter 4[64], austerity in Ghana comes in the form of public sector retrenchments,

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[62] See Chapter 3, Section 3.4
[63] See Chapter 2, Section 2.5
[64] See Chapter 2, Section 2.5

freeze, and government spending cuts, abolition or reduction subsidies and the imposition of new taxes.

Whereas there is no specific government policy of austerity on some social programmes such as the GSFP, nonetheless, austerity has affected the programme in diverse ways, albeit quietly. First, whereas the cost of goods and services have been rising, the government has remained adamant and refused to heed to calls to increase the cost of feeding per day, taking into consideration the rate of inflation in the country. In two 2011 UNICEF Social and Economic Policy reports, Ortiz and colleagues' report from 128 developing countries demonstrates the negative impact of increasing consumption taxes such as VAT on the cost of goods and services. They find that domestic food prices rose continually in the second half of 2010 in 58 developing countries as a consequence of the austerity policy of increasing consumption taxes (Ortiz et al., 2011a). Further, abolishing energy and fuel subsidies in developing countries also has negative ripple inflationary effects on the cost of basic goods and services (Ortiz et al., 2011b). The increasing of VAT in Ghana, as well as the government abolishing fuel subsidies[65] as a form of revenue mobilisation strategy, within the framework of the government's austerity measures, have led to rising inflation. For instance, although the Ghana Statistical Service (2018: 2) reports that the average non-food and food inflation for 2005-2017 was 16.6 per cent and 8.9 per cent respectively, the reality on the ground is different. Specifically, these official rates of inflation pale in comparison to the actual rate of food inflation. As we have seen above, service providers sometimes contend with as much as more than 100 per cent increases in the cost of foodstuff. For example:

> *A bag of 50 kilos Texas rice used to retail for GHS 70 in 2013. As we speak,*
> *the same product goes for almost GHS 300 in 2016. As we speak, a bowl of*
> *rice is GHS 5. If you buy a bowl of rice for GHS 5, when it is time to pay back,*
> *you are going to pay the prevailing price of a bowl of rice. We have no choice*
> *because we want to work* (Service Provider 6, Urban).

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[65] See Chapter 2, Section 2.5

Second, unlike the case countries of the Global North, austerity in Ghana as far as the GSFP does not come in the form of budget cuts to finance the programme or the tightening of eligibility requirements. Instead, it happens subtly. In a quest to meet the IMF conditions of reduced fiscal deficits targets, statutory payments to the National Health Insurance Scheme, District Assembly Common Fund[66] had been in arrears for several months[67] — with the GETFUND in arrears for up to 11 months (*GraphicOnline*, 2014). Likewise, with the GSFP reimbursement for service providers have been in arrears for close to one year, after providing the service with its attendant impact on service delivery, as the government continues its path of reduced public spending in the interest of having lower budget deficits. As discussed in Chapter 2[68], creating fiscal space for increased social programmes spending, while the government is under intense pressure to cut budget deficits, is clearly a problematic exercise (Diamond and Liddle, 2012). Calls for an increased feeding rate have remained unheeded by the government, as it keeps the feeding rate fixed despite the challenging macroeconomic environment. Thus, service providers have to live with a reality of operating a system of fixed feeding rate, and sharply rising cost of goods and services, sometimes by as much as 100 per cent annually.

The financial challenges of the GSFP have been exacerbated by a lack of definite funding source for the programme. As discussed in Chapter 4[69], a joint World Bank and World Food Programme in collaboration with Partnership for Child Development report, *Rethinking School Feeding* (Bundy et al., 2009), wherein an analytical or assessment framework was developed to assess both the sustainability and quality of existing school feeding using five quality standards. Essential among these quality standards are stable funding and the existence of budget lines for school feeding. Using these five quality standards, Drake and colleagues (2016) in *Global School Feeding*

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[66]The District Assembly Common Fund is a statutory payment created under Article 252 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution. Ghana's decentralised local government system is funded through this payment
[67] See Chapter 5 Section 4.5.1
[68] See Chapter 3, Section 3.4
[69] See Chapter 4, Section 4.6.2.1

Sourcebook: Lessons from 14 countries, presented findings that show that among others, the survival of school feeding programmes requires a substantial financial commitment to achieve sustainability. For example, in Brazil, school feeding is constitutionally a right and well established in national policy, with funding for the programme provided from the National Treasury, taxes and contributions (Drake et al., 2016). Other countries, such as Ecuador, fund the programme from investment funds as part of the government's budgetary allocation (Drake et al., 2016). Similarly, in El Salvador, interest paid on a national investment fund, serves an identifiable funding source, supported by law (Bundy et al., 2009).

What these countries have in common, is a dedicated funding source(s) for funding school feeding. However, in Ghana's case, there is no specific, discernible funding source for the GSFP. It is easier, therefore, for a programme such as the GSFP that relies on the general government of Ghana budgetary allocation to experience severe funding shocks within a period of austerity. The point must be made that, even programmes that are backed by law and with a dedicated and known funding source, such as the Ghana National Health Insurance Scheme, Ghana Education Trust Fund[70], District Assembly Common Fund, have all suffered severe funding restrictions gaps of several months of arrears, as the government embarks on a stiff dose austerity, to achieve the budget deficit reduction targets. This particular aspect has more to do with programme design flaws, which have been exacerbated by the ongoing austerity.

From the data analysis, it is apparent that the funding constraints of the GSFP have been worsened by other exogenous programme design factors such as the absence of a dedicated funding source for the programme. Unlike other programmes such as the NHIS, which has a specific tax dedicated to the funding of the scheme, there are no clear budget lines, or a specific source of funds, dedicated

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[70] Ghana Education Trust Fund is a public trust established to assist with the funding of education at all levels by providing infrastructure, teaching and learning facilities, scholarships among others.

to financing the GSFP. Some funding suggestions were discussed in the expert interviews, ranging from ring-fencing to tax-funded models.

> *There have been recommendations for them to have some ring-fenced*
> *funding for these initiatives, but they said it was not possible. They don't*
> *know where they can find the money. There is no fund for school feeding or*
> *social protection. They don't have such source of funding. Currently, I don't*
> *know how they are getting it but they are just squeezing from all other*
> *places…* (World Food Programme Expert Interview).

> *But if we prioritise SF, we could actually come out with a percentage either*
> *in a form of tax or a percentage from the oil revenue could be used to finance*
> *the SFP. There is no dedicated funding source so that is where the problem is*
> *... So, unlike the GETFUND and the rest, it is much easier. But then we should*
> *have had a dedicated funding source for the GSFP. Even if it takes long for*
> *the government to generate, eventually it will generate. And once it is*
> *generated, the SF would have been reimbursed. But it is as and when the*
> *government raises but given the importance of such a programme, we should*
> *have by now created a dedicated pot or funding source for the programme,*
> *just as the national health insurance levy . We don't have something like that*
> *for the SF. So we could honestly put a levy and say this percentage of our oil*
> *revenue should go to support the SF and that would have ensured if you like*
> *some timely release of funds. In this case, the government would have been*
> *required by law to make sure that… it would have been part of our statutory*
> *payments ...* (SEND-Ghana Expert Interview).

From the expert interviews, it is clear that the programme design flaw of lack of dedicated funding source for the GSFP has only served as a catalyst to worsen the funding gaps and challenges the SFP is experiencing in recent years, as government struggles to meet tight budget deficits targets by either shifting expenditure or budget lines around.

6.2.4 Service Provision on Credit, and Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP)

As presented above, providing the GSFP within a regime of non-reimbursement spanning up to one year has meant that the service providers run the service by relying on credit purchases. The service providers argued that the only way they could provide the service up to one year in arrears

has been because they buy the foodstuff and ingredients on credit. Forced to provide the service, and coupled with sharply rising inflation in Ghana, particularly on foodstuff, only further erodes what is left of their financial capital and profit. Because they are unable to personally pre-finance, an essential programme objective of the GSFP — linking SFP market to local agriculture (the HGSFP), through the direct purchases of SFP foodstuff from local smallholder[71] farmers — is not being met.

> *We used to buy from them [smallholder farmers] until we got to a point where we could no longer do that. Because there are times whereby you want to buy foodstuff and they don't have it to sell [smallholder farmers working on subsistence levels]. If you buy from them today, you can only buy from them again the following year. Furthermore, the local farmers would not sell to us on credit. They [GSFP administrators] have told us several times to buy from the local farmers but this is not possible…* (Service Provider 4, Rural).

Although there are many real practical reasons why the goal of HGSFP is not being met, an important variable, however, is the reality that local smallholder farmers do not sell their produce on credit. This effectively locks them out the SFP market, since service providers cannot also buy from local farmers. Another interesting dimension of the service provider-farmer dynamics is the fact that farmers in rural areas do not sell their foodstuff immediately after they harvest it. Instead, they hoard the foodstuff in anticipation of the lean seasons when the products are in short supply[72]. Service providers thus argue they are left with no choice but to sidestep the local smallholder farmers and purchase their stock from the open market:

> *We don't buy from local farmers. The local farmers do not sell at once [after harvesting]. When their produce is ready, they store the foodstuff. He will not sell it until the prices rise in the lean season. And we cook every time we cannot wait until [the farmer sells his hoarded stock] … and the farming too is seasonal. They will store the foodstuff until the next farming season when they bring the foodstuff out to sell in order to prepare himself for the next farming*

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[71] Farmers who cultivate five acres or less (World Food Programme, 2012)
[72] Farming in Ghana is seasonal due to subsistence nature, lack of mechanised farming, and rain fed nature (See Chapter 4).

season. Furthermore, the local farmers will not sell to us on credit, unlike the
market women do… (Service Provider 5, Urban).

During the expert interview, the Regional Director of SEND-Ghana argued strongly in defence of the service providers not buying from local smallholder farmers on the basis of lack of funds.

> *If you did evidence gathering in say ten districts, you wouldn't find two in*
> *which it is the farmers selling to the caterers. So how do you achieve the*
> *objective of increasing farmers' income in that district? Payments are always*
> *in arrears and the farmers are not willing to sell on credit so the caterers go*
> *to Tamale to buy on credit. So, in as much as caterers would love to buy from*
> *farmers, as far as payments are not regular, they will be faced with constraints*
> *because the farmers cannot afford to sell on credit for that long period. The*
> *objective we have succeeded to achieve is the enrolment. We have succeeded*
> *in increasing the enrolment figures…(SEND-Ghana Expert Interview).*

Thus, while issues of hoarding and the lack of capacity to produce the quality of foodstuff needed exist, the overarching reason why the service providers ignore the programme objective of buying from local farmers is because local farmers are unable and unwilling to sell to service providers on credit. Amongst all the challenges that come with credit purchases from traders in the open market, chief among them is the increased cost of service delivery. Because service providers are known to delay in repaying, the traders arbitrarily inflate the price of the foodstuff sold to the service providers. Arbitrarily inflating the cost of credit purchases is also done by traders to factor in, the continually rising cost of goods and services in Ghana. Therefore, given that service providers delay repaying their purchases, coupled with the fact of consistently rising prices, the traders make up for anticipated rises by increasing the cost of their credit sales. As an example, Service Provider 5 chronicled the changing prices over the years as:

> *We went to market women and took supply of [some] foodstuff on credit. We*
> *bought powdered fish for GHS 400. But when we started rendering the service*
> *[in 2014] we were buying it for GHS 250. But this time because the prices*
> *keep going up [rising constantly], this time if you want to buy it, it [powdered*
> *fish] will cost GHS 400 (Service Provider 5, Rural).*

Similarly, other service providers observed the following:

> *A jerrycan of oil [cooking oil] used to cost GHS 55, but today, it is GHS 150. So, the cost of everything has gone up. We used to buy tin tomatoes a box for GHS 48. But today, you buy the same thing for GHS 105. The big tins were GHS 60 but today it is being sold for GHS 140* (Service Provider 4, Urban).

> *When we started the service 2 years ago, a bowl of rice was GHS 3.50 pesewas. Cooking oil was GHS 73 a gallon. But now, a bowl of rice is now GHS 6 while cooking oil is now GHS 145* (Service Provider 2, Rural).

It can be inferred then, that the service providers face significant extra cost challenges with credit purchases as a result of the non-timely reimbursement from the government. According to the service providers, they operate in a financially turbulent environment of *a)* inadequate feeding rate; *b)* long periods of arrears and *c)* increased costs of service delivery on account of credit purchases, with *d)* the feeding rate held constant for years. The service providers argue that credit purchases erode whatever profit the service provider would have realised from delivering the service. Thus, they contend that they currently run the service consistently making losses:

> *If the government was going to pay us regularly, we would have been making profits. But because we are not paid regularly, and the little we get is used to pay debts, with your money still being with government, it is hard to make profit…* (Service Provider 2, Rural).

> *Sometimes you are paid by the secretariat and when you honour your debt obligations, you are left with nothing. You come home expecting another payment. That's what we have been doing …* (Service Provider 2, Urban).

Service Provider 2 explained further:

> *Whenever the price of foodstuff increases, you spend all your money on servicing your past debts and that would not even be enough. The sellers give us a lot of pressure, particularly when they hear that school feeding caterers have been paid. Whoever had sold foodstuff to you on credit would knock at your door early dawn… Because when the payments are done, you either use all the money to service debts, or because the suppliers increase the cost of the foodstuff exorbitantly in the case of credit purchases when you are paid eventually you use all your money to service the debt and the interest …* (Service Provider 2, Urban).

Puzzled by this grim picture painted by the service providers, I was curious to know why they still provide the service amid such difficulty. It emerged that service providers are unable to stop running the programme as they have found themselves trapped in an endless cycle of rising and compounding debts. As such, leaving the service means they have to find ways of paying the debts already racked up. Instead of leaving the service, the service providers have adopted means of juggling between creditors. Service Provider 3 elucidated this as:

> *We are just managing. We are just trying and squeezing ourselves. We just keep running deeper and deeper into debts. Our problem is that, we have already committed ourselves into this job. As a result, we have huge debts arising out of it from the suppliers. If we decide to opt-out, we will be unable to pay our old debts. That's why we are still providing the service in spite of all the challenges. If we opt out today, there are old debts we will be unable to pay. That's why we are managing. We are not being paid, and we have already gotten ourselves deep into debts. We have many creditors. Whenever we are paid, you use that amount to settle a particular debt. When another payment comes, we use it to settle another creditor* (Service Provider 3, Urban).*

Without any source of funds to pay off their creditors, they are unable to stop the programme altogether. Furthermore, they are unable to provide the service in this challenging situation as they have resorted to juggling creditors. Once they are paid, the debts owed creditors are not honoured. Instead, reimbursement funds are used to purchase new foodstuff.

6.2.5 Demand for Services Exceeding Supply

An essential theme in Lipsky's conceptualisation of service delivery context — that is, the corrupted world of service — is the notion of the mismatch between demands for services exceeding available resources. Lipsky argues that in the corrupted world of service, the sheer number of clients requiring their services overwhelms frontline service providers (Lipsky, 1980). While this particular theme is not exclusively related to fiscal austerity, nonetheless it plays a crucial role in understanding the context of service delivery. In the case of the GSFP, it was found that several factors, not least programme design flaws and weakness in the Ghana Education

system have played a role in creating a regime of continually rising numbers of students requiring school meals. Service providers decried this present situation of steadily rising numbers. First, an important theme that emerged from the data analysis relates to 'freeloaders' abusing the system. The service providers operate under challenging circumstances, especially in rural areas, where pupils who are unbudgeted for, take meals from the service providers. There were two types of freeloaders. The first type were children living in the surrounding communities who were not students yet came to school to be served during break time. In light of this, I made the following observations confirming the service providers' claim of feeding freeloaders:

> *It is time for the lunch break. The bell just went for break time, and the pupils are rushing out for a break. Four children have been standing at the outskirts of the school, holding bowls. After the bell boy rang the bell, these four children are making their way towards the service provider to be served. Although they are not students, the service provider has served them nonetheless. These four children were the first to be served today. Compared to the school in the urban area, the overwhelming majority of the pupils in the rural area do not wear school uniforms or proper footwear (or any footwear for that matter) to school. Every day in this school [rural area], the children come to school in very worn out and torn clothing. Coming to school barefooted is the norm here, as many of the students do this. I also note that teaching and learning in this school is different from that which goes on in the urban area. Apart from children coming to school barefooted, many of them lie down on the floor to write while in class because there are no desks. My hunch is that the service provider in the rural area here is unable to distinguish between students and non-students, precisely because of the fact that the students are physically indistinguishable from non-students. As such this makes it easier for the freeloaders to easily blend in and collects the food, although they are unbudgeted for freeloaders. I spoke to one of the four children who came for the food, asking him the following questions: 'Are you a student'? 'No, I am not a student'. 'Then why did you come for the food'? He replied, 'I don't have food to eat at home and my parents have gone to the farm'* (Field Diary B, April 18, 2017).

The above challenge was prevalent in the rural area as a result of the levels of poverty in those places. That perhaps was the reason why these four children who were not students came to school to be fed. The second category of freeloaders are students who are unbudgeted for. These students

are unbudgeted for in the sense that the service providers are paid to cook for a specified number of students every day, informed by the enrolment figures provided by the GES at the start of each academic year. Ideally, admissions are offered at the start of each academic year. However, this is not the case. Throughout each academic term, parents enrol their children.

Given that education enrolment figures in the three northern regions are low[73], headteachers admit students seeking admission, irrespective of the academic term in which the admission is sought. This situation happened only once in the urban school but happened consistently in the rural area. On one particular day, while in the head teacher's office, a parent came to the school to enrol her child. Even on this first day of school, the child came with her plate and immediately after the paperwork, she went to the service provider for food. The service provider refused to serve the pupil, as she was unbudgeted for. As a result, the parent of this child became angry and insisted that her child should be fed. These pupils are not accounted for when the service provider is being paid. Yet, they are feeding for free as in most cases; the service provider has no way of knowing the new student. Second, due to the poverty levels in the rural area, there were cases of pupils just walking either alone or following their older siblings to school for food. The service providers are in a dilemma. If they refuse to serve such pupils, the parents will enrol the pupil anyway.

> *You will see a pupil lurking around. As soon as they realise we have started serving the food, they come around. Even in this school, there are many students who eat from our service but are not captured in the enrolment figures. My understanding of school admissions was such that, at the end of the third term, new students are admitted. However, this is not the case in this school. When school reopens after the first term, new students are admitted. In the second term, it is the same situation…* (Service Provider1, Rural).

Service Providers 4 and 6 explain further:

> *This has gotten worse to the extent that, even when a new pupil enrols in the school, at any point in time, you will not be paid for their feeding until the start of the next academic year because their names are not in the register. So, we*

See Chapter 2, Section 2.6.1

serve some children who are not in the register for free. And the teachers know this. Even when parents go to the farm and leave children behind, they somehow bring their bowls into the school to be fed (Service Provider 4, Urban).

Even suckling babies come to school. They follow their elder brothers and sisters to school and as soon as they are fed, they start heading home … (Service Provider 6, Urban).

The scenarios above show a service delivery context of demands for services outstripping the supply available. Going by the sheer number of pupils being served (in one school, 400 pupils were being served), the service providers are not able to distinguish between the unbudgeted for new students and the old students on the list of eligible students. This scenario creates significant service delivery challenges for the service provider. Whereas this incident was more prevalent in the rural areas, nonetheless the service provider in the urban area expressed grave concerns about how this affects their ability to deliver the services.

In the end, the impact of fiscal austerity in Ghana, on the GSFP has been more about conditioning the market structures within which service providers operate (by phasing out subsidies and increasing consumption taxes, leading to a rise in the cost of goods and services). Furthermore, calls to increase the feeding rate paid to service providers remain unheeded, as the feeding rate is capped within a price-volatile market condition. Worsening the situation further, service providers have had to contend with a 'piecemeal' or staggered repayment, and repayment arrears are spanning up to one year after service delivery.

6.3 Unsanctioned Coping Mechanisms of Service Providers

Following the arguments in Chapter 3[74], implementing public policies and programmes in the context of the corrupted world of service implies frontline service providers develop several unsanctioned coping strategies (Lipsky 1980: xii; Tummers and Bekkers, 2014; Crossley, 2016).

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[74] See Chapter 3, Section 3.4

In other words, SLBs facing challenges such as high caseloads and fiscal crisis use their considerable discretion and autonomy to determine the nature, amount, and quality of benefits and sanctions provided their clients (Lipsky, 1980: 14; Ellis, 2007; Sullivan, 2009; Lipsky, 2010: 13). In this section, three coping strategies developed by the service providers (the use of discretion in programme implementation, service rationing and client differentiation) are identified and discussed.

6.3.1 Discretion at the Frontline of the GSFP Delivery

Discretion plays a foundational role in Lipsky's SLB conceptual framework in the sense that, SLBs rely on their autonomy and discretion in service delivery, to develop other distinct coping mechanisms when confronted with financial challenges for example. SLBs resort to discretion to 'adapt, subvert and sometimes even resist elements of policy' in order to 'make them fit' (Crossley, 2016) into the context of service provision. An important caveat is warranted here. It is important to point out that when Lipsky talks about discretion, he uses it in a negative sense. That is, SLBs eventually rely on discretion for negative purposes, mainly due to the structural constraints (resource limitations and heavy caseloads for example) within which they operate (Lipsky, 1971: 393-395). Accordingly, in the SLB framework, excessive and inappropriate use of discretion by frontline staff is blamed for the gaps between policy implementation and design (Carson et al., 2015). While discretion is in and of itself used to develop other coping mechanisms, Lipsky (1980: 18) points out that discretion itself is a coping strategy used to address the financial and other challenges frontline staff go through. Concerning the use of discretion as a coping strategy, the service providers routinely compromised the meals served to the pupils by ignoring the recommended meals, removing key (and expensive) ingredients, and in some cases suspending service provision altogether.

6.3.2 Compromised Quality of Meals

Faced with the service provision context of chronic financial challenges and a continually rising number of clients (pupils), it emerged that service providers relied on the use of their discretion, as a coping strategy, to in many ways 'adapt' (Crossley, 2016) service provision to fit the reality of service provision. This follows Lipsky's (1980) contention that frontline staff, among other things, use their discretion to determine the quality of benefits provided their clients. In light of this, a common coping strategy adopted by service providers was to compromise the quality of meals served to the pupils. From the interview with the service providers, they argue that they are unable to provide the service to the quality required. Thus, they have had to adopt a strategy of providing food that does not meet the required/desired quality, as a way of mitigating the escalating cost of service provision and lack of timely reimbursements.

> *They should increase how much they pay us and we will also do it very well,*
> *much better than we are currently doing. This is not how we would have loved*
> *to prepare the food. There was a time when they told us to use eggs when we*
> *cook. This was flatly rejected by the caterers. Each child can eat an egg, no*
> *problem but you have to pay us well…* (Service Provider 4, Rural).

> *We hear our colleagues (other service providers) complain that because they*
> *have not been paid, they cannot cook the food to the quality standard set.*
> *However, in our case, we always do our best to cook to the desired quality*
> (Service Provider 2, Urban).

The above quotes are indicative of the fact that the service providers themselves are aware of the food they provide is of low quality. To get an explanation and a description of the challenges related to the quality of the food served to pupils, two FGDs with the teachers and interviews with the headteachers elicited the following responses. An essential method of gauging the impact of the quality of food served, apart from my direct observation of the meals, was to examine the ingredients used in cooking as a proxy. Here, the teachers made the following observations:

Both quantity and quality have reduced. Some of us didn't meet the time they were serving meat. In 2010, they were serving meat and fish. Even as staff, they use to serve us with quality food (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

Yes. They used to add meat [to the food served] but this time they do not add meat… (Teacher 2, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

And sometimes fish [was added to the food] but now everything is stopped. Only fish powder (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

The teachers were of the view that the meals served to the pupils had changed significantly regarding certain vital ingredients that had been reduced, as a coping strategy. This mostly consisted of protein: fish, meat and eggs, as they were deemed costly. Admitting to the low quality of meals served to the pupils, Service Provider 4 justified her actions as thus:

It is not possible [to serve the pupils using the GHS 0.80 pesewas]. It won't be enough... There are days where you look at the food you are preparing for the children, and you know the children deserve better, but considering the amount of money you are being paid, you cannot help it. Generally, it's not easy… (Service Provider 4, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

One of the headteachers interviewed confirmed this status quo of reduced ingredients in the pupils' meals, describing the meals as 'marvellous' in the past. He argued:

…When it [GSFP] started it was marvellous. Because the children could get fish, all the children you see could get fish on their food or sometimes meat and as it keeps on moving…and even the quality of the food was good. But it has all changed. The fish…or sometimes they used to give them eggs. Yes. As for that one, when it started, it started very well and those [pupils] who were there [in school] enjoyed it...(Head Teacher 1, Urban).

These extracts from the teachers, headteachers and service providers themselves reveal that the service providers vary the quality of meals they serve to the pupils by ignoring ingredients they consider as expensive, as a way of mitigating the rising cost of food purchases. Although removing expensive ingredients as a coping strategy was adopted by all the service providers in this study,

some of them went a step further by exclusively delivering the provision of cheaper to prepare foods. This is discussed in the next section.

6.3.3 Alternative Cheaper Foods

As a coping strategy, the service providers argue they cannot provide the foods that they are required to provide in the menu produced by the GSFP Secretariat, which emphasizes the delivery of one hot, nutritious meal a day to pupils each day (GSFP 2011 Annual Operating Plan, 2011). In essence, they routinely ignore the menu in place of the required meals; the service providers deliver foods that are cheaper to prepare. Furthermore, these foods (cheaper to prepare) are then consistently provided for several days consecutively. However, it should be pointed out that while both service providers in the urban and rural areas ignored the official menu, service providers from the rural areas routinely provided the same meals without variation. Sometimes, they provided the same meal consecutively for three days. Consider the following comments from the headteachers:

> *Even the kinds of food served itself [is problematic]. At times they even try to prepare foods which are not on the menu just to make up for lack of funds. They don't follow the menu rigidly such that we are not able to predict which food will be cooked at any day. They do that to minimise costs. There are particular foods they keep cooking repeatedly because it is cheaper to prepare. Sometimes they will cook this food for several days* (Head Teacher 2, Rural).

> *Yes, I have the menu over here. The menu is for both raining and dry seasons. But they [service providers] don't follow the menu [ignore the menu]. So, when I ask, they will tell you that they pre-finance so sometimes it is difficult to get money enough to follow the menu. So, they rather cook the food they can afford* (Head Teacher1 Urban).

The monotony of the diet delivered to the pupils did not escape the attention of the teachers in both schools as they also described situations where they are unable to know what food the service

provider will cook, as sometimes she cooks the same meal up to three days continuously. Some of the teachers made the following observations:

> *Sometimes they cook the same food 3 days continuous straight [the red type of beans]* (Teacher 4, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *When they [service providers] see [realise] that a particular food… aha like maize, they will cook the same food for several days* (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

Having had these discussions with the headteachers and teachers, I looked out to see if I could notice this incident during observation. Sure enough, this incident occurred during observation. The following is an extract from Field Diary B:

> *It is Thursday the 15th of June 2017. The service provider cooked Aduwa today. She has been cooking the same food since Monday every day. According to anecdotal evidence, the service provider cooks (adopting this strategy because it is cheaper to cook). I noticed a student sitting under one of the trees, quietly and not eating any food. I approached her, and the following ensued: 'Have you been to the service provider today for food'? 'No, I won't go'. I asked her why won't you go? 'Today is Aduwa', she responded. What is wrong with Aduwa, I probed? 'I am tired of it, everyday Aduwa Aduwa why? Now I am tired of it'. After the service provider had served all the students, I engaged her in conversation to understand her point of view. I asked her why she cooked Aduwa four days continuously, contrary to the provisions of the menu and she argued: 'they [the government] has not paid me for cooking for two months now. As you know, Aduwa is cheaper. I have to use my own money, and this is what I can afford'* (Field Diary B, 15th June 2017).

These teachers' concerns about the monotony of diet were put to the service providers. According to the service providers, they are unable to cook according to the menu only because of the lack of funds they face. The service providers argued that:

> *We were asked to cook TZ[75] with meat, Yam[76], Rice and beans etc. We started cooking according to this menu, but it was difficult. Because we are being paid*

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[75] Local dish prepared from stirred maize flour.
[76] Yam is a staple food in many tropical countries, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Yams have brown tough skins and the flesh can vary in colour. It is usually prepared by boiling or frying, bearing a close resemblance to potatoes (only significantly bigger than potatoes).

GHS 0.80 pesewas to cook rice with meat. Is the GHS 0.80 pesewas supposed to pay for the meat or is it supposed to pay for the rice? (Service Provider 2, Rural).

We have been given a daily menu for our cooking weekly. So, for example, as we speak today, we are supposed to cook Tuubaani[77], and yet I don't have the supplies to cook Tuubaani, so what will I do? If you don't get the money to cook the food on the menu, you will have to change the food on the menu and use what you have... One time, I was supposed to cook rice per the menu, but I didn't have rice so I cooked maize... (Service Provider 4, Urban).

As the menu is designed to provide nutritious diets to pupils, service providers cooking cheaper foods, and continuously for days with no variations, undermines the balanced diet component of the GSFP. This has potential long-term effects on the health of the pupils, as they are not served the required balanced diet. In both schools, it was hard to judge, or indeed know the kind of ingredients used in preparing the meals because the meals were prepared from different locations and transported to the schools to be served. However, on a number of occasions, the sentiments of the teachers about the quality of meals were confirmed. Sometimes, when the service provider cooked rice, there were hardly any stew or tomatoes and other ingredients in them. Just by looking at the meals served to the pupils, it looked completely white. Other times too, when the service provider cooked beans, the beans had almost no oil in them. Even worse, the service provider would dilute the beans with much water, making the food watery.

6.3.4 Truncated Service Provision

For some service providers, the only available option to them is either to stop providing the service altogether or suspend the provision of meals for a few days. Here again, service providers interviewed blamed the non-payment of funds when talking about why they skip a few days of service provision. However, the service providers in the urban area provided the service every single day of the academic term. The service provider in the rural area ultimately decided to skip

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[77] Tuubaani is a local dish prepared by blending and boiling beans. It is served with oil and salt.

Fridays in the provision of meals while I was there. Accordingly, in the rural school, every Friday was ineffective as pupils would either not come to school or desert school right after break time. This situation forced the headteacher to dismiss the school at 12 noon on Fridays, instead of the 2 pm scheduled. This situation effectively reduced the number of contact hours for the pupils in the deprived communities. According to this headteacher:

> *On Fridays, she [service provider] does not provide food. They say that last academic year, term 1, term 2, term 3, they have not paid them. So, they have borrowed… if they mean to cook on the five days, in fact, they cannot do it because they [the government] are owing them. So, that is what they said. So, on Fridays, during break time when they [the pupils] don't see any sign [of food], they will go and some will not come. So, punctuality on days that, especially Fridays, is not good. In the morning, they will be present but break time, they will go and you will not have the same number as in the morning* (Head Teacher 1, Rural).

I experienced this phenomenon first hand in the rural school. The number of students looked fewer than usual, on the second Friday of my arrival in the school. Subsequently, I made the following notes:

> *I noticed today that compared to my first Friday visit to the school, the number of children in school were fewer than the usual number. When I inquired from the headteacher, he explained that 'the absence of caterer is the reason why the pupils have left school'. Almost half of the school's population had deserted school. The remaining students on campus were loitering about, with some heading to the bushes, even though the time for break had passed* (Field Diary B, 5th May 2017).

As can be deduced from the data above, service providers of the GSFP appear to wield considerable discretion in the delivery of the school feeding programme. This discretion and autonomy allow them to decide at will, which ingredients to include in the meals served, which meals to provide at which quality, as well as when to serve the meals and when not to (although they are required to provide the meals daily). These findings are consistent with other studies on the use of discretion as a coping strategy by street-level bureaucrats operating in the context of a corrupted world of

service delivery. Particularly, Ellis (2007) found that because of a lack of clear policy and implementation guidelines, coupled with an endemic shortage of funds, social workers responsible for implementing the Direct Payment programme of the Cash-for-care policy in the UK routinely relied on their discretion in determining who gained access to the publicly provided provision. Similarly, Alden (2015a) finds that due to a political climate of austerity in English Local Housing Advice Services, manifested in housing and welfare spending cuts, local authority officials in dealing with a rising number of homelessness resort to the use of negative discretion in interpreting the Housing Act, to ultimately deny qualified people access. Furthermore, service providers at the frontline of service delivery have been found to use their discretion, in the face of dwindling resources and rising caseloads, to sanction claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance in the UK (Fletcher, 2011).

These findings also show the continued relevance of the use of discretion by frontline staff, as a coping strategy, contrary to the claims of some commentators. Following the discussions in Chapter 3[78], these commentators (see Carson et al., 2015; Taylor and Kelly, 2006; Lawson 1993; Langan, 2000) have argued that with the advent of the New Public Management[79] and its attendant ethos of managerialism, the effects of discretion and autonomy has been minimised, thereby questioning the relevance of the SLB framework. Increased managerialism, they argue, has led to the activities of subordinates being increasingly regulated. However, the findings above support the arguments that discretion cannot be eradicated from SLBs work. Several studies (Brodkin, 2006; Baldwin, 2000; Wright 2003; Evans 2010; Grant 2013; Fletcher, 2011) confirm that discretion and autonomy still play a central role in the activities of SLBs. This is because the context of Lipsky's research — the 1970s fiscal crisis and political pressures for frontline staff and agencies to deliver more with less in the USA — are still relevant today, forty years since his seminal work (Lipsky,

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[78] See Chapter 3, Section 3.5

[79] An attempt to reduce government and bureaucratic inefficiencies by adopting private sector management practices.

1980; Evans, 2010; Hoyle, 2014). The work context of SLBs work (the corrupted world of service) makes an attempt to eradicate their reliance on discretion a difficult one.

It must be noted that although Lipsky's framework heavily focuses on frontline workers' discretion and autonomy, he is quick to point out that this does not mean frontline workers work in a context of no rules or regulations concerning their work. He notes that negative discretion is used in the implementation of public programmes not because no rules and regulations are governing the activities of SLBs, it is used because the guidelines can be complex or confounding, or because they are to cope with challenges such as financial. Also, other exogenous factors enhance or widen the discretion and autonomy available to SLBs as they implement public programmes. In the case of the GSFP, through observation and the interviews, the service providers welded overwhelming discretion and autonomy as there was virtually no monitoring or supervision carried out on them or indeed any other moderation force. This state of affairs is attributable to other factors exogenous to Lipsky's SLB conceptual framework. However, if we understand Lipsky's corrupted world of service delivery theme as on in which other factors impact on service delivery to create the imperfect context of service provision, then this exogenous factor can be argued to be part of the corrupted world of service delivery.

It emerged that the GSFP is a heavily politicised programme. Political considerations inform who gets awarded a service provision contract and who is not. Most often, the service providers belong to the Women's Wing of the ruling political party (this is presented later in this chapter). Knowing this, no staff of the GSFP or headteacher is willing or able to supervise or monitor the activities of service providers. Ultimately, service providers are left on their own, to do as they see fit, in the delivery of services. This state of affairs leaves them with vast levels of discretion and autonomy.

6.3.5 Politicisation of the GSFP: The Impact on Monitoring and Supervision

A common theme running through the data set, from the interviews with the service providers, headteachers, expert interviews, as well as the FGD with the teachers was the politicisation of the

GSFP, with its impact on the implementation of the programme. This theme can be viewed as how governments over the years, have routinely used/abused the programme in furtherance of their goals of maintaining clientelistic networks. The sub-themes under this identified as partisan recruitment, and, politically connected service providers and supervision. As discussed in chapter 4, social programmes have proved a useful tool for establishing and firming up patron-clientelistic networks because these programmes offer 'opportunities' of abuse for a variety of reasons (Alcazar, 2011). In a broad sense, social programmes in developing countries are usually designed for clientelistic allocation (Swamy, 2016). This is done because politicians usually focus on short-term distributional policies to deliver both resources and economic opportunities to their base (Appiah and Abdulai, 2017).

The GSFP probably offers the most visible manifestation of what Abotsi (2013), Attafuah (2013) and Gyampo (2016) describe as *Winner Takes All* (WTA) politics. Following Chapter 4's discussion[80], WTA politics particularly pronounced during Ghana's 'chaotic' (Gyampo, 2016) transitions where the termination of contracts of perceived political opponents, forcible ejection from duty post, wholesale removal of public servants from office, and partisan political recruitments as replacements become the norm. Service providers who themselves are political party supporters become nervous as they hear news reports of impending dismissals to make way for the members of the women's wing of the incoming political party. In some cases, service providers have been violently attacked, during the political transition, having their goods destroyed by political party supporters of the incoming government, forcing service providers to halt providing the service — with immediate and significant impacts to primary education. Exactly a week after the new government was sworn into power on 7th January 2017 party supporters of the new government on 12th January 2017 attacked school feeding caterers at the Ejura Basic School in the Ashanti region of Ghana, ostensibly to get them to stop providing the service (*Myjoyonline*,

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[80] See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1.2

2017). Similarly, on 30th March 2017, party supporters again attacked caterers at the Atecoe Demonstration Basic School in the Brong Ahafo region, 'overturning tables and pouring the prepared food on the ground' because according to them, a 'new government (their party)' had come to power and thus, these contracts had to be abrogated to make room for their supporters (*GhanaWeb,* 2017). While party supporters violently attacked caterers, asking for their dismissal, the impact of the suspension of the programme was swift. In one month after the suspension, 33 primary schools lost about 40 per cent of their student population (*Myjoyonline.com,* 2017).

6.3.6 Partisan Recruitment

This theme uncovers and discusses the process of recruiting service providers into the GSFP. When questioned about the appointment process, service providers were surprisingly open and candid about their political affiliations and how such networks aided in securing their contracts for them. In many cases, they spoke in terms, which suggest an association with the present political party. Consider this extract from Service Provider 1:

> *Personally, my husband is the XYZ political party's district chairman. He came home one day and told us [my rival and I[81]] that he had secured a job for us. So, he brought the contract letter to us…* (Service Provider 1, Rural).

Service Provider 1 above is making the point that although she and her co-wife did not apply to be service providers of the GSFP, their husband (a political party Chairman) brought them their catering contracts. Service Provider 5 below describe in more detail, using politically personalising statements, the extent of the politicisation of the recruitment process.

> *If your party is in power, when it is time to employ caterers, the regional organisers of the political party and the District Chief Executive [DCE] are given slots/vacancies. So, you get the contract through the regional organisers and the DCE. So, the agreement was that if your party gives you the contract, or if you are a party member, your party will give you the contract and you will use it to sponsor your constituency. But as for me, the party had not yet given me the contract. After all, the understanding was that as I won the XYZ*

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[81] Polygamy is practiced in the Northern region of Ghana, as it is predominantly Muslim.

constituency, I should be given the contract. This present one that I am running, I had it before I won the Women's Organiser of the XYZ Constituency ... Later on, the XYZ party chairman told me the caterers in his constituency said they couldn't provide the service because they thought they were going to be given cash to run the service. So, he had gotten Zoomlion [A public works programme] for the ladies, so there were other communities without caterers. So he asked me if I could provide the service if given the contract, and I agreed. Later on, he actually called me so I took my uncle's wife along. When we got there my uncle's wife was given contracts for two schools, and I was given 1 school. So, when John Mahama won the elections and I was also elected the Women's Organiser of the constituency, the understanding was that I should be offered a school feeding contract... In my case, I felt that if the opportunity presents itself and I am called by the DCE to be offered the contracts, I would let my friend also take one ... (Service Provider 5, Urban).

The above is indicative of the politicised nature of the programme's recruitment process. Here, service providers were awarded the contracts to provide the service because they hold key positions within their political party or that their husband is the District Chairman of a political party. This was, however not an isolated incident. In my expert interview with the WFP Northern Regional School Feeding Programme Coordinator, she noted:

> *There is no transparent and known procedure in recruiting caterers. Even the issue of contracts, it was one of the reasons why they started giving them contracts. Even in the past, they [service providers] didn't have contracts.*

As stated by the WFP interviewee, there is no clear-cut publicly known procedure for recruiting service providers into the service. The only known requirement is to belong to the political party in power usually as a member of the Women's Wing. Thus, when the political party comes to power, the party loyalists lobby for service provision. Key party members in the regions and constituencies are given slots to be offered to the known party supporters to run the service. Instead of manipulating the GSFP for electoral outcomes as it is the often reported[82] means of abusing social programmes in the Global South (see Manacorda et al., 2011; De Waal, 1997; Holland and

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[82] See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1.1

Yeats, 2005), these findings, on the contrary, show that the GSFP is used to reward political party activists and members for their perceived efforts at getting their party elected. This follows Alcazar (2010), Lindberg (2003) and Wantchekon (2003)'s argument that public programmes are used to compensate political party faithful in the Global South. In Ghanaian political landscape, incoming governments feel the need to use their power and control over state resources (Alcazar, 2010) to 'take care of your [their] own people' (Lindberg 2003: 124) by granting personal favours — jobs, contracts (Berenschot, 2018) in exchange for continued political support from their base (Wantchekon, 2003, Lindberg, 2003).

In the case of the GSFP, the data show that politicisation of the programme is not so much about seeking political support from the general populace, as it is about offering rewards to campaign supporters. In this case, the service providers are part of the political structure of the government in the form of the women's wing. It must be noted, however, that these favours are not only limited to the Women's' Wing, but other party supporters are rewarded with appointments to positions such as Regional Coordinators, District and Regional Managers, District Chief Executives, Municipal Chief Executive and the National Coordinator.

The politicisation of the programme has led to a regime of non-supervision of monitoring of the activities of service providers. During the two terms that I was in the schools, not once was supervision carried out to check the nature of the service being delivered. Because of the incidence of the politically connected caterers, headteachers are unable to interfere. The WFP interviewee blamed this lack of supervision on the existence of politically connected and powerful service providers. In a sense, headteachers are careful in their dealings with such service providers. Consider this extract from the WFP Northern Regional School Feeding Programme Coordinator:

> *Now, some of the caterers are even more powerful than the headteachers so*
> *the headteachers even fear to approach them. Because we found out in one of*
> *our monitoring that a lot of the caterers were either Women's Organisers of*
> *Political Parties or a DCE's wife or even… they are all politically connected.*

A headteacher also explained:

You know this programme, excuse me to say is political. So, they don't monitor them oo. They only sit at assembly [District Assembly] and give the headteachers forms to fill. But they don't follow it [enforce it] …. Now, if you should taste the food [served to pupils], or if a child is served and you look at it [the food], nobody will tell you the quality is low ... Both the quality and quantity is not there [inadequate] but when you talk [when you complain], it doesn't go anywhere so it's better you also keep quiet… The only challenge is, you know, supervision from the municipal assembly. Because they are in charge. Since we started [head teacher for 8 years], I remember only 1 person came here [to monitor] … so they do not supervise ... (Head Teacher 1, Rural).

Since political appointees can be very powerful as they have considerable political influence, professional education workers such as headteachers, district education officers are wary of these politically connected service providers. The existence of politically connected and powerful service providers means that the service providers have a field day. There is little supervision at best or none in most cases, and headteachers cannot do anything about it. This only worsens an already bad situation as children eventually bear the brunt of the problem. A case in point is the service provider in the rural area who decided not to run the service on Fridays, for the entire term, yet no one did anything about it. Rewarding party faithful with contracts and employment into the GSFP undermines the programme delivery in a number of ways. First, as we have seen, both vertical and horizontal monitoring and supervision become weakened. Knowing that the service providers are party supporters, there is a little incentive from the regional and district bosses to monitor and supervise them. At the local level also, both headteachers and district education authority officers are unable to monitor and supervise them, as the service providers are known to be influential with their links to incumbent political parties. As presented about, some service providers are married to regional political party chairmen — people who wield significant political power. In the end, as there is little to no supervision (in some cases, once in 8 years of the head teacher's tenure in the school), both the school staff and children are left at the mercy of the service provider. In sum, it follows from the data findings that the concept of the politicising of social

programmes in Ghana further supports the discussions in the literature on the politicisation of social programmes in the Global South. Specifically, programmes such as the GSFP are used to selectively reward constituencies known to be the base of political parties in power, with the aim of either rewarding the party supporters for their votes.

6.4 Rationing Services

The use of discretion in the delivery of public services within the context of strict funding regimes is just one of the many coping strategies in Lipsky's SLB conceptual framework. Rowe (2012), Vedung (2015), and Tummers and colleagues (2015) note that rationing available public services and programmes to clients is also an essential tool in the SLB's coping strategy arsenal. SLBs in the context of rationing services essentially act as gatekeepers (of scarce resources) in reducing quantity and access to their services. SLBs adopt several methods to ration the goods and services they deliver. Lipsky (2010: 87) notes that this may be done by 'fixing the amount or level of goods and services in relation to other goods and services' or 'varying the total amount available'. Ultimately, the rationale behind rationing goods and services delivered by SLBs is usually to reduce or limit the level of services provided (Lipsky, 2010: 87). Thus, rationing available goods and services within the context of service delivery challenges is an essential coping mechanism adopted by SLBs.

Regarding the GSFP, all service providers were asked how the current programme delivery challenges (chronic fiscal challenges, fixed feeding rate within a regime of continually rising cost of goods and services and the increasing number of student 'freeloaders') impact service delivery. Many of the service providers felt they were unable to deliver the service in the quantity desired due to the challenges they experience. Accordingly, they have had to adopt a strategy of 'thinning' — that is, reducing the quantity of meals served to each student. This is because they are unable to increase the overall quantity of meals they prepare, as the cost of foodstuff escalates. Thus, the same quantity (and in the context of rising prices, dwindling quantity) is used to serve the

continually rising number of students. In other words, as a response to programme implementation challenges, the service providers have had to adopt a strategy of rationing the available meals as a way of *1)* mitigating the escalating cost of service provision and *2)* lack of timely reimbursements.

> *Truly speaking, if you want to serve the food according to how we were asked to serve per child, a lot of children are going to be left out without being served. And it is not proper for a child to bring his bowl for food and then you don't serve that child. We manage the food until it is enough for all of them* (Service Provider 1 Rural).

Providing a practical example and better particulars of the situation, these service providers explained:

> *It [fiscal challenges] affects [the meals served]. Because the ladle they [GSFP Administrators] want us to use, we don't use it. So at least, for example the quantity that we are supposed to serve to three children, we use the same quantity to serve at least five children. If you are going to use that quantity to serve three children, your food will not be enough to serve every child …* (Service Provider 1 Urban).

> *If you serve them in that quantity [required quantity of two ladles] and the food is not enough to serve every child, what will you do? If you cook and you are not able to serve all the children, what are you going to do? You will not be able to serve all the children [if you use the ladle]. They just have to pay us well…* (Service Provider 4, Rural).

> *So, we have only been managing with the amount. For example, when we cook beans, there is this ladle that we use in serving the pupils. So, if you use the ladle to fetch 1 and half, then add gari[83] and oil. If you cook rice, you use two ladles. [**Question: Is this how you have been asked to do in serving?**] No. this is what we do when we say we are managing….* (Service Provider 5, Rural).

From these quotes, it can be discerned that the service providers serve the pupils in smaller quantities compared to the prescribed quantity of two ladles per child, only as means of 'managing' and ensuring that all the children present in the school are served. As the quotes above suggest, the

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[83] Gari is a coarse granular flour made from grated cassava tubers. It can be eaten by mixing it with water, sugar and milk. It can also be added to other foods such as cooked beans and oil.

service providers themselves are aware of the food they provide is of inadequate quantity. The inadequate nature of the food served to the pupils was a major concern of the teachers, arguing that sometimes if they looked at the food served, they only 'pity the students.'

> *When the children are holding it, and you see it [the food], you will pity them* (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *When they serve, just one ladle, it is not enough. When you look at their[pupils] faces, you will not see happiness* (Teacher 4, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *It is just one ladle. They will just fetch once. That is not how we serve our children. KG [Kindergarten] child [even] if they add 2 [of the ladle they serve currently] they won't be satisfied. And this is the quantity they serve everyone* (Teacher 6, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

These sentiments were not isolated cases. In both schools, during the observation, I noticed that the food served to the pupils were unusually small. Consider the following extract from Field Diary A:

> *The quantity of food served today looks quite small, even for the inadequate one ladle the service provider said she uses. The pupils look quite disappointed. Almost four minutes after this student went for the food, she has eaten it and she is sitting down quietly and calmly. I approached her and asked why she was seated quietly and all alone, without eating. She said 'this food is small. Me I have eaten it already and my stomach is not full'* (Field Diary A, February 20th, 2017).

Most often than not, when the children were served the food, they quickly consumed the food and headed off to a corner to play. At one point, I noticed a student was unusually quiet after eating. When asked why, she said she was hungry. I asked her if she had not eaten and she said she was not satisfied. In the rural area, in a school of 400 students, a small cooking pot (see Image 1 below) was used for cooking for the school. The food was cooked only once, and it immediately was strange to me how that many students were to be fed from that pot. Unsurprisingly, the service providers had to serve all the 400 pupils from that moderately sized single cooking pot.

Image 1: Cooking pot for 400 students in the Rural Area.

The above findings are broadly consistent with other research findings (Alden, 2015b; Rowe, 2002; Hastings, 2009) that show that frontline service workers resort to rationing available services as a response to the challenges of their work. For instance, Sarah Alden (2015a) found that in local authorities with a scarce resource, as a result of the UK Coalition Government's ongoing strict fiscal austerity programme, frontline workers responsible for implementing the Housing Act consistently resorted to rationing the available services (housing facilities) which eventually turned many qualified clients away. Similarly, Hastings' (2009) research into the coping strategies of frontline environmental workers in the UK show that these workers, as a result of increased workload and lack of resources rationed their service provision by cutting corners or doing 'just the bare minimum' of the job required of them as they worked in deprived communities.

Additionally, Rowe (2002) demonstrates that officers tasked to implement the Social Fund, in order to manage competing pressures for limited resources, had to act as gatekeepers (of the scarce resources) by rationing the available resources to fewer of the qualified applicants. As it has been discussed above, Lipsky notes that rationing services can be achieved through rationing the amount of resources or services available or through limiting access to services by making it more difficult for clients (Tummers et al., 2015) to access services. This is done through tactics such as time-wasting, asking clients to form long queues or deliberately withholding key information about the client's rights or available services. In the case of the GSFP, the rationing approach adopted by the service providers was more about reducing the quantity of service available, rather than time-wasting for example, as service providers thinned out available meals in order to satisfy all the students available.

6.5 Client Differentiation

This section discusses the final theme in Lipsky's SLB framework that is relevant to this research. In order to carry out their duties within the corrupted world of service delivery — particularly in the context of chronic financial challenges and increased workload — Lipsky (1980: 105-106) pointed out that SLBs resort to differentiating (among clients), focusing on issues such as 'eligibility, culpability and suitability for bureaucratic intervention'. Lipsky (1980: 142) points out that frontline service providers differentiate between clients through categorisations or on the spot *ad hoc* decisions making. Differentiating or categorising clients will ultimately lead to a regime of different or segmented service provisions for different categories of clients since some clients will be subjected to stereotyping and bias (Lipsky, 1980; Hastings, 2009; Baviskar and Winter, 2017). Lipsky further argues that the nature of stereotyping and bias used by SLBs to differentiate between clients will 'reflect the prevailing biases of society' (Lipsky, 1980: 22). This is an essential point. Some studies (see Meier et al., 1991; Baumgarter, 1992; Hasenfeld, 2000) show that prevailing societal biases about specific clients are an important basis upon which SLBs use to categorise

clients into 'deserving' and 'undeserving' of services being rendered. In other words, when faced with situations in which SLBs have to resort to client differentiation as a coping strategy, societal biases in respect of their clients is the basis for categorising them into 'deserving' and 'undeserving' dichotomies.

Regarding the service providers of the GSFP, compared to the other coping strategies such as rationing services, only a few service providers, all in the rural area (perhaps as a result of the comparatively lax supervision from the school authorities) resorted to client differentiation as a coping strategy. The service providers noted that:

> *As the cooks are going to school, I instruct them not to serve the other [new] students. I asked them to serve only the official number of students in my contract...* (Service Provider 5, Rural).

> *Because as they [the pupils] eat the food being served without any payment coming to the caterer, we drive away the older students, leaving the younger ones to be served because they cannot stop serving the little ones...* (Service Provider 6, Rural).

When I asked why she decides to do this, Service Provider 6 argued:

> *The little ones will be crying and making noise in the school, but the older ones are grown so they don't fear hunger [are able to contain hunger easier] compared to the little ones. As for little children they don't understand anything. All they [the pupils] want is food.*

In the rural school, I noticed that the service provider also resorted to this approach.

> *It has been 15 minutes now since four of the older pupils have been trying to get the Service Provider's attention to serve them, but she has continually been ignoring them. These four pupils stand out because they are physically different; they are taller and bigger by far, compared to the other students in general. Eventually, three of them left the service provider's stand and went to their class. The other one went on to eat with another friend, whom I imagine is his friend* (Field Diary A, 13th March 2017).

In fact, at a point, it almost became normalised, as the older pupils would not go for the meals at break time. When the service provider was asked about this, she said her priority was on the

younger children. Service Provider 4 below justified her actions by arguing that she had to focus on the younger children, rather than the older ones because the older pupils are 'used to hunger':

> *This is a village. The older children are already used to hunger. But as for the little ones, when they don't eat and you see them, you will pity them [due to their demeanour]. So, we serve the little ones first, and the remaining will be used to serve the older ones in that way* (Service Provider 4, Rural).

As already discussed above, a regime of fiscal austerity and its attendant effects, coupled with an atmosphere of significant politicisation of the programme has meant that service providers have overwhelming autonomy and discretion in running the service. Furthermore, attitudes to education are laxer in the rural areas than in the urban areas. For example, in the rural areas, both the teachers and headteacher were wholly disconnected from the running of the programme. They showed very little interest in what the service provider did or did not do. This is contrary to what pertained in the urban area where a number of times the headteacher would be seen going to the canteen to check if the service provider was around. As a result of these factors, the service providers in the rural areas had more autonomy and discretion to develop other coping mechanisms such as client differentiation. Another example of the wide variation in autonomy and discretion between service providers in rural and urban areas is demonstrated, as already discussed, that on Fridays the service provider in the rural area would not show up. This went on for the entire term, to the point that it became a regular occurrence. This is highly unlikely to have been allowed to go on in the urban school.

The findings on client differentiation echo similar research findings demonstrating the effect fiscal austerity has on frontline service provider's resort to client differentiation. In a recent quantitative study, Siddhartha Baviskar (2018) shows that as a direct response to resource challenges, 30 per cent of schoolteachers in Denmark resorted to categorising students on the basis of academic performance. The teachers then proceeded to place greater teaching priority on students with a greater chance of making it academically, to the disadvantage of the other students. Additionally,

Alden (2015b) reveals that the opinions and biases (based on their subjective worldview and personal values) of local housing officials in England about particular users, informed the services rendered to clients who applied for support. In the field of medical practice, some studies have found practices of client differentiation and segmentation. In South Africa, Walker and Gilson's (2004) and Gaede's (2015) study of doctors and nurses show that medical practitioners feeling overwhelmed (due to high caseloads) and operating within the context of resource scarcity resort to client differentiation as a coping strategy as they create categories of patients. That is, 'deserving patients' — children, the elderly and patients with chronic illnesses — and the 'undeserving patients' (that is, patients who are rude to nurses, and those shopping around between clinics). These medical staff relied on their subjective biases in classifying patients into those needing/deserving care and those who do not. In the case of the doctors, they also used bias against some patients by reducing access to such patients. Wright (2003) has also shown how Jobcentre staff relied on moral judgements to categorise clients into 'good' and 'bad' clients. With good clients deserving assistance, while bad clients do not. Concerning the service providers of the GSFP who adopted differentiation as a coping strategy, that to them was the only means of continually providing the service in such difficult contexts. In their cases, they adopted frames of 'deserving' pupils and 'undeserving' pupils to differentiate between which categories of pupils needed assistance first as a priority. The basis for differentiating and categorising the pupils was prevailing stereotypical views about age. That is, a stereotypical view that younger children are less able to withstand hunger, and so more deserving of meals than older pupils who were expected to handle the issue of hunger easier on account of their age.

In the end, the unsanctioned coping strategies service providers develop, as a direct response to the challenges they face — in the corrupted world of service — ultimately undermines policy intent and goals (Lipsky, 1980: xii; Nielsen, 2006; Tummers and Bekkers, 2014; Crossley, 2016; Vedung, 2015). This is because frontline workers adopt them despite requirements to provide services

equally to beneficiaries and to pre-determined standards (Lipsky, 2010). In the case of the GSFP, it is clear how service providers, as a result of their attempts to deal with the impact of austerity on their delivery, undermine the policy intent of the GSFP. As a recap, following the discussion in Chapter 4[84], the GSFP's goal is to serve every eligible child, one hot, nutritious food a day. This is designed to increase school enrolment and retention, with the long-term goal of harnessing the human capital of the country through the education of children — the citizen workers of the future. However, if service providers are routinely sidestepping carefully designed menus; compromising the quality and quantity of meals served; and arbitrarily determining the frequency of delivering the service as well as the category of pupils they serve, what hope is there for the GSFP to contribute in building the human capital of the country?

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on examining how the ongoing fiscal austerity in Ghana affects both the funding and delivery of the GSFP. The findings suggest that although there is no clearly stated government policy of austerity concerning the GSFP, in reality, the programme has not been immune or protected from austerity. Using Michael Lipsky's SLB conceptual framework to analyse and discuss the actions, decisions and choices made by service providers of the GSFP show how fiscal austerity in Ghana (in the form of fixed, inadequate feeding rates in a context of continually rising prices of goods and services, and unpaid service provision spanning up to one year after service provision) has created a corrupted world of service delivery for the GSFP. Specifically, the chapter has highlighted how severe financial challenges can lead to inadequate service provision, as service providers adopt a host of unsanctioned coping strategies — such as the use of discretion in determining the quality of meals, the ingredients to include and which to ignore and the consistency of service provision. Furthermore, service providers have resorted to rationing meals served to students, compromising the quantity of meals served to pupils in the

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[84] See Chapter 4, Section 4.6.2

process. Also, as a way of getting around the challenges of service provision, some providers resorted to differentiating between clients, using prevailing societal biases and prejudices into classifying pupils into 'deserving' (younger primary school pupils) and undeserving (older upper primary pupils). These coping strategies ultimately undermine both the programme intent and goals, leading to a mismatch between policy intent, and the actual nature of delivery on the frontlines. The service providers' discretion undergirds these unsanctioned coping strategies. The findings also show that while the service providers draw heavily on their discretionary powers to cope with the fiscal challenges of service delivery, the ability to resort to discretion by service providers is further enhanced due to the politicised nature of the programme. The GSFP is a heavily politicised one; as a result, service providers are left unsupervised as they implement the programme the way they deem fit. The next chapter focuses on how this interplay between service provision within a corrupted world of service and the adoption of unsanctioned coping strategies by service providers, impact teaching and learning, as well as the food insecurity status of primary school pupils.

CHAPTER 7

Bearing the Brunt of Austerity in School: The Experiences of Families and School Staff

7.1 Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter explored the impacts and implications of fiscal austerity for the delivery, as well as objectives of the GSFP, the primary aim of this chapter is to understand school children's perceptions and experiences of food insecurity in their schools — as a consequence of the actions and decisions of the service providers — and the implications this has on their academic performance. The second aim is centred on exploring the strategies adopted by teachers, parents and the children themselves to cope with the challenge of food insecurity (facing pupils) in the context of austerity. The chapter begins by highlighting important gaps in the food security literature, thereby demonstrating why a focus on the experiences of children, in particular, is essential for this research study. This is followed by an examination of pupils' experiences of food insecurity in school and how these experiences correlate with their academic performance. The subsequent section discusses the strategies adopted by teachers as they struggle to balance their responsibility of teaching with dealing with the existence of hungry and food insecure pupils who are disinterested in any teaching activity. The final part is devoted to exploring the strategies children and parents adopt to address the challenge of their pupils staying in school hungry.

7.2 Hunger in the Classroom and the *Stock* Functions of Social Investment

The analysis of the data collected for this research shows that fiscal austerity in Ghana has not only had substantial delivery challenges for the service providers of the GSFP, but austerity has significant implications for the pupils in schools as well. Related to the pupils, the data suggest that austerity has meant that pupils experience food insecurity in their classrooms almost as a daily routine. More specifically, the coping strategies and decisions the service providers adopt (as a response to the fiscal challenges they experience), have profound implications for children's classroom activities, as well as their nutritional status.

Following on from the discussions in Chapter 4[85], achieving the state of food security, defined as 'existing when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (World Food Summit, 1996; World Health Organisation, 2015) remains an elusive quest for governments and policymakers both in high-income and low-income countries. Despite ongoing attempts to end food insecurity, understood as 'the inability of households and individuals to access food of adequate quantity and quality' (FAO, 2017a: 23), millions of people and households worldwide experience food insecurity challenges. Studies in the food security literature are predicated on these conceptualisations of food (in) security and were thus employed in this thesis. That is, having the physical, social, and economic access to food of adequate quantity and nutritional quality is the state of being food secure.

The literature on food insecurity is vast and growing. However, there are significant gaps that need to be addressed. First, on a methodological level, issues of measurement and appropriate conceptualisation exist. A large proportion of the existing studies focuses on the use of proxy variables such as anthropometric measures (measuring nutrition, body weight and height for age) to determine the extent of food insecurity (Weaver and Hadley, 2009; Howard, 2011). However, anthropometric measures are incapable of accurately measuring and understanding experiential aspects and severity of food insecurity (Weaver and Hadley, 2009; Wolfe et al., 2003). Arguing for an experiential approach to the study of food insecurity, Radimer et al. (1992) cautioned that due to the inherently subjective nature of hunger, attempts to measure it directly (through proxy tools such as anthropometry) is problematic. Weaver and Hadley (2009) note that these significant limitations of proxy variables have led to the recent rising interests in focusing on experience-based measures of food insecurity, using qualitative methods.

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[85] See Chapter 4 Section 4.5

Second, while some studies on experience-based measures exist, they have significant gaps as well. The existing qualitative studies of food insecurity is focused on the experiences and perspectives of adults (Anderson, 1990; Lorenzana and Sanjur, 1999; Nord, 2009) or old people (Wolfe et al., 1998; 2003) leading to a conceptualisation of food insecurity that is grounded in adult experiences and perspectives (Connell et al., 2005). Only a few studies have examined the effects of food insecurity on children, but these studies have also relied upon parent proxies, rather than engaging children directly (Casey et al., 2006; Cook et al. 2006; Fram et al., 2011). Parent proxies sometimes do not accurately capture the true nature of children's experiences (Nalty et al., 2013). In their review of the food security literature, Bernal and colleagues (2012), as well as Harvey (2016: 236), found 'only two studies' [that is, Fram et al.'s 2011 and Connell et al.'s 2005 research] that had asked children directly about their experiences and perceptions of food security.

Incidentally, Harvey (2016) observes that much of the food security research, in general, has been done in the USA and Canada. Therefore, these two studies that directly engaged children were in high-income countries and within the context of understanding household food insecurity (not that of schools). Clearly then, the impact of food insecurity on children, on the whole, is not well documented (Ke and Ford-Jones, 2015) and in relation to school contexts, mostly ignored — leaving an important gap for research. In other words, while the literature on food insecurity is vast, the experiences of children have been primarily sidestepped (Connell et al., 2005). Thus, research on the nature and severity of children's food insecurity 'can and should be grounded in children's own perspectives' (Fram et al., 2011: 1115) because studies show that children are the best reporters of their experiences (ibid).

Furthermore, both Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child 1989 proclaim children's right to express their views and perceptions on issues affecting them and thus should be involved in research (Twum-Danso, 2009). Additionally, many studies within the new sociological studies of childhood show that children are competent social actors with agency,

capable of shaping and being shaped by the social world around them (James et al., 1998; James and James, 2012; James and Prout, 1997a, 1997b; Pells, 2012; Abebe, 2013). This section, therefore, in order to understand children's perceptions and views of food insecurity in schools, is grounded in the experiences of pupils themselves.

7.2.1 Pupils' Experiences with Food Insecurity

At the methodological level, the few experiential qualitative research studies into food insecurity rely on the components of food insecurity. That is, when participants are narrating their experiences of food insecurity, the responses are usually classified under four major themes. These four components of food insecurity was first developed by Radimer et al. (1992) and subsequently adapted by Wolfe et al. (1998; 2003) in their study into the older peoples' experiences of food insecurity; Connell et al. 's (2005) study of mothers and children's experiences of food insecurity; and Fram et al.'s (2011) study into adolescents' experiences of food insecurity. The results from these studies demonstrate that food insecurity has quantitative, qualitative, social and psychological components, as has been discussed in Chapter 4[86]. Using these four themes, the data in this study show that children as young as eight years old described behaviours and experiences suggestive of food insecurity while in school. This section of the chapter presents and discusses the findings on children's experiences of food insecurity in the classroom.

7.2.1.1 Quantitative Component of Food Insecurity

This component of food insecurity examines participants' patterns of food consumption that depicts or suggest insufficient food intake. Specifically, the quantitative component of food insecurity explores the actual amount of food consumed by interviewees, usually reflected in respondents reporting eating less than usual or needed. The pupils in this research were asked to reflect on the amount of food served to them in school. Pupils from both the urban and rural areas

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[86] See Chapter 4 Section 4.5

indicated that the food served to them in school was of insufficient quantity, leading to several challenges. Consider the excerpts below:

> *Because they [service providers] cut it small small [food served in small portions], when I eat it, I don't get satisfied* (Boy, 12-year-old Urban).

> *The first time [previously] when they are going to cut it [serve the portion], they will cut it big big when you eat it your stomach will be full [satisfied], and this time they will cut it small small and your stomach will not full* (Girl, 13-year-old Urban).

> *The food [served to us] is not plenty, it is very small because they will be putting it in your bowls small small and the soup is not more [insufficient]. We don't get enough to eat every day in school* (Boy, 14-year-old Rural).

> *Now [Presently] it [quantity of food served] is bad, and it is not better because the other time [previously] it was better, and they were serving us very beautifully. That time when we take the food, it is plenty* (Girl, 10-year-old Urban).

> *It [the food] is small because when you go to them [service providers] to collect the food, they will cut the food small* (Girl, 8-year-old Rural).

Using terms and concepts such as 'cut it small small', 'our stomach will not be full', 'it is bad' and 'previously it was better' these pupils demonstrated awareness of, and narrated their experiences of the quantitative component of food insecurity while in school. From these comments, the pupils show their dissatisfaction with the quantity of food served to them in school by the service providers, noting that 'previously' the food served to them was better. That is, the students compared the quantity of food served to them in times past to the quantity served to them presently and concluded that the quantity of meals served presently is lower. Not having access to the desired quantity of food, while in school, suggests that the pupils are quantitatively food insecure in school.

7.2.1.2 Qualitative Component of Food Insecurity

The second component of food insecurity refers to the poor quality of food consumed, generally reflected in inadequate diet or nutrition and unsuitable food. Respondents typically reference eating

poor quality of diet or eating less preferred diet among others when narrating their experiences about the qualitative component of food insecurity. With specific reference to this research, it emerged that while the overwhelming number of pupils involved in the study did not understand terminologies such as balanced and healthy diet (a diet made up of a variety of foods such as carbohydrates, proteins, vegetables, among others, in the right proportions), a few of them did. The pupils who did not understand the concept balanced and healthy diet, nonetheless, used words and phrases to describe their experiences associated with the qualitative component of food insecurity. The pupils were asked to discuss if any, the food they disliked and why. They made the following observations:

> *Before [Initially, in the past], they [used to] serve the food with stew and oil. But now [in recent times] you cannot even taste the salt in the food. The food that was served back then was better, we could eat the food [back then]. That time [in times past], they even added gari to the beans, but this has been stopped* (Boy, 12-year-old Rural).

> *They no longer serve some food [The menu has changed]. The food is not delicious. Before [Back in those days], the food was much more delicious than today. They used to serve the food with a lot of stew and meat* (Girl, 13-year-old Urban).

> *The food is not delicious. There is no meat, Maggi[87] and pepper [in the food]* (Girl, 12-year-old Urban).

> *The food is not nutritious and delicious because they pour more water on [in] the stew and soup [this makes the stew/soup watery because the caterer wants to make sure every child is served]* (Boy, 13-year-old, Urban).

> *They [service provider] cook only maize and oil, but you can't taste the oil and salt because it is not much. I don't eat like it* (Boy, 12-year-old, Urban).

> *Yes [I don't like], maize. They cook the maize, and it will be white [without stew/oil]. They don't add anything to it. There will be oil, but it will tiny. I don't like it [but] I eat it because I am hungry* (Girl, 9-year-old, Rural).

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[87] Maggi is a concentrated seasoning sauce (usually in the form of cubes or liquid) used in stew and soup.

The comments above indicate that the quality of meals served to the pupils is inadequate, and the pupils are unhappy about that. Through phrases such as 'the pour more water on the stew' by (Boy, 13-year old, Urban), he makes the point that the service providers dilute the food served by adding much water into the stew (just so she is able to serve many all the students) — thereby rendering the food 'not nutritious and delicious'. Furthermore, Girl, 12-year-old, Urban observed the elimination of key ingredients in their food. She pointed out that the food served contains 'no fish or meat or Maggi' (lack of required ingredients for a healthy and balanced diet). Thus, as it has been argued in the previous chapter, the service providers eliminate ingredients they deem expensive, as a cost-saving measure. However, these are key ingredients (fish and meat for example) required for the meals to be healthy and balanced.

A prominent feature of the pupils' responses above is the fact that the pupils compared the state of the quality of their food presently to their past experiences. They concluded that because the service providers no longer add meat, fish and other ingredients such as Maggi, the food served in the past was 'better'. Overall, the pupils' unanimous denunciation the quality of their diet did not come as a surprise to me. Throughout my stay on their campuses, I observed quite worryingly, that the quality of the food served is inadequate. For example, as Girl, 9-year-old Rural above described, the maize served to them is 'will be white'. The poor quality of the meals served to the pupils was documented in the field diary as:

> *The food served today looks watery. The food is loose, even though the service provider served beans today. Some of the students are playing with their food. Two girls are driving their spoons through the food in a circular motion. And in the process, they are spilling the food. When I asked one of them why she is doing that (spilling the food), she said: 'it is not good, it (the food) is just water. Me I don't like it'. The other girl at this point kicked the rest of the food away. I asked her if she had arrangements for another food and this was her response: 'no. I have not eaten, but I don't like this food. It [eating the food] is like drinking soup'. My impression is that these pupils although hungry, are not eating the food served to them by reason of the food's quality, or the lack thereof (Field Diary A, February 7th 2017).*

In most cases, I observed that the food served to the pupils was either pale (indicative of a lack of adequate essential nutrients such as the absence of oil, tomatoes and Maggi among others) or watery (as the service providers added water just to increase the quantity of the food in the cooking pot). Together, the extracts above under the qualitative component of food insecurity are suggestive of the pupils' consciousness of the gradual deteriorating in the quality of meals served to them. Although the children said they dislike some foods (such as maize for example) because of the undesirable quality of the food, it should be noted that the children would still have been considered food insecure, even if they consumed the poor quality food served.

7.2.1.3 Psychological Component of Food Insecurity

The psychological component of children's experiences of food insecurity relates to feelings of sadness or a lack of choice, and anxiety about the unavailability of food. The psychological component is also about respondents having an awareness of food insecurity and what they feel about it. As well as the qualitative and quantitative components of food insecurity, the pupils in this study talked about their lack of choice in accessing the food they desire. Some of them noted that although they dislike the food served to them due to its low quality, nonetheless they were 'forced' to take the food as they had no alternative. At this point, it is essential to clarify the overlapping nature of both the qualitative and psychological components of food insecurity. These two themes overlap in the sense that the pupils talked about eating less desirable food they did not like (signifying the qualitative component) because they had no choice (psychological component). Regarding the pupils' psychological experiences of food insecurity, they made the following claims:

> *Yes [I don't like] 'Cowpeas[88]'. I just don't like it. On the days that 'Cowpeas'*
> *is cooked, I will just eat it though I don't like it. So, I will have to eat it. I don't*
> *tell my mother that they cook 'Cowpeas' because she already knows* (Boy, 12-
> year-old, Urban).

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[88] Cowpeas are beans-like seeds that is eaten (by boiling) mostly in the African sub-region.

Yes, [there is some food I don't like] that is beans because when they prepare it germs is inside the beans, and I don't like it, but if I don't eat it I will be hungry (Girl, 13-year-old, Rural).

I don't like the beans. It is like water [watery because it is diluted]. Though I don't like it, I have to eat it like that because I am hungry. When I am eating this food, I don't feel well (Boy, 11-year-old, Urban).

When madam [service provider] does not come [pointing towards the caterer] that day, I will be quiet because madam didn't come and I won't get food. The teacher will ask a question, and I won't mind her. She [teacher] will be angry and say I don't pay attention [in class]. But I didn't hear the question [she asked] (Girl, 12-year-old, Rural).

These child participants described their psychological experiences of food insecurity, primarily reflected in their lack of choice in getting the food they want. While admitting they did not like these foods, some of them claimed had to eat the food nonetheless because they had no choice. Many of them reported disliking the food that was served to them because of their low quality, particularly the foods that were watery. For instance, Girl, 13-year-old, Rural makes the point that while she dislikes the food served, 'but if I don't eat it I will be hungry'. This statement signifies a lack of choice in accessing desirable food. For some pupils too, the non-availability of the service provider on certain days sets in motion feelings of worry and anxiety about getting food to eat that day. Girl, 12-year-old, Rural stated that: 'When madam [service provider] does not come that day, I will be quiet because madam didn't come and I won't get food.' As a result of worrying about not getting food that day, she loses concentration in class: 'The teacher will ask a question, and I won't mind her. She [teacher] will be angry and say I don't pay attention [in class]. But I didn't hear the question [she asked]' (Girl, 12-year-old, Rural). Apart from worrying about not getting food to eat in school, the pupils were faced with a binary choice: eat the food they did not like or go hungry in school.

7.2.1.4 Social Component of Food Insecurity

The last experiential measure of food insecurity is the social component. That is, the social component of food insecurity examines respondents' use of social networks to seek food, such as borrowing from family or friends. As the research was carried out in a school setting, the pupils' ability and options in terms of relying on social networks for food was severely constrained (pupils were mostly among their peers of similar socio-economic circumstances). This limitation was understandable to me because of the general lack of resources among themselves as peers. Nevertheless, within the context of this research, the theme of social component appeared within two broad scenarios. Some students reported either borrowing money from their friends or that they ate from their friends. In the extracts below, the students reported some of the strategies they adopt when they either do not like the food or when the service providers do not turn up in school on a particular day:

> *I will tell my friends to give me money [when the service provider does not turn up or when I do not like the food served]. Tomorrow [the next day] when I come [to school], then I will give it [borrowed money] to them* (Boy, 10-year-old, Urban).

> *My friend comes to school with food. She does not eat the food they [service provider] cook. So, when they cook the food and there is plenty water in it, I don't eat it. I go to my friend and we eat her own [food brought from home]* (Girl, 12-year-old, Urban).

> *Sometimes, I don't do anything [when I do not like the food]. I just sit down and I don't talk. Sometimes my friend will go and buy food and ask me to come and eat. Then we will eat his food* (Boy, 13-year-old, Urban).

From these extracts, it is apparent that some of the pupils rely on their friends for meals in school. They either eat food that their friends buy or that they borrow money from their friends. However, all the pupils who reported using these social networks were pupils in the urban area. None of the pupils in the rural area reported using social networks to get food in school.

Generally, while analysing the children's responses of their experiences and perceptions of food insecurity, it became evident that the pupils were aware of a shift, and they talked about this shift in terms of the quality and quantity of meals served especially. That is, they narrate a time during which the service was better, better in the sense of the quality and quantity of meals served to them, while simultaneously decrying the present austere regime of poor quality of diet and inadequate diet, marking a shift in the period of austerity. While the students do not make the link between the current poor state of the food and the impact of austerity, it is clear from the data analysis in the previous chapter that the service providers' resort to coping mechanisms on account of the financial challenge they experience, eventually trickle down to the pupils.

In the end, these narrated quantitative, qualitative, psychological and social experiences of children's food insecurity are supported by the findings of other studies. Specifically, both Connell et al. 's (2005) and Fram et al. 's (2011) qualitative studies into the experiences of child food insecurity at the household show that although children have been primarily ignored directly in research examining food insecurity, they are nonetheless able to explain and discuss their own experiences of food insecurity. Speaking to children directly or engaging them in research can provide valuable information on, for example, how they uniquely experience food insecurity. This can play a vital role in either shaping, informing or designing SF programmes or helping to evaluate existing programmes. While the context of Connell et al.'s (2005) and Fram et al.'s (2011) studies (household experiences) are different from the context of this research (school setting), the parallels nonetheless, in children's experiences in both contexts are striking. One of the most important reasons why the incidence of food-insecure pupils matter is the impact food insecurity has on children's education. From both observations in the two schools and the data analysis, the likely effect of food insecurity on the pupils' education was established. The next section examines how, the incidence of pupils not getting enough and nutritious food to eat, worrying about a lack of choice in the food they consume, affect children's academic performance.

7.3 Correlates of Food Insecurity and Academic Performance

Food security research provides compelling evidence that food insecurity is negatively associated with academic performance. For instance, Alaimo et al. (2001) in a cross-sectional study found that 6 to 11-year-old children living in food-insecure households scored lower in reading and math than children from food secure households in the USA. This finding is similar to Jyoti and colleagues' (2005) longitudinal study on the effects of household food insecurity on children. Their study revealed that food insecurity impaired academic performance in reading and arithmetic. Even at the level of University, Martinez and colleagues (2018) found that food-insecure students in California scored lower grade point averages compared to food secure students. Similarly, through narrations of difficulty in concentrating in class, Patton-Lopez et al. (2014) showed that food insecurity affected the academic performance of university students in Oregon. In Tehran, Esfandiari and colleagues' (2018) cross-sectional study of children aged 10-12 showed that food insecure pupils performed poorer in all subjects studied, compared to food secure pupils. Some pathways have been suggested to explain how food insecurity may impede academic performance. As an example, food insecurity said to be a predictor of poor educational attainment (Alaimo et al., 2001; Jyoti et al., 2005) through its impact on learning (Winicki and Jemison 2003; Belachew et al., 2011) or school participation (Ashiabi and O'Neal 2008) or through other means such as compromised nutritional quality and quantity.

In this research, it emerged that the key pathways through which food insecurity impacts academic work is through children's loss of concentration in class, health concerns and absenteeism. The findings show that food-insecure students in school face substantial health and learning challenges, which eventually have grave implications for their academic work. In light of this, a central theme that emerged from the pupils' experiences of food insecurity was the inability of pupils to concentrate in class. The child participants reported severe health impacts of going without

adequate food intake in class. They described how, due to hunger; their health was impacted, leading to disinterest activities:

> *In class, we don't study well. Sometimes, when we are hungry, we get a headache. When this happens, you tell the teacher and then go home for medicine* (Boy, 12-year-old, Urban).

> *When you are hungry, your stomach will be paining you (Boy, 13-year-old Rural).*

> *Sometimes [when I am hungry] I will be okay, or sometimes my stomach will be aching* (Girl, 10-year-old, Urban).

> *Sometimes I will be weak, I will be tired* (Girl, 11-year-old, Rural).

> *When I am hungry, I feel weak. When I go to class, I get stomach pains* (Boy, 12-year-old, Rural).

From the comments above, the pupils can be seen narrating that being hungry in school meant that they have frequent headaches, stomach aches, weaknesses and tiredness. These reported incidences of sickness affect their ability to concentrate in class, as a number of them made it clear below:

> *When I am hungry, I don't pay attention in class. I just sit quietly in class like I am not there* (Girl, 12-year-old, Urban).

> *When I eat that small food, my body becomes weak. My stomach will be paining me in class, and I cannot concentrate very well* (Boy, 10-year-old, Urban).

> *Me, sometimes when I don't get [food] my stomach will be paining me and if they are teaching, I can't listen to the teacher* (Girl, 10-year-old, Rural).

> *When the teacher is teaching me, I don't participate. I will feel pains. Sometimes I feel stomach pains* (Boy, 12-year-old, Rural).

> *[When you are hungry] You will be thinking of food so that you cannot concentrate* (Girl, 10-year-old, Urban).

> *We cant study very well because of this [hunger]. You don't hear what the teacher is saying, sometimes I get stomach pains* (Boy, 11-year-old, Urban).

The above-narrated children's disinterest in classroom activities on account of hunger seemed like a regular phenomenon, considering the fact that the teachers corroborated these accounts. The teachers extensively discussed their experiences in dealing with hungry children in their classrooms. They noted that hungry pupils in their classes found it very difficult to engage in classroom activities, as they were dull, bored, and lethargic. According to the teachers, the pupils' lack of concentration in class was the main challenge that impacts children's classroom engagement and participation. The teachers narrated that:

> *When you are talking [teaching in class], they will not even mind you, not to talk of them participating. If you ask them [a] question, they are just down [disengaged]. So, they are not willing to respond to what you are doing. Even when you give exercise, they feel reluctant to [do it] because of the hunger. You see them yawning* (Teacher 7, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *They [pupils] can't concentrate when you are teaching them after the first period [morning session]. Even sometimes they can prepare the food, and by 1 pm [even when the caterer provides the service], they will be hungry again because the food sometimes it will be very small. The quantity is too small. It is not enough* (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *They will be 'beterr' [lethargic] in class, lying on their desks. It's because of hunger. They can no more concentrate. They are hungry* (Teacher 8, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *They [caregivers] don't give them money before coming [to school]. They always rely on the food that they [service providers] are cooking in the school here. So, when maybe something happens, and then the cook is not able to provide food for them that very day, their attitude towards lessons to you will be different. They will be sleeping, and that will be as a result of the hunger that we are talking of* (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *Sometimes hunger [affects their academic work]. When they are hungry, and they come to school, they will not concentrate in class. When they come, and you are teaching, they are then lying down or sleeping. That madam I am hungry* (Teacher 4, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

Inferring from the teachers' and pupils' extracts above, the pupils' state of food insecurity correlates with their academic performance as their inability to engage with classroom activities of teaching, reading and writing is manifest. Rather than focus on what their teachers' are teaching, the pupils admitted losing interest in the classroom activities. As a result, in some cases above, the pupils reported internalising behaviour problems such as becoming withdrawn, quiet and isolated from the class 'like I am not there [in class]' (Girl, 12-year-old, Urban). Furthermore, some of these food-insecure pupils completely ignore their teachers while teaching is in session. As Teacher 7, Rural above puts it, 'When you are talking [teaching in class], they will not even mind you, not to talk of them participating'. These findings, in many ways, align with the food insecurity research. Prior research on household food insecurity demonstrates that food-insecure children are significantly more likely to experience poorer health status through frequent experiences headaches and stomach aches than children from food secure households (Alaimo et al., 2001; Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003; Weinreb et al., 2002). Also, Strupp and Levitsky (1995), Pollitt et al. (1996), Slopen et al. (2010), Tanner and Finn-Stevenson (2002) and Reid (2000) have all confirmed that hunger drains the energy levels of children, ultimately leading to significant externalising (aggressive, fighting, arguing, irritability) and internalising (apathetic passive and withdrawn, fatigue) behavioural problems. These internalising and externalising behaviour problems collectively undermine pupils' ability to engage in class activities (Ashiabi and O'Neal 2008). For example, Sigman-Grant et al. (2008) showed that children in the USA Child and Adult Care Food program childcare were frequently irritable and lacked concentration, showing little interest in anything else but food.

Although the context of this research is food insecurity in school, nonetheless, the findings herein align with the conclusions of the studies of household food insecurity. Specifically, because of the experiences of hunger in school, the children in this research sometimes showed disinterest in classroom activities through yawning, sleeping, feeling tired, reporting stomach and headaches as

well as displaying internalising behavioural problems such as being withdrawn and isolated in class. The implications of these challenges are straightforward: these pupils were just too hungry to learn. As little teaching and learning were going on in these schools, it raises critical questions about Ghana's commitment and progress towards the realisation of the country's goal of raising the *stock* human capital — especially and more importantly, at the basic primary school level. While this study did not conduct standardised tests to establish to what extent these challenges directly affected pupils' academic performance, the household food insecurity studies referenced above confirm that food insecure pupils (who exhibit symptoms of tiredness, weakness, lethargy, aggression among others) lower academic performance compared to those who are food secure. In other words, there is an association between food insecurity and academic performances, mediated through the above symptoms. For, at the very least, students have to be in school to be taught, and while in school, classroom engagement is a predictor of academic performance.

7.3.1 Truancy and Absenteeism

The pathways by which food insecurity affect pupils' academic work was not only through feelings of disinterest in learning, tiredness and stomach ache. For some pupils, they resisted school altogether, on the days the service provider either provided a meal they disliked or did not provide any meal at all. Instead of staying in school hungry, some of the pupils resorted to skipping school. However, the resort to skipping school was more prevalent in the rural area. The school in the rural area was situated a few metres away from the community. Thus, the pupils in the rural area devised ways of knowing — without coming to school — if the service provider had come to school or not. Consider the following extracts:

> *The day that she [service provider] comes to school, you will see smoke going up from the kitchen even when you are at home* (Girl, 12-year-old Rural).

> *When she comes to school, you can see her people [workers] on campus* (Boy, 11-year-old Rural).

Early in the morning, these pupils said they would look towards the kitchen to see if billows of smoke rose into the air (signifying the availability of the caterer as they cook with firewood). The pupils claimed they would not turn up in school if they did not see the smoke since the service provider would not be around to provide the service. Nonetheless, there were times when the caterer arrived late (well after the pupils had gone into the classrooms for the start of lessons), and the pupils knew this. Therefore, even though sometimes they would not 'see smoke going up from the kitchen' they would still come to school (hoping/believing that the service provider was late that day). Nevertheless, by break time, if it became clear that caterer had not come to school, the pupils would leave the school and roam in the nearby farms and bushes. On the other hand, even if the service provider had come to school, but prepared meals the pupils did not like, they abandoned the school during break time. Consequently, truancy and absenteeism were a significant challenge to enrolment in the rural area. The pupils made the following revelations:

> *I can't stay in school [when I don't get food to eat]. If I don't eat, I feel weakness, and I can't learn very hard, so I go to my grandmother's house* (Girl, 12-year-old, Rural).

> *When she [service provider] does not come [to school], I just sit in the class [during lunchtime]. Sometimes I leave the school and go home for food. Sometimes I come back when break is over. Sometimes I will just stay there [out of school]* (Boy, 11-year-old Rural).

> *I will go home and eat [When the service provider does not come to school]. I go home sometimes and sometimes I wont come back [to school]* (Girl, 10-year-old, Rural).

> *I will stay here [so that] after closing I go home to eat. And if I want, I will go to my grandmother's house to eat* (Boy, 9-year-old Rural).

> *Break time I go to my mother in the farm. She get [has] food there. The place [farm] is far so sometimes I don't come back [to school]* (Boy, 10-year-old Rural).

As these extracts show, on days that the service provider skips service delivery, or indeed when the pupils are hungry (because they do not like the quality of the food, or that the quantity served

is not enough for them) they leave school — going home or to their parents in the farm for food. As it is the case most often, these pupils do not return to school partly because the 'place [farm] is far [from the school]' (Boy, 10-year-old, Rural). The challenge of hunger in the classroom was quite a delicate one. As the teachers were well aware of the pupils' state of food insecurity, they granted permission to pupils who claimed they wanted to go home and eat. Sometimes too, the teachers themselves said they allowed the hungry pupils to go home (without the pupils asking). The teachers narrated the following:

> *And you see some of the students when they are in class, and they are hungry, they know that an auntie's house is closer [to the school] and there will be food there. Before you realise, he comes to ask for permission to go and urinate. Then he goes out with the reason to urinate. Ah, after some time you are not seeing the person [pupil]. You trace [go to the urinary], and he's not there* (Teacher 6, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *When they are hungry, some of them will come and tell you they want to go home [for food]. What can you do? You just have to let them go home because you don't want them crying about headache, stomach ache or be 'beterr' [lethargic] in class* (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *At times, you yourself will ask the fellow [pupil] to go to the house and eat if you don't have [anything] to give and the child is 'beterr' [lethargic] in the class. At times, the child is very weak, so you ask the child to go home* (Teacher 7, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

The teachers admitted that when the pupils ask for permission to leave school, there is very little they can do. Coupled with the fact that some pupils did not turn up in school on the days that the service providers did not deliver the service, absenteeism and truancy affected the pupils' attendance culture, which might also impact their academic performance. Some studies have provided empirical evidence that demonstrates that food insecurity negatively impacts children's education through high rates of absenteeism. The association between food insecurity and absenteeism has been found to be high because food insecure children are more likely to start school late or be absent from school or learn less compared to children from food secure households

(Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005). Murphy et al. 's (1998) and Alaimo et al. 's (2001) research arrived at a similar conclusion. Food insecure children were found to be more likely to repeat a grade in the USA compared to their food secure colleagues. The picture is the same in many countries in the Global South. In Venezuela, Bernal et al. (2014) realised that food-insecure children were associated with high absentee rates, as they either roamed about in search of food or worked to support themselves. Belachew et al. 's (2011) longitudinal study of 13-17-year-old adolescents found that food insecurity was associated with high absenteeism and lower academic attainment in Ethiopia. That is, children from food-insecure households frequently missed school or eventually dropped out. Similarly, some of the food insecure pupils in this research refused to come to school, simply walked out of school themselves or asked for permission from their teachers to go in search of food. There is a logical progression that goes from hungry pupils being disinterested in classroom activities, or any activities for that matter, through to abandoning school in search of food. This obviously, at the face of it, implies these pupils are not engaged in any serious academic work, at least for the period that they are not in school.

I observed that the nature of these schools also made it very easy for the pupils to just walk out of school. Consider the following extract from Field Diaries A and B:

> *Today is the first day of observing in the urban school. The school is located on a vast stretch of land with no clearly demarcated borders. The school is neither gated nor walled. People in the communities walk across the school to their farms and to other places around the school. This has been happening since morning. The pupils also move out of the school without restraint. Students roaming around and playing outside the school seem to be a regular thing, as none of the school staff seems bothered* (Field Diary A, January 9th, 2017).

> *Today is my first day of observing in the rural area and there are striking similarities in terms of the nature of the school. This school, just like the one in the urban area is located on a vast land with no walls or gates. But, the school in the urban area looks better because this school is surrounded by thick bushes and very tall trees. The school is close to the forests. It is much easier to lose sight of pupils as they dash into the bushes* (Field Diary B, April 27th, 2017).

None of the schools was walled or gated, and it was situated on vast land with nearby bushes. A pupil could easily sneak out of school without being noticed. Then again, some of the teachers themselves asked hungry students to go home for food. Ultimately, absenteeism was an entrenched practice, as teachers struggled to cope with the situation, thereby being lenient to requests from students to go home. In the next section, I present and discuss some coping strategies the teachers adopted to mitigate the challenge of pupils' food insecurity.

7.4 Teachers' Discretion in the Classroom

The incidence of having hungry children in their classrooms raised important challenges for the teachers, in terms of their teaching style and strategies adopted to cope with the situation. As SLBs, the data show that teachers also resort to discretion in their classrooms as a way of handling the challenges associated with teaching food insecure pupils. The teachers reported using their discretion to adapt their teaching approach to fit with the challenges of teaching food insecure pupils. They noted:

> *Nobody will tell you what to do as a teacher [when faced with hungry pupils in your class]. You will have to look at the situation and use your mind [judgment/discretion] to decide what to do. There is no manual or rules on how to handle hungry students. So, for me, if the children are so hungry to the extent that they can't sit in class, I stop teaching and tell them to put their heads on the table* (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *Sometimes me I will just stop the teaching, and we will sit down because when they are dull, and you teach, it [the teaching] is useless* (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

> *Maybe if I say they should read, and I find out that some are not [reading], I stop the reading. I do say put your heads on the desk until it is time for break then they will do that, and when it is break time, we will all go. At times, others will just be vomiting, or they say 'madam my stomach' as I am teaching* (Teacher 7, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *Sometimes when I am teaching, and I see that they are like that [dull and not concentrating] I will suspend the teaching and motivate them by advising and telling jokes to bring their minds back to class or let them forget their hunger problems* (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

You know there are topics that we normally treat [teach] that are games related topics. Sometimes when they play games, they become excited. So sometimes we involve them in the games, and they forget about hunger. So sometimes that's what we do. But sometimes when there is hunger, there is hunger [the games will not help]. Even when you engage them in the game, you will see that they are not cooperating. Sometimes also, we close the school early. Normally they close at 1.30, but on days when there is no food, we close them [the school] early (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

If you don't have [food] to give [the student] and the child is 'beterr' [lethargic], so [you] ask the child to go home because they are many and you cannot be buying food for them or giving [all of] them money (Teacher 6, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

Although teachers are usually the first line of defence or contact with food insecure pupils, these teachers are not able to do much in terms of addressing the challenge. As the extracts above show, the teachers note that handling hungry pupils in their classrooms stretches them beyond their abilities, as such; they have to use their 'mind' [discretion] (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Rural) to determine what they should do. In other words, they have to use their discretion in deciding how to deal with the situation, in the absence of guidelines from the school or education offices. These guidelines do not exist probably because of the general assumption that such problems do not happen, as service providers are expected to provide the service daily in the right quantity and quality. From the above comments, it is evident that the teachers use of discretion to adapt their teaching approach implies that they suspend teaching and 'tell(ing) jokes' (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Urban), 'stop teaching and tell them to put their heads on the table' (Teacher 5, Rural Focus Group Discussion), ask them to 'play games' so that they 'forget about [the] hunger' (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Urban) or that 'close them [school] early [before the official stipulated closing time]' (Teacher 6, Focus Group Discussion Rural). It is, therefore, imperative to note that instead of teaching the curriculum, the teachers have to spend instructional hours addressing food insecurity concerns, with potential impacts on the pupils' academic

performance. Eventually, hunger in the classroom and disrupted academic work contribute to creating teaching deficits, as teachers are unlikely to complete their syllabuses.

7.4.1 Teachers Differentiating among Pupils

Apart from changing their teaching approach or asking food insecure pupils to go home (see above) among others, the data show that the teachers also adopted additional coping strategies to deal with the challenges of teaching and interacting with hungry pupils. Lipsky's SLB's theme of 'client differentiation' is relevant to this section of the chapter because the teachers (just as the service providers) also reported that they resort to differentiating among their pupils, as the basis for selecting which of the food insecure pupils to assist. An explanation is warranted here: although Lipsky (2010) lists teachers as examples of SLBs, teachers qualify as SLBs because they directly implement public policy (education) by interacting daily with the beneficiaries of the public policy (the pupils). Related to the theme of 'client differentiation', a number of teachers reported giving out money or food to the food insecure students. The teachers and headteacher made the following comments about assisting the pupils:

> *Sometimes I just pity some of them [hungry pupils]. I give them money to buy food. But it is not always I can do that. When I do that, it is the best students I give [money]. Giving money to them [the best students] is like some motivation* (Teacher 7, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *You [will] find one [a pupil] leaning on a pole. The person [pupil] will not eat … When I see this, sometimes I have to give out money or my food to them. I will give my food out to the person. For my food, four or three [pupils] can eat it [because of the quantity]* (Teacher 1, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *There are times even the class teacher will have to send somebody to Kanshegu [a nearby town] where they sell 'Kenkey' [food made from boiled maize flour] to buy food for the hungry child* (Head Teacher, Rural).

From the comments above, some of the teachers claimed they offer money or food to some of the food insecure pupils. However, the practice of some teachers giving out money or food to hungry pupils in their classes occurred in the urban school only. All of the teachers who reported giving

out money to pupils were teachers in the urban area. This was not surprising as compared to the urban area, the school in the rural area was remotely located, with no sellers (food or sweets) on campus. This reflected the general nature of the rural area[89]. Conversely, in the urban area, there were brisk business activities by private sellers on campus as many foods, and sweets sellers were dotted all across the campus. Hence, it was pointless for teachers to give pupils money in the rural area. As one teacher put it:

> *Even when I give the child money, what will the child do with the money? Because there is no food here [for sale]. Nothing is here, just look around and* see (Teacher 4, Focus Group Discussion Rural).

In order to buy food in the rural area, the teachers would have to go to the next nearby town *Kanshegu*, as the Head Teacher Rural explained above. Nevertheless, the practice of teachers in the urban area personally paying for children's lunch (as Teachers 7 and 1 above, for example, claimed) was interesting to me. Interesting because I found it curious as to why and how the teachers would spend their own money to feed some pupils. Thus, I asked these teachers for explanations. It turned out that the teachers who gave out money or food did not want to lose their 'good pupils' (academically good pupils), as they described them. Consider the following extracts:

> *You know, not all of them [the pupils] are serious [studios]. So, I just give it [money] to the serious ones. I rotate it between four or three of them and give them the food [teacher gives money to three or four select pupils rotationally]* (Teacher 2, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *Those [the pupils] who are hungry are plenty, and I can't help all of them. Some do not pull their weight in class. The times that I give money to them to buy [food], I just look at the good students and give them the money. Else, maybe they too will fall behind and not be good [academically good]. You always want your good students to be in class* (Teacher 5, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

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[89] The other time (during observation) I forgot to take water to the school and searched in vain for a water seller in the campus. Eventually, I had to drive 4 miles away from the school to the nearest community (which was closer to the nearest big town) to buy water.

You know, as a teacher, your money is not much, and there are plenty [of] students who are hungry. At the same time, not all of them are good [academically strong], so you give the little money to the good ones so that they can stay in class. At the end of the day, as a teacher, you also need someone [a pupil] who can prove that you have done your job as a teacher (Teacher 7, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

These teachers were adopting the SLBs' coping strategies of client differentiation. From the excerpts above, while it is evident that some of the teachers resorted to giving out money or food to their pupils, the financial and food assistance offered by these teachers was neither random nor offered to all the pupils. Since the number of students requiring financial assistance or food outstripped the teachers' available financial resources, ultimately the teachers' offering of assistance came down to selecting their favourite students — who happened to be the bright pupils in the class. Accordingly, the teachers had to differentiate among their pupils on the basis of academic strength as a way of selecting which of the students to assist. Therefore, students who were deemed as 'deserving' assistance from teachers were the bright ones, while those not too bright were deemed 'undeserving'. Hence, it can be argued that the teachers were not being altruistic and selfless. Instead, the teachers who gave out money and food to the select pupils were evidently concerned about keeping these 'good' pupils in the class, as they somehow represented the teachers' output. Teacher 7's (Focus Group Discussion Urban) comment above makes this point clearer: 'At the end of the day, as a teacher, you also need someone [a pupil] who can prove that you have done your job as a teacher.' Keeping bright students in the class, to these teachers was a way of indicating that the teacher had done their job (of teaching) well; evidenced by the availability of the academically good pupils.

Teachers going above and beyond the dictates of their job by providing food to hungry pupils, or offering money to them is neither a new phenomenon nor exclusive to the Ghanaian context. In a recent 2019 survey of 4,300 teachers, the UK's NASUWT-The Teachers' Union found teachers spending their own money to buy food for their pupils. 45 per cent of the teachers reported paying

for basic necessities for the pupils, with 75 per cent reported paying for food (NASUWT-The Teachers' Union, 2019; *The Guardian*, 2019). Also, Kelly (1994) found that as a result of cuts to schools, a teacher in California spent his US $500 to ensure that all students received musical supplies and instruments in his class. Furthermore, a national survey of American teachers in 2015 by No Kid Hungry (an NGO focused on ending child hunger) showed that teachers on the average reported spending US$37 monthly on food for hungry pupils in their class (No Kid Hungry, 2015). Half of the teachers in the survey stated that hunger was a vital issue in their class, as pupils came to school hungry and could not concentrate, lack energy and show poor academic performance.

The findings on client differentiation further echo similar research findings demonstrating the effect fiscal austerity has on frontline service provider's resort to client differentiation. In a recent quantitative study, Siddhartha Baviskar (2018) shows that due to chronic underfunding of schools in Denmark, 30 per cent of school teachers categorised students on the basis of academic strength, so that they could focus their time and resources more on those students. Kelly's (1994) study also found some teachers in the face of severe funding challenges to their school differentiated and categorised students on the basis of aptitude and need, to determine who got musical instruments in class for example.

In the Ghanaian context, it was further found that some teachers went beyond offering money or food to food-insecure pupils. Some of the teachers reported spending their resources on teaching and learning materials to address funding deficits they were experiencing in their schools. Teaching and learning materials such as books and chalk were reported to be in short supply, necessitating some of the teachers spend out of their pocket on these items.

> *You know in our district here, it [funding] is a problem that affects almost all the schools because I have been here for a number of years [8 years as the head teacher]. The year we had textbooks especially English and Mathematics, they said every four years they [will] supply [new ones again] but this is even the 7th year, and I have not seen any [new textbooks]. So, if you look at the textbooks, they are worn out. Then the enrolment keeps rising so in fact if you*

go to a class, even six children to one book you cannot do that [You cannot even pair six pupils to the one textbook, if you did, there would still be other pupils who would not have a group]. So, the teachers sometimes buy textbooks themselves for the class (Head Teacher, Rural).

You realise that you have four or five books in a class of 45 students. In that case, the teacher will have to write whatever they are going to learn on the blackboard and that will be a difficult task for the teacher. In my class like this, if you are going to count the furniture that we have in the class, it's about five or six furniture over there. So, you will pair them five or six [for 45 pupils] sitting on the same furniture. When you do that, the pupils will be fighting [since six pupils are reading from one book]. In that case, to stop this fighting, we the teachers buy the textbooks for the class. It is not enough, but that is what they do (Teacher 3, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

Head Teacher Rural notes that for the seven out of the eight years he has been the headteacher of the school, the district education office only supplied textbooks once to the school. These textbooks are now worn out, necessitating that the teachers' pay for it. During one of my observational tour of the classrooms while teaching and learning were ongoing, I confirmed the claims made by Head Teacher Rural above. My experience was captured in the field note as:

I just went to Teacher 2's class to observe teaching and learning. I noticed 7 students sitting on a desk meant for 4 pupils. The total number of desks in the class is 4 but the total number of students in the class was 42. The rest of the students are lying on their bare floor, with heads raised listening to the teacher. The students looked unconcerned about their predicament, neither did the teacher. It appeared to me that both the teacher and students had gotten used to this situation (Field Diary B, June 12th, 2017).

In an environment of chronic underfunding, these teachers have to spend out of their pocket to purchase school supplies (textbooks) just so there is peaceful teaching and learning atmosphere — since pairing six pupils to a textbook lead to the pupils struggling. Clearly then, just as Kelly (1994) and NASUWT-The Teachers' Union (2019) found teachers going beyond the dictates of their jobs in purchasing musical instruments for pupils in their school, as part of the daily challenges these

teachers have to endure, they are forced by circumstances to fund teaching and learning materials at their personal cost.

7.5 Families' Experiences and Responses

The final section of this chapter concentrates on exploring what implications austerity has for caregivers. It is important to state that the caregivers in this research were not forthcoming in discussing the impact austerity has had on them as caregivers. That is, the interviews with caregivers about their household experiences of austerity yielded minimal responses. Despite this limitation, the caregivers highlighted how fiscal austerity had affected their household consumption patterns. Within the context of a continually rising cost of foodstuff, the caregivers generally noted that austerity has affected the decisions they take, concerning the foodstuff they purchase. More explicitly, the caregivers claimed they are unable to purchase their preferred food, due to a regime of rising food prices without a corresponding rise in income. The following excerpts from the caregivers highlight their experiences of austerity's impact on households' consumption choices:

> *For me, if you are a salaried worker, the best way [to lessen the impact of austerity] is, when you just pick your salary, [you] do your budget first for the kitchen. It is very important [to] buy your foodstuffs before you start doing [other] things with the money. Food takes a chunk of our salary. Growing children eat a lot, and you can't tell them not to eat. My mother assists me sometimes when my salary is not enough. I am a single parent actually. Their dad is not working, once a while he gets something for you. So, for example, I go for [buy] the local rice. That one is cheaper oooo, because a bowl of local rice can be GHS 6 and the polished one [imported rice] is GHS 13* (Caregiver 1, Urban).*

> *In my situation, if both myself and my wife do not have [money], and if we want to buy food, normally we can't buy it the way we used to. If we are going to buy, we look at the one [foodstuff] whose quantity is plentiful for the money we have. The one which will be enough [for the household] is what we buy. Even if that one is of lower quality but can satisfy us, fine! That is what we buy because the prices of the one we want are always increasing and we can't afford it* (Caregiver 3, Rural).*

For us, we change the types of food we buy from the market so that we can get the foods that are plenty (Caregiver 5, Urban).

Now [these days] every day the prices [of food] are going up up. Today you go to the market, and an item is GHS 5. Tomorrow you and it is GHS 7, or even GHS 8. And you know, as you can see, we don't have money here. So what do we do? When we have to buy in the market, you go to the old market. That place, they sell the cheaper ones [food], and it is plenty too. Sometimes that one [cheaper food] is not the best but what can we do? (Caregiver 6, Rural).

From these excerpts, the caregivers contend that the rising cost of goods and services has affected their household consumption choices. Rather than buying their desired food items, they resorted to making purchase decisions based on the cost and quantity of foodstuff. That is, Caregivers 3 Rural and 5 Urban make the point that, due to their resource constraints, within a context of rising prices, they buy cheaper foods that are in large quantities (food that is cheap and plentiful). These caregivers said they buy cheaper foods that are in greater quantities because their incomes cannot sustain their dietary preferences, especially with what Caregiver 6 described as 'daily' price increases. The caregivers were aware that cheaper foods might not necessarily be the best in terms of nutrition and hygiene. Caregiver 6 Rural highlights this point when she asks rhetorically: 'sometimes that one [cheaper food] is not the best, but what can we do? These households are left with no choice than to buy the cheaper foodstuff because '… the one [foodstuff] we want are always increasing and we can't afford it' (Caregiver 3, Rural).

Household food insecurity studies with parents and caregivers have revealed that as a direct consequence of austerity and within a context of rising food prices, caregivers opt for cheaper foods that are either plenty in quantity or dense in calories but unhealthy. In other words, there is a connection between the type of foods households purchase and their income levels (Feinberg et al., 2008). For instance, Griffith et al., (2013) and Harvey (2016) have shown that some parents in the UK either reduce spending on food and other essential household items or purchase cheaper and calorie-dense foods as a coping strategy to deal with the effects of austerity. The findings in

this section of the chapter add to the discourses on the impact of austerity on households by revealing that as a coping strategy, some caregivers in northern Ghana choose to buy cheaper foods that are plentiful, in the context of continually rising food prices. Although the caregivers were not forthcoming in discussing in detail other experiences related to austerity, they still made these revealing comments on how austerity has influenced their purchase decisions in terms of household foodstuff purchases.

7.5.1 Households and Pupils' Agentic Choices

Conceptually, in the SLB literature, both Lipsky (2010) and the other academic studies that followed his seminal study have dwelt on examining and analysing the actions and decisions of SLBs in the context of public policy implementation challenges. On the other hand, the actions, decisions and choices made by clients as they interact with frontline staff have not received comparable research. The focus of the SLB research on the decisions of frontline staff is partly due to the inherent assumptions of the powerlessness of clients within the SLB framework. Clients in the framework are generally described as non-voluntary (Lipsky, 2010: 54). That is, it is believed that as SLBs provide essential public services, their clients (particularly poor clients) usually cannot get these services elsewhere, due to their lack of financial resources and several other limitations (Lipsky, 2010). SLBs, Lipsky (2010: 55) argued, 'usually have nothing to lose by failing to satisfy clients' because these non-voluntary clients cannot hold SLBs responsible. In other words, SLBs are not accountable to their clients, especially when the demand for publicly provided services constantly exceeds available resources. Consequently, clients are seen as being 'forced' to accept whatever services are available to them. Lipsky's SLB-Client relationship is thus an asymmetrical one, heavily stacked up against the client. It must, however, be noted that Lipsky's conceptualisation of the SLB-Client relations only partially portrays a sense of powerlessness on the part of clients. For, although Lipsky admitted that clients are not completely powerless in the SLB-Client relationship (because clients must at the very least consent to the SLB's actions), yet,

he was quick to add that clients do so because they 'anticipate that dissent would not be productive' (Lipsky, 2010: 57). Ultimately, Lipsky (2010) argued that as a manifestation of their comparatively powerless status, clients seek to enhance their status in the lopsided SLB-Client relationship, rather than disturb the relationship. Some of the tactics clients adopt 'include passivity and acquiescence, expressions of empathy with workers' problems ...' (Lipsky, 2010: 59) as they try to court favour from SLBs.

Despite Lipsky's and others' portrayal of the powerlessness of clients, the data from this research showed that the clients could not in any conceivable way, be described as passive or acquiescing. Rather than passively endure the status quo in terms of poor service delivery, the clients made diverse agentic choices, some of which eventually affected the service provider, contrary to Lipsky's beliefs. As an example, whereas some of the pupils said they had no choice than to take the prepared food — that they disliked — nonetheless, it was clear that others did not submissively endure the situation. Not all the pupils were helpless and lacked alternatives in the face of their disquiet with the quantity and quality of meals served. For some student, they either refused to take part in the service delivery or that they adopted other strategies of dealing with the challenge. For instance, while I was on the schools observing, it was strange to see some pupils seated under trees during break time all by themselves without food while the service provider was around serving the other pupils. During one such occasion, I approached these pupils (who were not taking part in the service) and asked why they were not eating; they merely referred to the name of the food that was cooked that day.

> *Today is beans [Service provider cooked beans today]* (Boy, 9-year-old, Rural).
>
> *It is maize* (Boy, 11-year-old, Urban).
>
> *It is Cowpeas they [service provider] cook today* (Girl, 12-year-old, Rural).
>
> *She [service provider] cooked maize today* (Girl, 13-year-old, Urban).

Trying to make sense of what they meant, I probed further on why they mentioned those foods. The responses were unanimous: they said they did not like those particular foods. These pupils

decided not to take part in the service delivery because they did not like those particular foods (because of the low quality of the food) — it did not matter that they were hungry. In the discussion with the teachers, some of them also recounted such experiences of pupils ignoring the service provider's meals as:

> *Something like beans and Cowpeas, most of them [the pupils] don't eat [it]. They will just be lying down [and] when you ask them [why they haven't gone out for the break] they will say, madam, today it is Tuubaani [that was prepared]* (Teacher 8, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

> *[During break time] You [will] find one [a pupil] leaning on a pole. The person [pupil] will not eat, the person [pupil] has no money to go and buy food but will not go for that food [being served by the caterer]. It is the taste, it is the taste that is the major problem. The taste is the major issue. I see them leaning on a pole, watching their colleagues eating. But when you ask them to come for our own [teacher's food], they quickly come. I feel so bad. When they go back to the classroom, you see that the child is dull* (Teacher 6, Focus Group Discussion Urban).

Even as they were hungry, without money to buy food, and with the service provider around serving meals, some pupils chose not to take the meals because they disliked the particular food served. Overall, from observations, the number of pupils who ignored the service provider paled in comparison to the number of pupils who actively participated in the GSFP delivery. Therefore, while only a few pupils resisted the service providers' meals, these pupils displayed their displeasure in another way: boycotting.

Food insecure pupils' refusal to eat the food served in school (in the face of no alternatives), resorting to taking money from their peers and resisting and abandoning school altogether in search of food can be seen as the expression of their agency. That is, making a conscious choice is an expression of one's agency. These pupils acted as competent social actors, by thinking, evaluating their circumstances and making choices for themselves, rather than passively enduring whatever (food) was available. Caregivers and their pupils, both of whom are the SLBs' clients (in this case the service providers), adopted measures to circumvent the challenges they experienced in their

interactions with the service providers, thereby demonstrating that clients are not always powerless, contrary to Lipksy' conceptualisation. At the very least, they can boycott the service in certain conditions.

Expressing their choice by boycotting the service can lead to behavioural and service implementation changes, as was the case in this research. Lipsky admitted that sometimes SLBs try to address the complaints they receive from their clients. However, he argued that the net effect of clients' feelings of dissatisfaction is for the SLBs to 'manage' these complaints, rather than change implementation policy in response to consumer dissatisfaction (Lipsky, 2010: 55).

Nonetheless, the data show that some service providers changed their implementation strategy as a direct response to pupils' expression of dissatisfaction — boycotting her meals. For example, Service Providers 1 and 4 recounted their experiences in dealing with pupils' rejection of her meals:

> *Their [pupils] main problem is that they said they do not like Tuubaani. But, it is not as if they don't like the Tuubani, it is the quantity served to them that they complain about. And I cannot increase the quantity because the beans [used to prepare Tuubaani] is expensive. I stopped serving Tuubaani for some time because they did not like it. If you cook the food and they don't like it, what are you going to do? You can't carry it home, and you cant throw it away. So, you have to look at the food they like, and the one you can afford and you prepare it. Because they were not eating the food, the headmaster started having problems with me* (Service Provider 1, Urban).

> *Some time ago I cooked maize for one week because I did not have any other food. Can you believe some of these children [pupils] went and told the headmaster that they are tired of maize? He [the head teacher] also came to me and asked me to stop cooking the maize if that is all I have. I had to go and borrow rice from one of my colleagues [service provider] who cooks in school X, hmmm. It is not easy for us [service providers] ooo, [there is] pressure [from] everywhere* (Service Provider 4, Rural).

The pupils' boycott of the meals served eventually compelled Service Providers 1 and 4 to change the menu served to the pupils — directly exerting an impact on the service providers' decision and implementation strategy. Furthermore, the pupils' expression of dissatisfaction with maize, by

shunning and 'reporting' the service provider, prompted other stakeholders such as the headteacher to intervene. It can be seen, therefore, that the SLB-Client relation is a fluid, dynamic and nuanced one. While it certainly is the case that some clients passively accept whatever service they are offered, and thus do not have any power or influence over the decisions of SLBs, in some instances the reverse is equally valid. Pupils expressing their agency had an impact on the service provider.

It must be noted, however, that although students acted as competent actors by making agentic decisions, the structural constraints within which they exercised their agency, as well as the ultimate result of those decisions, cannot be ignored. The data above further support the growing calls (see Klocker, 2007; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Andersen, 2012; Ansell, 2014; Campbell et al., 2015) within the dominant discourses on childhood studies for a rethink of the notion of children's agency, as it is presently framed. Whereas the recognition of children's agency and the fact that childhood is a social construct has undeniably made a significant contribution to childhood studies and children's right, there have been studies that show that children expressing their agency can sometimes lead to undesirable consequences (Campbell et al., 2015). Arguing for a rethink of children's agency, Smyth et al. (2011) and Campbell et al. (2015) point out that the notion of children agency is being applied in a decontextualised manner. Specifically, there is little focus on the structural constraints within which children exercise their agentic choices.

Nonetheless, structural constraints such as age, gender, socio-cultural norms (Klocker, 2007) can inhibit children's expression of their agency. Arguing further, Klocker (2007) notes that these structural constraints act as thinners of their agency. Therefore, children operating within certain contexts and structures can be said to have 'thin agency'. Thin agency referring to the 'decisions and everyday actions that are carried out within highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives' (Klocker, 2007: 85). Eventually, contextual and structural constraints can act as thinners of one's agency by effectively limiting one's available options (Klocker, 2007). For example, a 12-year-old girl's choice to engage in prostitution, with an HIV-infected older man

might lead to undesirable future consequences that are not in the interest of the girl, although she can be seen to have expressed a choice in this matter (Andersen, 2012). Likewise, as it has been the case within the context of the GSFP, some pupils are seen exercising their choice not to eat or to boycott school altogether, despite the consequences it has on the child's health and education outcomes. Insisting on children's agency then, without paying attention to the structural constraints within which these agentic choices happen, risks obscuring the potentially deleterious impact of their choices, and as Campbell et al. (2015) cautions, risks normalising the challenges children face.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter's goal was to understand how the impact of fiscal austerity on the delivery of the GSFP is experienced by children, caregivers and teachers in school. The findings suggest that children in school experience quantitative, qualitative, social and psychological components of food insecurity as a direct consequence of the unsanctioned coping mechanisms street-level bureaucrats employ to deal with the fiscal challenges of their work. Both the teachers and pupils constantly referred to a shift that has taken place in the quality and quantity of meals served in recent years. Although the pupils and teachers only discussed the nature of this shift, the service providers in the previous chapter went further to draw the linkage between austerity and the shift in the quality of service delivered to the pupils.

The chapter also highlighted the knock-on effects children's food insecurity has on their academic performance, reflected in pupils experiencing health challenges and the inability to concentrate in class, as well as increased absenteeism and truancy. These challenges have important implications for teachers as they struggle simultaneously to teach and deal with hungry pupils in the class. In the end, teachers' instructional times are reduced, as they stop teaching, or adopt other methods such as telling stories so that pupils could forget their hunger as they awaited break time. Additionally, parents reported how rising prices had increased their food expenditure, forcing them

to concentrate on cheaper foods, while some parents also give money or food to their children as they go to school. Finally, the chapter has also contradicted the assumption of the powerlessness of clients in the SLB-Client relationship. This study did not find evidence suggesting that the clients in the SLBs framework are helpless. Rather than being passive, acquiescing victims at the whims of SLBs, clients do take several measures to (such as boycotting the services rendered or exerting pressure on service providers) reform policy implementation challenges.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The thesis began with the overarching research goal of exploring and examining the impact and implications of fiscal austerity for Ghana's social investment strategy with a specific focus on the GSFP. Achieving this goal, then, was anchored on answering two fundamental sub-questions: *(a)* In what ways, if any, has fiscal austerity affected the funding and service delivery of the GSFP? and *(b)* How are the implications of fiscal austerity on social investment programmes experienced in the everyday lives of pupils, teachers and families in northern Ghana? Thus, in this study, I have investigated how fiscal austerity impacts social investment programmes, using the GSFP as a case study. In answering the two sub-questions, my primary purpose has been to bring to the fore, the empirical evidence needed, to start a discussion on how austerity can directly, and indirectly impact both the delivery of social policies and how they are experienced by beneficiaries, for example. An academic lacuna exists as far as the impact of austerity, in the Global South is concerned (manifested by the few studies that exist about the effects of austerity). Therefore, this thesis has attempted to address these empirical gaps within the austerity discourse by providing a case study of one particular context in the Global South — Ghana. The goal has been to demonstrate that the effects of austerity on the GSFP are being felt silently and quietly, away from the gaze of policymakers and politicians at the national level.

In this concluding chapter, I first briefly provide an overview of the empirical and theoretical contributions of the study. On the basis of these findings, I examine the implications these have for the Ghanaian society. Finally, I provide some personal reflections on the doctoral programme process and the potential weaknesses of the study.

8.2 Summary of Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions

Social investments, as a development strategy, diffused from the Global North through agencies such as WB, IMF, UNICEF in the 1990s. As a result, a focus on human capital development, post-SAPs gained prominence in the international development discourse in the Global South. This thesis contributes to the relatively new, but rapidly expanding discourses on social investment, as a social policy response to the neoliberal critique of the welfare state spending. However, this thesis' primary focus was on one context in the Global South, where the discourse on austerity, particularly post-SAPs, has been somewhat muted.

The research was undertaken in the context of fiscal austerity in Ghana. While knowledge and research of austerity in the Global North, particularly in the UK, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, the USA, and Canada among others have in the last decade seen an explosion of interest, post the 2008 financial crisis, the same cannot be said of many countries in the Global South. Nonetheless, the findings from this study demonstrate that (to varying degrees, manifestations and intensity) austerity is a reality that is shaping the lives of people as well as social policies in countries in both global contexts. The key research question addressed in this thesis is the implications of austerity on Ghana's social investment strategy. The theoretical frameworks of the SLB, social investment and food insecurity provided a useful strategy in answering the research questions mainly through the lens of the actions, decisions of service providers and their clients.

The impacts and implications of austerity for Ghana's SFP, as has been demonstrated are profound. Using the GSFP as an exploratory case study, this thesis found that the Ghanaian government's economic and fiscal objective of halting public debts and budget deficits led to the implementation of a regime of fiscal conservatism. Specifically, the government of Ghana checked almost all the boxes in the austerity manual as it reduced public expenditure, increased revenue generation by increasing consumption taxes such as VAT, abolished specific public programmes such as Nurses and Training Allowances, eliminated fuel subsidies (leading to a spike in the cost of living,

particularly food items) among others. Even in cases where there is not a direct, stated government policy of austerity (for example, cancelling welfare programmes or tightening edibility requirements), the austerity inspired cost-containment policies of abolishing subsidies, and the increment of VAT can constrain or impact the market, which eventually affects the cost of goods and services. Directly, too, the regime of fiscal conservatism has meant that the feeding rates for the GSFP have been frozen at unrealistic rates (with calls from civil society and service providers for upwards revisions going unheeded). Moreover, these unrealistic rates are not paid timely. Accordingly, there is a *de facto* system of reimbursement arrears to service providers spanning up to a year after service provision (as with other statutory payments such as the DACF, Health Insurance Payments, among others).

Ultimately, the fiscal challenges experienced by service providers trickle down to the clients — pupils and families — in the form of rationed services, differentiating between clients, and relying on their (service providers) discretion to determine the nature of services rendered. In practical terms, the service providers' resort to their discretion has created significant programme implementation challenges. As a result of the funding freezes and significant delays in reimbursing service providers (spanning up to 1 year in some cases after service provision), there has been a shift in the quality and quantity of meals served to the pupils. This is manifested in the substantial reductions in food portions and compromised quality of meals. Furthermore, due to the wide discretion the service providers wield, some of them skip delivering the service for up to a week, with no consequences.

The coping strategies adopted by service providers (such as rationing services, differentiating among the pupils, skipping service delivery as well as the discretionary acts of compromising both the quality and quantity of meals served) means that pupils routinely experience food insecurity in school, leading to disinterest in classroom activities. Consequently, in both the rural and urban areas, absenteeism and truancy have become normalised in these schools as food insecure students

leave school in search of food or abandon school altogether. Faced with this reality, the teachers adapt by suspending teaching or using instructional hours on 'trying to get pupils 'forget their hunger' or tell jokes, and in some cases, spend their own money to either feed the pupils or purchase school supplies. Additionally, the school management in the rural area has to close the school early on Fridays because the service provider does not deliver the service on that day. In the end, not much by way of teaching and learning happens in the schools, as teachers became overwhelmed in managing food insecure pupils in the class.

Theoretically, my research has revealed that contrary to Lipsky's belief that the Client-Service provider relationship is a lopsided one heavily stacked up against the client, manifested in his description of clients being involuntary, passive and acquiescing, this study has found no evidence that the GSFP clients are passive or acquiescing. Instead, these clients have shown resilience and agency by analysing their situations and taking actions, either through skipping school or boycotting the service being rendered as pupils. Sometimes, these expressions of agency can have a controlling effect on the service provider as the service provider is compelled to address the particular needs of students who boycott their meals. Therefore, the client service relationship can sometimes be a mutually reinforcing one.

Furthermore, this thesis shows that while Lipsky's conceptual framework has been used extensively in the Global North within the context of understanding the challenges frontline service providers experience, I was only able to find three studies adopting the SLB conceptual framework in SSA. Two of these studies were carried out in South Africa (in the health sector) while the other one was a study in Ghana (in the health sector as well). However, this thesis has revealed that Lipsky's framework is equally relevant (if not even more, bearing in mind the considerable gaps between policy goals and outcomes) in exploring the policy implementation challenges in the Global South in general and Ghana specifically.

The food security research is overwhelmingly reflective of adult experiences and perspectives, leading to significant gaps in foregrounding children's experiences in food security research. The few studies that directly engage children to highlight the importance of children narrating their own experiences are based in the Global North — with even fewer studies focusing on children's experiences of food insecurity school. This thesis adds to these few but important studies because it highlights in detail, how children experience food insecurity and what these experiences mean for their health and academic performance. The findings from the study demonstrate that children are conscious of and capable of expressing their life experiences. As such, ignoring their voices (by relying on proxy reports from parents and teachers for example), as has been the case in the food insecurity research, risks missing or failing to capture the severity and peculiarities inherent in their experiences of food insecurity. Listening to children directly affected could help in designing or improving a monitoring, supervision and evaluation system.

In the end, it is essential that the present regime of austerity is placed in a historical context as it carries a sense of *deja vu*. As discussed in Chapter 2[90], a decade of fiscal austerity in Ghana under the externally imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s almost brought the country's health and education sectors to its knees, through the immense disinvestments in these sectors. However, starting from the 1990s, the country embarked on a massive social spending increase because of the then growing global anti-poverty campaigns and calls for a recast of development policy towards human investment[91]. Many countries in the Global South already have substantial human capital deficits as well as lack of comprehensive social protection stemming from years of disinvestment through SAPs. In light of the preceding, fiscal austerity in its current form, poses significant threats of reversing the most gains achieved, post the adoption of social

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[90] See Chapter 2 Section 2.3.1
[91] See Chapter 4 Section 4.3

investment as a development strategy counter to SAPs. Austerity has the potential of reversing the modest human capital gains post-2000.

8.3 Policy Implications for Ghana

It has been found that the Ghanaian government's adoption of fiscal austerity in recent times has had a profound impact, both directly and indirectly, on the country's social investment strategy. These findings appear to hold some critical implications for the country's social investment strategy. First, to realise the GSFP goal and objectives, and in the interest of reducing discretion at the frontlines of service delivery, the Ghanaian government should consider establishing a dedicated source of funds (as has been done by other countries running their school foods[92]). Since the most significant implementation challenge confronting the GSFP is one of funding, — which ultimately impacts the quality, quantity, and consistency of meals served — providing accurate, reliable and predictable funding regime can help eliminate the coping strategies adopted by the service providers.

Second, the findings also show that the GSFP plays a fundamental role in getting children to school, just as the programme's original objective intended. Nonetheless, significant challenges also belie the programme, and by extension, undermine Ghana's SI strategy. Although addressing the supply-side constraints to education by providing the needed access is a necessary step towards building the human capital of a nation, addressing supply-side constraints to education is by itself insufficient in realising the ideals of social investment. The quality of education provided is equally essential, if not the most important — particularly when you consider the large human deficits gaps the country is facing, following years of disinvestment. Similar to the critique of other social investment programmes in the Global South (particularly CTTs) identified by Jones (2016) and Nelson and Sandberg (2017) in Chapter 4[93], it could also be argued that by solely focusing on

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[92] See Chapter 4 Section 4.6.2.1
[93] See Chapter 4 Section 4.4.2

increasing enrolment figures, the GSFP just like CCTs, is unlikely to meet the goal of helping create, in the long term, the needed human capital for the country. The GSFP, much like CCTs, also makes no explicit assumptions about the quality of education offered. However, the quality of education provided is as crucial as addressing supply-side constraints, such as providing access to pupils. Through observation, particularly in the rural area, not much teaching and learning was going on. In many classrooms, it was normal to see children lying on the floor (on their stomachs) while trying to copy what the teachers were writing on the board. This was because of the lack of needed infrastructure. Desks meant for two pupils had four pupils seated on them. Moreover, regarding the provision of textbooks, the data have shown how only eight books are available to a class of 45 pupils in some cases.

If the goal of social investment is to create the citizen workers of the future, by investing in education and lifelong learning, then going by the data and existing evidence, the country is still quite far from achieving those ambitions. Although politicians boast about rising enrolment figures through the GSFP, it does not tell the entire story. The nuances and intricacies surrounding Ghana's education system, particularly at the primary level, obscures essential dimensions such as the quality of education. Politicians in Ghana have an obsession with tackling access to education challenges, perceived or real. It remains a matter of intense speculation why politicians invariably opt for addressing the access challenges. My hypothesis is that given the heavily politicised nature of Ghana's governance system, it is much easier for people to relate to (concerning appraising the performance of government) increasing numbers of students, than 'abstract' concerns such as quality of education.

Related to the preceding, another alluring promise of the social investment perspective is the aim of breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. However, as it has been demonstrated in Chapter 4[94], several factors, not least the nature of the labour market, accounts for people's inability

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[94] See Chapter 4 Section 4.4.2

to participate in the labour market. Thus, a comprehensive plan is needed (including a restructuring of the labour market) to realise the ambition of breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty, rather than focusing on standalone programmes such as the GSFP. Otherwise, school feeding programmes, just like CCTs, run the risks of 'guaranteeing policy failure' (Nelson and Sandberg, 2017: 32). If no jobs are available for people who have acquired the needed human capital, then singular programmes such as the GSFP hold little power in breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. As has been discussed in Chapter 2 [95], high unemployment rates are a serious challenge in Ghana. The country's Vice President, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia worryingly observed that the youth and graduate unemployment situation is a 'national security threat' because 'the devil finds work for idle hands' (*Citifmonline*, 2018). To avert a full-blown unemployment crisis in Ghana by 2020, Honorati and de Silva (2016) estimate that the country needs to create an additional 1.5 million jobs. In this context, it is clear then, that while building the needed human capital is essential, the GSFP is unlikely to contribute to creating a healthy workforce if there are no jobs in the first place for them. Focusing on building the *stock* of human capital through programmes such as the GSFP, without a corresponding strategy of easing the *flow* into the world of work, or indeed a *buffer* policy of cushioning against temporal shocks, calls into question the viability of Ghana's social investment strategy.

Additionally, this study reveals several design and implementation flaws defining the GSFP. Key among them being the over-politicisation of the program, which reflects in how incumbent political party supporters are 'rewarded' as service providers of the GSFP. Party supporters running the service has meant that in practice, there very little to no monitoring and supervision carried out on the activities of service providers, leaving them to do as they see fit. This state of affairs, cannot help in the quest towards human capital formation.

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[95] See Chapter 2 Section 2.6.1

8.4 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

At this point, it is essential that I acknowledge how much I have learnt in the course of this doctoral research. Through this study, I have learned a lot — particularly when I consider how this thesis evolved over the last three years. When I commenced this study in 2015, the focus of the research was broadly on child labour in northern Ghana. However, six months into the study, the direction of my research changed completely (as with other doctoral studies) towards fiscal austerity. Despite this slight hiccup, I have been able to develop and broaden my knowledge of social investments as a social policy paradigm, its origins as an intellectual response to neoliberalism, as well as Michael Lipsky' Street Level Bureaucrat as a conceptual framework in examining the impact of austerity on social policies. Nevertheless, after I completed the thesis, I have looked back and realised that there were things I could have done differently.

As with any research, this study is not without limitations. First, the study focused solely on the GSFP. However, the GSFP, or indeed, any single programme does not comprehensively capture the entirety of a country's social investment strategy. In developing countries, as argued in Chapter 4[96], the social policy programmes with the logic of social investment logic are mainly CCTs and school food programmes. Thus, examining the impact of austerity on Ghana's CCTS (Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty) as well as the GSFP would have provided a broader picture of the impact of austerity on Ghana's social investment strategy. However, constraints of time, financial resources, as well as the requirements for a doctoral programme, did not make this feasible in one research. Accordingly, it would be interesting to see how, if any, and to what extent, fiscal impacts other social investment programmes in Ghana such as the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Programme in future research.

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[96] See Chapter 4 Section 4.4

Second, this thesis has highlighted some similarities in terms of the actions and decisions frontline staff in both the Global North and Global South take in response to austerity. This shows that in some respects, even when the policy implementation contexts of Global North and Global South are different, similarities exist, nonetheless. This similarity calls for greater collaboration of research activities, as far as practical. It is evident that the SLB's framework is relevant in understanding some of the sources and nature of policy distortions that happen at the point of implementation in Ghana. This brings up the possibility of using Lipsky's framework beyond the specific focus of this research, to examine and the actions and decisions of frontline staff implementing the government's other social policies and programmes.

Third, due to the politicised nature of the GSFP and coupled with the data collection period coinciding with the 2016 general elections, some important stakeholders opted out of this research. Both representatives of the sector ministry with oversight responsibility (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection) and the agency responsible for the implementation of the programme, the School Feeding Secretariat opted out of this research. However, the position of these stakeholders as key policymakers might have shed more light on this research, especially from the perspective of the government. In the same vein, I could not get caregivers to give a detailed discussion of what austerity means to them at the household levels. Together, these are important aspects that have to be researched further, to gain a much more holistic picture of the impact and depth of austerity in Ghana.

Fourth, following on from the discussions in the Methodology Chapter, qualitative researchers continuously face resistance and critique mainly from positivist epistemological and objectivist ontological traditions as having validity questions, due to the comparatively smaller sample sizes used in qualitative studies. Among others, positivists contend that valid scientific research is one that is capable of generalising its results and findings (Marshall, 1996). Thus, because qualitative research typically involves smaller samples, it is perceived as not rigorous or scientific. De Vaus

(2001) makes the point that findings from qualitative studies, especially case studies, cannot be statistically generalised beyond the specific case being studied. Nevertheless, a research strategy does not have to be quantitative to be rigorous and valid. In light of the preceding, this study, like all qualitative case study research, potentially suffers the same positivist claims. This thesis was carried out in the northern region (one of the ten administrative regional capitals) and in two public primary schools. Accordingly, on the face of it, especially in the views of positivist academics, the sample size raises questions about generalizability beyond the specifics school and region. However, as argued in the methodology chapter, qualitative research is about the 'systematic collection, organisation, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or observation' (Malterud, 2001: 483). As such, the focus of qualitative researchers is to provide an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon as experienced by research participants, and not to seek statistical generalisation. Similarly, this study should be judged on the basis of providing an in-depth understanding of how fiscal austerity might impact social investment programmes, through the lenses of service providers, families, and school staff. This research was not about statistical generalisations.

Many experts of research methods such as Mays and Pope (2000), Barbour (2001), Golafshani (2003) and Yin (2014: 45) have argued that qualitative researchers can improve validity and minimise bias by 'using multiple sources of evidence' — otherwise known as triangulation. Thus, triangulation — 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978: 291)' — is one of the ways whereby qualitative researchers address concerns of reliability and validity. Using multiple sources of data and research methods reveal diverse viewpoints in order to eliminate potential bias associated with relying on one method (Grix, 2001; Olsen, 2004; Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2011; Gray, 2014). Yin (2011: 88) advises that in order to avoid bias arising from choosing sources to reaffirm your views (looking for data to confirm your views or data mining) researchers should select a wide range of respondents, including those participants who

might hold contrary views. With these suggestions in mind, as the research strategy, I adopted a methodological triangulation. That is, the use of several methods of data collection sources. Specifically, direct observation, focus group discussions, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and audio recordings were the data collection methods used in the study. Furthermore, heeding to Yin's (2011: 88) advice above, a wide range of participants from a diverse social structure such as school staff, caregivers, pupils, headteachers, and experts were deliberately involved in helping examine the phenomenon of austerity from multiple angles.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

Following years of massive underinvestment (during the SAPs period of the 1980s) in social programmes, Ghana's development strategy post-2000 shifted in part, towards increased public spending in social protection programmes and children's education. Nevertheless, given that only 18.3 per cent of Ghanaians covered by at least one social protection programmes as of 2017 (ILO, 2017: 123) as it has been highlighted in Chapter 1, it is evident that the post-2000 achievement has been rather modest. Compounding further this state of low public spending on social programmes is the adoption of fiscal austerity programmes. Fiscal austerity programmes have the potential of derailing the modest achievement of increased government spending on social programmes post-SAPs. Specifically, austerity in its current form undermines Ghana's quest and objective of raising the stock of its human capital through investing in programmes such as the GSFP. Therefore, what Ghana needs now, more than ever, is to scale up public spending on social programmes, especially those with a social investment outlook. Concerted and sustained advocacy (research and media) has to demand change and call for more investments, rather than retrenchment. This is particularly important, given that presently, austerity is happening 'quietly', beyond the public or policymakers' gaze.

APPENDIX 1: Glossary of Terms

1. **Beterr** — Local term for describing lethargy.

2. **Cowpeas** — Cowpeas are beans-like seeds that are eaten (by boiling) mostly in the African sub-region.

3. **Gari** — is a coarse granular flour made from grated cassava tubers. It can be eaten by mixing it with water, sugar and milk. It can also be added to other foods such as cooked beans and oil.

4. **Maggi** — A concentrated seasoning sauce (usually in the form of cubes or liquid) used in stew and soup.

5. **Tuubaani** — A local dish prepared by blending and boiling beans. It is served with oil and salt.

6. **TZ** — Local dish prepared from stirred maize flour.

7. **Yam** — A staple food in many tropical countries, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Yams have tough brown skins, and the flesh can vary in colour. It is usually prepared by boiling or frying, bearing a close resemblance to potatoes (only significantly bigger than potatoes).

APPENDIX 2

Information leaflet for Governmental, NGO and INGO representatives

The title of the study: *Understanding the Impacts and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for the Implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Strategy.*

Introduction

I am Abdul-Rahim Mohammed, a PhD candidate in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield, UK. I wish to invite you to participate in the study named above. To help you decide whether you will like to do so or not, please find detailed information about the study, why it is being carried out, what your participation will involve and what we will be doing with the information you give us below.

What is the purpose of the study?

The objectives of the study are to (1) identify and explain in what ways fiscal austerity affects the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme; (2) reveal how fiscal austerity affects children's welfare, teaching and learning, and poor households' ability and willingness to educate their children; and (3) explore the nature of the public discourse around fiscal austerity and the need to sustain the Ghana School Feeding Programme. These issues are fundamental to understanding how the fiscal consolidation objectives of government, affect Ghana's social investment agenda. While austerity has been sweeping across 187 countries in the world (Ghana inclusive) since 2010, the empirical data to show austerity's impacts on social programmes, and children's education in developing countries, is lacking. My research aims to fill this gap in the Ghanaian context. This is particularly important, given that, at the turn of the Millennium in 2000, the government of Ghana and international development institutions recast their focus from macroeconomic stabilisation — after two decades of structural adjustment — towards increased social investments.

Why I want you to help me

I seek your assistance because I feel it is important to gather the views of those who play a key role in the creation and implementation of laws or facilitate the law-making or policy-making process. I am interested in understanding your views of, and reactions to, the government's austerity programmes on the country's social programmes; particularly the Ghana school feeding programmes. Further, I seek your opinion on the nature of the discourse on austerity and its impact on the school feeding programme. If you wish to assist me, then kindly contact us on **(0248368272 or amohammed7@sheffield.ac.uk)** to provide me with your details and when you will be available to be interviewed.

What your participation will involve

You will be asked to participate in an interview, lasting no longer than one hour. Your consent will be required for a digital voice recorder to be used to record the interview. The recording is intended to help me capture everything you say correctly. However, if you object to being recorded, then I will take down notes. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. Nonetheless, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Any information you provide shall be securely and confidentially stored on an encrypted USB storage device and then later transferred onto a personal computer. The data will be deleted after the relevant information has been used. This will take place in October 2019 after I complete my viva. Should you not wish for your voice to be recorded, kindly inform me at the start of the interview, and this will duly be complied with.

Potential risks or inconveniences in taking part in the study
Taking part should bear no disadvantages or risks.

Potential benefits of your participation
This study will provide empirical evidence on the impact and effects of austerity programmes in Ghana. This is particularly important given that there is the assumption that the school feeding programme and other social programmes enjoy considerable political and public support. Consequently, these programmes are immune to the consequence of austerity. The evidence provided from this study will, therefore, provide a basis to challenge this assumption and provide a justification for a re-examination of government policy and programmes on social investments.

Results of the study
The results of the study will be published in a doctoral thesis. A summary of the key findings and recommendations of the thesis will be distributed electronically to relevant senior civil servants and policy-makers in Ghana as well as local NGOs in Ghana and international NGOs based both in Ghana. A poster will also be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study to each of the schools participating in this research so that participants can also be aware of the outcome of the research.

What to do if you have any concern about the study
I encourage you to raise any concerns that you have about the study itself, my conduct as a researcher or any other matters pertaining to this study. I will endeavour to address any issues raised. Alternatively, my supervisors can be reached via email at Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk).

Do I have to continue to the end once I have taken part in the project?
You are free to withdraw your offer to participate at any time of your choosing. You do not have to give a reason for this. You will be asked if the information you have already provided can be used or if you want it to be destroyed. Your withdrawal will not have any negative consequences.

Funding and authorising organisations
The study is funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Secretariat, UK.

I hope that the above provides you with adequate information to help you make your mind. If you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at:

Abdul-Rahim Mohammed – 0248368272
Thank you for taking the time to read this!

APPENDIX 3
Adult Focus Group Participant Information Leaflet

The title of the study: *Understanding the Impacts and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for the Implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Strategy.*

Introduction

I am Abdul-Rahim Mohammed, a PhD student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield, UK. I wish to invite you to participate in the above-named study. To help you decide whether you will like to do so or not, please find detailed information about the study, why it is being carried out, what your participation will involve and what I will be doing with the information you give me below.

What is the purpose of the study?

The objectives of the study are to (1) identify and explain in what ways fiscal austerity affects the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme; (2) reveal how fiscal austerity affects children's welfare, teaching and learning, and poor households' ability and willingness to educate their children; and (3) explore the nature of the public discourse around fiscal austerity and the need to sustain the Ghana School Feeding Programme. These issues are fundamental to understanding how the fiscal consolidation efforts of government affect Ghana's social investment agenda. While austerity has been sweeping across 187 countries in the world (Ghana inclusive), the empirical data to show austerity's impacts on social programmes, and children's education in developing countries, is lacking. My research aims to fill this gap in the Ghanaian context. This is particularly important, given that, at the turn of the Millennium in 2000, the government of Ghana and international development institutions shifted their focus from macroeconomic stabilisation — after two decades of structural adjustment — towards increased social investments.

Why I want you to help me

I seek your assistance because, as primary caregivers and teachers in northern Ghana, I feel you have important experiences and views to share on the matter. I am interested in examining and understanding your experiences of fiscal austerity via the school feeding programme. It is entirely up to you to decide whether you want to participate or not. Please note that if you decide not to take part, this will have no effect whatsoever.

However, if you wish to assist me, then kindly contact us on **(0248368272)** to provide me with your details and when you will be available to speak to me. Should you change your mind at any time during the group discussion, you can withdraw your offer.

What your participation will involve

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion, lasting no longer than one hour. The other participants in the group discussion will be your colleague teachers and fellow caregivers. The discussion is intended to offer you a platform to share your ideas and experiences on the effect of austerity on the school feeding programme as well as their effect on children's education.

With your consent, a voice recorder will be used in the focus group discussion. This is to help me correctly transcribe the discussion. Your personal details will be anonymised, and information given me will be safely stored in encrypted form in my personal computer. This data will be deleted in October 2019 upon the completion of my viva. Should you not wish for your voice to be recorded, kindly inform me at the start of the focus group discussion and this will duly be complied with.

Potential risks or inconveniences in taking part in the study

Taking part should bear no disadvantages or risks. I will keep the information you provide me confidential, and your name and details will be anonymised.

Potential benefits of your participation

This study will provide empirical evidence on the impact and effects of austerity programmes in Ghana. This is particularly important given that there is the assumption that the school feeding programme and other social programmes enjoy considerable political and public support. Thus, these programmes are immune to the consequence of austerity. The evidence provided from this study will, therefore, provide a basis to challenge this assumption, and offer a justification for a re-examination of government policy and programmes on social investments.

Results of the study

The results of the study will be published in a doctoral thesis. A summary of the key findings and recommendations of the thesis will be distributed electronically to relevant senior civil servants and policy-makers in Ghana as well as local NGOs in Ghana and international NGOs based both in Ghana. A poster will also be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study to each of the schools participating in this research so that participants can also be aware of the outcome of the research.

Will you be compensated for your participation?

I will provide refreshments to all participants in group discussions.

What to do if you have any concern about the study

I encourage you to raise any concerns that you have about the study itself, my conduct as a researcher or any other matters pertaining to this study. I will endeavour to address any issues raised. Alternatively, my supervisors can be reached via email at Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk).

Do I have to continue to the end once I have taken part in the project?

You are free to withdraw your offer to participate at any time of your choice. You do not have to give a reason for this. You will be asked if the information you have already provided can be used or if you want it to be destroyed.

Funding and authorising organisations

The study is funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Secretariat, UK.

I hope that the above provides you with adequate information to help you make your mind. If you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at: Abdul-Rahim Mohammed – 0248368272

Thank you for taking the time to read this!

APPENDIX 4
<u>Service Providers Participant Information Leaflet</u>

<u>The title of the study:</u> *<u>Understanding the Impacts and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for the Implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Strategy.</u>*

Introduction
I am Abdul-Rahim Mohammed, a PhD student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield, UK. I wish to invite you to participate in the above-named study. To help you decide whether you will like to do so or not, please find detailed information about the study, why it is being carried out, what your participation will involve and what I will be doing with the information you give me below.

What is the purpose of the study?
The objectives of the study are to: (1) identify and explain in what ways fiscal austerity affects the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme; (2) reveal how fiscal austerity affects children's welfare, teaching and learning, and poor households' ability and willingness to educate their children; and (3) explore the nature of the public discourse around fiscal austerity and the need to sustain the Ghana School Feeding Programme. These issues are fundamental to understanding how the fiscal consolidation efforts of government affect Ghana's social investment agenda. While austerity has been sweeping across 187 countries in the world (Ghana inclusive), the empirical data to show austerity's impacts on social programmes, and children's education in developing countries, is lacking. My research aims to fill this gap in the Ghanaian context. This is particularly important, given that, at the turn of the Millennium in 2000, the government of Ghana and international development institutions shifted their focus from macroeconomic stabilisation — after two decades of structural adjustment — towards increased social investments.

Why I want you to help me
I seek your assistance because, as service providers of the Ghana School Feeding programme, you singularly occupy a very critical role in the programme design. Since you serve as the interface between the beneficiaries (students) and the policy formulators/implementers (government), you have a rich experience which enables you to discuss and examine how austerity has impacted on the funding, (re)design, and delivery of the programme. I feel your very important experiences and views on the matter will shed more light on my research. It is entirely up to you to decide whether you want to participate or not.

However, if you wish to assist me, then kindly contact me on **(0268368271)** to provide me with your details and when you will be available to speak to me. Should you change your mind at any time during the group discussion, you can withdraw your offer.

What your participation will involve
I will kindly invite you to an interview (at your convenience and time) lasting no longer than one hour. The interview is intended to offer you a platform to share your experiences on the effect of austerity on the school feeding programme.

With your consent, a voice recorder will be used in the interview. This is to help me correctly transcribe the discussion. Your personal details will be anonymised and information given me will be safely stored in encrypted form in my personal computer. This data will be deleted in October 2019 upon the completion of my viva. Should you not wish for your voice to be recorded, kindly inform me at the start of the interview and this will duly be complied with.

Potential risks or inconveniences in taking part in the study
Taking part of this study has the potential risk of you losing your contract to provide the service (depending on the nature of the information you share). However, every effort will be channelled into averting this. I will keep the information you provide me confidentially. Your name, details, and the school(s) in which you provide the service will be anonymised. This is to ensure that the information provided can be traced to neither you nor the school

Potential benefits of your participation
This study will provide empirical evidence on the impact and effects of austerity programmes in Ghana. This is particularly important given that there is the assumption that the school feeding programme and other social programmes enjoy considerable political and public support. Thus, these programmes are immune to the consequence of austerity. The evidence provided from this study will, therefore, provide a basis to challenge this assumption, and offer a justification for a re-examination of government policy and programmes on social investments.

Results of the study
The results of the study will be published in a doctoral thesis. A summary of the key findings and recommendations of the thesis will be distributed electronically to relevant senior civil servants and policy-makers in Ghana as well as local NGOs in Ghana and international NGOs based both in Ghana. A poster will also be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study to each of the schools participating in this research so that participants can also be aware of the outcome of the research.

Will you be compensated for your participation?

I will provide refreshments to you a sign of appreciation of your time spent engaging in this interview.

What to do if you have any concern about the study
I encourage you to raise any concerns that you have about the study itself, my conduct as a researcher or any other matters pertaining to this study. I will endeavour to address any issues raised. Alternatively, my supervisors can be reached via email at: Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk).

Do I have to continue to the end once I have taken part in the project?
You are free to withdraw your offer to participate at any time of your choice. You do not have to give a reason for this. You will be asked if the information you have already provided can be used or if you want it to be destroyed.

Funding and authorising organisations
The study is funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Secretariat, UK.

I hope that the above provides you with adequate information to help you make your mind. If you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at:

<div align="center">Abdul-Rahim Mohammed – 0268368271</div>

<div align="center">**Thank you for taking the time to read this!**</div>

APPENDIX 5

Participant information leaflet – For Children and young people aged 8-15.

The title of the study: *Understanding the Impacts and Implications of Financial Challenges for the Implementation of Ghana's School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Strategy.*

Introduction.

Hello! My name is Abdul and I am a student from the University of Sheffield. I am here to find out your views on and experiences of the Ghana School Feeding Programme in the last few years.

Why am I conducting this research?

This is an important study because today, the current reduction in government spending can affect the provision of the school feeding programme.

As a result, the University of Sheffield felt that it is important to discuss with you about your experiences of the programme.

I hope that the findings of our study will provide the information to show to policymakers and NGOs working in Ghana on the effects austerity is having on your education.

Why I want you to help me.

I am asking if you would like to take part in this study because I think you may have some views and experiences to share on the matter since you are the direct intended recipients of the school feeding programme. As such, you are in a special position to talk about the school feeding programme. You do not have to say yes if you do not want to take part. It is up to you and there will be no problem at all for you if you say no.

But, if you will like to help me, then kindly contact me on during school hours as I will be in your school this term. You can still change your mind about taking part even after the group activities and focus group discussion start. Again, this will not cause any problems for you at all. You have the choice to say no at any time you want.

What happens if you do agree to participate in the study?

If you decide to help me, then that would be fantastic! I would like to invite you to take part in a number of group exercises during the term. The group exercises will involve you and other children of your similar age and gender/sex. These children will all come from within your school. I will not ask you any personal questions during this group discussion.

These activities will be done through the term. The activities are going to be all about food!! We are going to engage in multiple group discussions, storytelling and role-playing (acting), drawing (and you will be taking some exciting pictures about the foods you eat, like best etc). We will be talking and engaging in talking about healthy food, nutritious food, your favourite food, how often you get these and how you feel when you do not get any. The activities will last about 45 minutes (twice a month) and if you agree, it will be recorded with a voice recorder. The recording is supposed to help me capture what you have told me correctly. The recording will be securely and confidentially stored on an encrypted USB storage device and any details which will allow someone to identify you will be removed as soon as possible after the discussion. Once I have written up the details of the group discussion I will delete the recording. Also, this information will be destroyed after my exams (viva) in October 2019. If you do not wish to be recorded, then let me know. In that case, I will only be taking notes. Also, I will be observing/watching you take your

lunch from the school matron. This is to help me understand how the lunch is prepared and served to you.

Is it possible that your involvement in this study could put you in danger?

Taking part should not put you in danger and I will take some steps to make sure this does not happen. I will keep the information you provide me private/secret. This means that I will not tell anyone (parents, uncles, aunts, teachers, and even your friends!) of anything that you have said during the discussion. I will also encourage you not to share personal experiences during the group discussion so that others do not share it outside the group.

Also, your name will be changed in the report for the project so that no one will be able to identify you or your community when they read the report.

What are the benefits of getting involved in this study?

The views you share in this study will be fed back to policymakers. I hope that this will ensure that policies and programmes are designed to address the effect of government spending on the school feeding programme.

Results of the Study

At the end of the project, I will write a brief report in addition to my thesis. Also, a poster will also be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of this exercise the school so that you can be aware of the outcome of the research.

Is there any payment for your involvement?
Refreshments will be provided at two of the group activities (the focus group discussion and the final activity at the end of the term).

Who to go to if you have any worries about how the research is being undertaken?

If anything happens during the project that worries you or that you do not like, please let me know. I will answer any questions you may have. Also, my supervisors can be reached through email at: Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk) if there are any issues about the study.

I hope the information in this leaflet will help you decide if you want to take part in the project or not. If you want any more information you can contact me on:

0268368271

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me!

APPENDIX 6
Request for Access Letter to the Director of Education.

The University of Sheffield.
Department of Sociological Studies.
Elmfield Building.
Northumberland Road.
Sheffield S10 2TU, UK.
Amohammed7@sheffield.ac.uk.

0248368272.

The Regional Director.
Ghana Education Service.
Northern Region.
Tamale.
DATE.
Dear Director,

Request for Permission.

I am Abdul-Rahim Mohammed, a lecturer at the University for Development Studies (Tamale Campus) and a PhD student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield (UK) in the department of sociological studies under the joint supervision of Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twumdanso@sheffield.ac.uk). My supervisors can be reached through the above-stated email addresses if there are any concerns about the study.

I am writing to kindly: (1) request access to two schools in the Northern region to conduct research as part of my doctoral degree and, (2) to invite you to take part in an interview with me (to be scheduled at your convenient time and location).

My research broadly aims to contribute to an understanding of the impacts and implications of the ongoing fiscal austerity in Ghana on the country's social investment agenda using the Ghana school feeding programme as a case study. The research will be done in two public primary schools in the northern region. One of the schools will be in the metropolitan area (Tamale), while the other one will be in the Savelugu-Nanton district. The research will involve:

- An in-depth interview with you the Regional Director of Education.
- A focus group discussion with 8 teachers in each of the 2 schools.
- An in-depth interview with headmasters (or their assistants) in each of the 2 schools.
- An in-depth interview with the service provider of the school feeding programme in the school.
- Group activities with 2 groups of pupils in each school (10 pupils in each group and each group activity lasting no more than 45 minutes) throughout the term (these group activities will be done once every two weeks); and the observation of these pupils during lunch.
- The group activities will involve engaging pupils on a series of focus group discussions, storytelling and role-playing, drawing and photography of food, and finally a talk show/debate between the groups at the end of the term on the benefits of nutrition and healthy eating as well as their experiences of food. These activities are designed solely to engage pupils on their experiences with the Ghana School Feeding Programme and education.

The interviews and discussions will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis with the participants' permission. All responses will be coded and anonymised so that participants cannot be identified. These interview sheets, recorded messages and all data gathered in the schools

will be destroyed in October 2019 after my viva. Participation in this is voluntary and individuals can decline to participate without giving any reasons to myself or the head of the institution. All information provided is considered completely confidential.

Names and other identifying details will not appear in the thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with respondent's permission, anonymous quotations may be used. A poster will be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study to the schools so that participants can also be aware of the outcome of the research.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Review Board at the University of Sheffield.

Please, find attached copies of the following: letter of introduction and information sheets to you the Regional Director of Education, the Head of schools, the teaching staff, students, service providers, parents/caregivers as well as a consent form.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Abdul-Rahim Mohammed.

APPENDIX 7
Request Letter to Head Teachers

The University of Sheffield.
Department of Sociological Studies.
Elmfield Building.
Northumberland Road.
Sheffield S10 2TU, UK.
amohammed7@sheffield.ac.uk.

The Academic Head.
XXX Primary School.
Tamale.
DATE
Dear Head Teacher,

Study Title: ***Understanding the Impacts and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for the Implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Strategy.***

Request for Access.

I am Abdul-Rahim Mohammed, a lecturer at the University for Development Studies (Tamale Campus) and a PhD student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield, UK. I am writing to ask for access to your school and to invite you to take part in an interview as part of my doctoral degree's fieldwork in the department of sociological studies at the University of Sheffield. This research is under the joint supervision of Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk). My supervisors can be reached through these email addresses if there are any concerns about the study.

The Northern Regional Director of the Ghana Education Service has granted permission to carry out this research in your school (find attached a copy). Nonetheless, as the study is a voluntary exercise, you can decide not to participate in the research project.

My research broadly aims to contribute to an understanding of the impacts and implications of the ongoing fiscal austerity in Ghana on the country's social investment agenda. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

- To identify and explain in what ways fiscal austerity affects the implementation and delivery of the Ghana School Feeding Programme.
- To reveal how fiscal austerity affects children's welfare, teaching and learning, and poor household's ability and willingness to educate their children.

This will require that:

- I conduct an in-depth interview with you (lasting no more than 1 hour) at a suitably arranged time within the term.
- I will need to conduct a focus group discussion with 7 teaching staff in your school.
- I will need to conduct an in-depth interview with the service provider of the school feeding programme.
- I will need to conduct a focus group discussion with two groups of caregivers (8 members in each group). Male guardians/parents will be in one group, while female caregivers are in the other group. The school's PTA association will be the source of identifying and recruiting them.

- Two groups of pupils (10 pupils in each group) in the upper primary 6 will be engaged in group exercises through the term on an agreed day (lasting no more than 45 minutes of each meeting. These activities will be done once every 2 weeks). The group exercises will involve repeated focus group discussions and activities (such as storytelling and role-plays, drawing and photography of foods) focused on highlighting and engaging the pupils on the benefits of good nutrition, healthy eating, balanced diet.

- Finally, in addition to the group exercises, these pupils will be observed during lunchtime as they engage with the service providers. This observation is to serve as (1) a means of gaining first-hand information on the nature and how the programme is implemented in schools, and (2) a form of check against the pupils' claims and information gathered during the group exercises on their experiences of the school feeding programme.

In your role as head of the institution, I will be most grateful if you could kindly facilitate the introduction of myself as a researcher to your assistant, senior housemaster/mistress, heads of departments, staff and students, and PTA members.

Participants must know that they are free to make their own decisions whether or not to take part, and they need not supply any reason for their decision if they decide against taking part. If they decide to take part in this voluntary exercise, they can withdraw from this research at any time. Furthermore, with the permission of participants, the interviews and focus group discussions will be tape-recorded to facilitate the collection of information and later transcribed for analysis.

Every effort will be made to ensure the school and participants remain anonymous in the thesis. All responses will be coded and anonymised so that participants cannot be identified. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used.

The collected data will be kept securely in my office at the University of Sheffield. My supervisors and I are the only people who will have access to those data. The interview sheets and recorded data will be destroyed in October 2019 after my viva. A poster will be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study so that participants can also be aware of the outcome of the research. I will like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Review Board at the University of Sheffield.

Please, find attached copies of the following; approval letter/letter of introduction, letter of invitation, information sheet, consent form and reply sheet as samples of documents that I will be using. In the event that you want to contact me, I can be reached via 0248368272.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Abdul-Rahim Mohammed.

APPENDIX 8

Consent Letter to Parent.

<div align="right">
The University of Sheffield.
Department of Sociological Studies.
Elmfield Building.
Northumberland Road.
Sheffield S10 2TU, UK.
amohammed7@sheffield.ac.uk.
</div>

DATE.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

LETTER OF INFORMATION.

I am Abdul-Rahim Mohammed, a PhD student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield, UK. I would like to ask for permission for your child to participate in a research study to be used for my doctoral dissertation. My research aims to contribute to an understanding of the impacts of the ongoing reduced government spending in Ghana on the country's school feeding programme. In relation to your child specifically, the objective is to understand how reduced government spending affects children's welfare, teaching and learning. The experiences of children on the Ghana school feeding programme during periods of financial problems will be explored.

The study consists of the following:

1. I will ask your permission for your child to take part in group exercises (10 pupils in each group and each exercise lasting no more than 45 minutes) over the course of the term. These group exercises will be done once every two weeks.
2. These tasks may include: answering questions about what your child has experienced while in the school feeding programme, how your child feels about being in the programme, and group exercises designed to highlight the benefits of healthy eating and balanced diet and to engage pupils on their experiences with the school feeding programme. The exercises with involve repeated group discussions, role-playing, drawings and photography of foods.
3. Additionally, your child will be observed during lunch for the term while on the school feeding programme.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect your child in any way. The research will be explained to your child in a language that your child understands. Even if you grant your permission for this study to go on, your child is free to opt-out of the study. In such a scenario, your child's refusal to participate in the study will not affect him/her in any way. A poster will be produced to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the study to the school so that participants can also be aware of the outcome of the research.

The Ghana Education Service and the headmaster/mistress have given approval for the conduct of this research. However, in the event that you object to your child participating in this research, or you wish to ask questions you can contact me using the following contact details; Abdul-Rahim Mohammed (**0248368272**). I will endeavour to address any issues you raise. Alternatively, if you have any concerns or questions about the study, my supervisors can be reached via email at: Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh (a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk).

If you **do not** want your child to participate in this study, please check box #1 on the enclosed form and return it in the envelope.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely,
Abdul-Rahim Mohammed.

OPT-OUT FORM

Examining the Impacts and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for Ghana's School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Agenda.

Please complete this form and return in the envelope provided

1. ☐ I do not want my child to participate in this study.

Name: _____

Telephone(s): _____

Email: _____

Signature/Thumbprint……………………………………………………

APPENDIX 9.

Participants Consent Form.

The title of Research Project: *Understanding the Impacts and Implications of Fiscal Austerity for the Implementation of Ghana's School Feeding Programme and Social Investment Agenda.*

Name of Researcher: Abdul-Rahim Mohammed

Institution: The University of Sheffield, UK

Please fill the boxes with your initials if you agree with the foregoing statements

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask

   questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.

3. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

4. I agree for my responses to be recorded with a tape recorder.

5. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give

   permission for members of the research team to have access to my Anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research

6. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

   [ ]

7. I agree to take part in the above research project.

   [ ]

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

 Lead Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

APPENDIX 10

Interview Guide for Service Providers of the GSFP

Introduction.

Thank you for taking time off your schedule and agreeing to talk to me about your experiences as a caterer on the GSFP. In this section, we are going to discuss issues that have to do with your experience as a caterer and how you got involved with the GSFP.

1. How long have you been providing catering services in general?

2. When did you start providing catering services under the GSFP?

3. What is the procedure involved in being selected as a service provider for the GSFP? What is your opinion on the procedure?

4. How many schools do you currently serve?

5. How large is your service provision? How many pupils do you cook for every day in this/each school? What is your general experience of providing catering as part of the GSFP?

Financial Arrangement.

At this stage, I want us to discuss the financial arrangements you have with the GSFP Secretariat and your experiences in financing the programme.

6. Can you tell me the nature of the financing agreement you have with the GSFP Secretariat? Do you pre-finance it? If yes, how long does it typically take for you to be reimbursed? In 2005 (when the GSFP started), caterers were reimbursed every two weeks in regular instalments. Is this still the practice? If not, when did it change? What do you think of the financial agreement you have with the GSFP secretariat? Why do you think so?

7. Has this always been the status quo since you started providing the service? If not, when did things change and why? What do you think are the reasons for the change?

8. If there is a payment schedule with the GSF Secretariat, is this agreement adhered to? If payment schedules are not adhered to, how does it affect you?

9. What issues emerge as a result of having to pre-finance the programme?

10. How do you address these issues?

11. Do you source credit from suppliers and financial institutions? If yes, how have austerity measures in recent years affected your ability to source credit and how does this affect the delivery of the programme?

12. Taking credit implies extra cost on the service provider. How do you address this extra cost? Does the extra cost impact/compromise the quality and quantity of the meals served?

13. One of the goals of the GSFP's is to boost local agricultural production by linking local farmers with the GSFP. Specifically, the GSFP Operational Manual requires that 80 per cent of foodstuff for meals should be bought from local farmers. Is this the case with you? What do you think about this requirement? Why do you think this way?

14. Bearing in mind that you should pre-finance the programme, are you able to meet this requirement?

15. How much does government pay for each pupil's feeding per day?

16. What do you think about the amount? What is the reason for this view? Is it sufficient in providing the quality of food you want to provide for pupils?

17. Has there been a revision of the amount government pays per child per day under the school feeding programme? If no, when was the last time this amount was revised? Has there been a cut or freeze in this rate in recent years?

18. What is your financial position while providing this service? Are you able to make a profit, break-even, or losses? If you do not make a profit, why do you still provide the service?

19. There have been widespread agitations reported in the media about caterers of the GSFP. Can you tell me what specifically your concerns are and why those concerns in particular?

Service Provision.

In this section, I want us to talk about your experiences in providing the service within the context of an economy characterised by sharply rising costs of goods and services, and government cutbacks on expenditure.

20. In the last four years, have your costs changed? Up or down and why? If up, can you give me an example of these increases that affect you as a service provider? In what ways, if any, have these events affected the delivery of the service? What do you think about the increases?

21. Have rising prices impacted meals served to students? If yes, in what ways? **Probe**.

22. Have there been any arrangements by governments, school staff, or the district assemblies to cushion caterers against the sharp rises in prices of goods and services? What are these arrangements? What do you think of them? Do you think they are effective? If there are no such arrangements, how has this impacted on service delivery?

23. If the amount the government pays for each pupil has not been significantly revised at a time of sharply rising cost of goods and services, why and how are you able to provide services to the pupils?

24. Are you consistently able to provide the meals daily to the students every week? If yes, how do you do it? If not, why not? What is the attitude of the pupils on days you are unable to cook?

25. There are reports that the government does not always honour its commitments to service providers. Have you ever experienced this? What did you do? What do you think about it?

26. Given that the service is not for all pupils in every school, has there been a revision of the eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries? What consequences has that had for you? Is there agitation between those who benefit and those who are excluded?

27. District Assemblies, per the GSFP operational manual, are supposed to provide a canteen (cooking place) and a water reservoir to caterers. Is this the case? If not, do you cook from outside the school and transport it to school? How is this cost handled?

28. What are your general impressions with providing the service in the last four years compared to when you started working as a caterer on the GSFP? Is there anything else you would like to mention in relation to the GSFP and your role within it?

APPENDIX 11

Interview Schedule with Head Teacher and Focus Group Discussion with School Staff.

Q1. What do you consider as key issues inhibiting the full participation of children in the class?
Q2. Do you consider hunger in the classroom as one of these problems? If yes, why do you think so? How does hunger affect teaching and learning? Probe: Does it affect concentration, the classroom environment and other students? How do you manage these effects?

Q3. If not, why do you not consider hunger as an issue?

Q4. How would addressing hunger in the classroom make a difference in children's experience of education?

Q5. Do you think pupils come to school because they anticipate being fed? If yes, why is this? Q6. Are there instances when pupils come to school hungry, in anticipation of being fed in school, but do not get fed? What happens in this case?

Q7. Are there pupils from food-insecure households (households without adequate nutritious food for each member due to resource constraints) who come to school with the school lunch being their only source of food? Probe

Q8. When was the GSFP started in this school?

Q9. In your view, does the GSFP contribute to the goals of universal primary education? How is this achieved?

Q10. What has been the experience of the GSFP in your school? Following the start of the GSFP in your school, what has been the impact of the GSFP on teaching, learning, enrolment, and retention?

Q13. Austerity in Ghana has meant that teaching supplies and materials (books, equipment, etc.) are routinely delayed and/or in short supply. Do you think the ongoing fiscal austerity has affected the implementation of the GSFP? Why do you think that? Have you noticed any changes in the quality and quantity of meals served to pupils by the caterers? If yes, what are some of these changes and why do you think this?

Q14. Are there days (or periods) when the caterer is unable to provide the service? If yes, does this affect attendance, teaching, learning, and academic performance? If yes, how does it happen? What measures has the school put in place to deal with this?

Q15. As teachers and school staff, you are among the first line of defence for hungry pupils. What do you do, when children come to school hoping to be fed but do not get fed, or do not like the food? Why do you do this? Are there any effects you are aware of? How are these effects manifested in the classroom? Does this happen routinely? What do you do?

Q16. How does it affect teaching and learning? What impact has this had on you as a teacher?
Q17. How do you help hungry pupils in the class?

Q18. What are the challenges associated with the GSFP presently, in your view and how can these be addressed?

Q19. Is there anything else you would like to mention in relation to the GSFP in your school?

APPENDIX 12

Elite Interview Guide

Q1. What is the discourse around the future of social spending within the period of austerity by policymakers and the general public? Why has it been this way?

Q2. Whereas there have been some calls to abolish the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme, the discourse around the school feeding programme has mostly been one of expansion. In your experience, why do you think this is so?

Q3. Do you think the ongoing fiscal austerity has affected the implementation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) in any way? Why do you think that? How can this be addressed in your view?

Q4. What are some of the challenges associated with the GSFP?

Q5. Do you believe the current narrative on the need for fiscal discipline has had an impact on the design, funding, and/or delivery of the GSFP in any way? Why do you say so?

Q6. One of the goals of the GSFP's is to boost local agricultural production by linking local farmers with the GSFP. Specifically, the GSFP Operational Manual requires that 80 per cent of foodstuff for meals should be bought from local farmers. What do you think about this requirement? Why do you think this way?

Q7. The government of Ghana pays 0.80 pesewas for each pupil's feeding per day. What do you think about this amount? What is the reason for this view?

Q8. The amount government pays for each pupil's feeding has not been significantly revised (since 2015) at a time of constant, and sharply rising cost of goods and services (inflation for March 26, 2016, was 19.2%). Since 2016, there have been calls for this amount to be increased to 1.20 pesewas per child per day, without success. What do you think accounts for this and why?

Q9. Is there anything else you would like to mention in relation to the GSFP?

APPENDIX 13

Interview Guide with Caregivers/Guardians/Parents

1. What do you think, are some of the importance of schooling? Why did you send your children to this school?
2. Do children look forward to school on specific days because their favourite meal will be served?
3. In recent times, Ghana's economy has slumped. Do you think households are affected by the general rising costs of living? If yes, why do you say so? Do households try to reduce spending? If yes, In what ways?
4. Has there been any change, in your experience (learning from pupils' comments, complaints, or remarks at home), in recent years in terms of the implementation of the GSFP?

5. If there has been a change in the implementation of the programme, what do you think is the cause? In your view, how can we address these challenges?
6. In your estimation, do you think that the ongoing austerity has impacted the running of the GSFP? If yes, why do you think so? In what ways has austerity impacted the GSFP?
7. Are there instances when children complain about either the quantity or quality of food served in school? *(Probe)* How does this affect you as a parent?
8. Do children always get served food in school? If no, how does this affect you as a parent? Have you put in place backup strategies if children are not served in school or they do not like the food served? If yes, what are they?
9. What impact does availability / non-availability of food in school have on children's willingness to go to school*? (Do children resist going to school because they would not get fed?)* What do you do if they do not get food in school or do not like the food available there?
10. If children resist going to school because of food, what do you think about it? How does it affect you? Do you think this affects their education?
11. What do they (children) do when they don't go to school? Do they work instead of going to school? If yes, what kind of work do they do?
12. How do children feel about their school holidays (Are children eager to go back to school during holidays?) Why do you think this is the case?

APPENDIX 14

Interview Guide with 8 to 15-year-old students

1. Can you kindly tell me about yourself? What is your name? How old are you? How long have you been in this school?

    2. In your view, what is a good and healthy diet? What are your favourite things to eat? Then moving on to talk about whether they are good for you or not and then you can ask them what kind of food would be good for them to eat?

    3. Do your favourite meal at school? Do you think your favourite food at school is a healthy and good diet? Why do you think so?

    4. Do you like coming to school? Can you tell me why you go to school? What do you like about school or what makes you look forward to going to school? What are the best things about going to school? What do you most look forward to when going to school?

    5. What do you think about the quality of the food being served to you? Why do you say this? What about the and quantity? Why do you say this?

    6. Has been a change in the food served to you? If yes, what is the nature of this change? When did this change start? Has this change affected you in any way?

    7. Do you get enough to eat every day? If no, what happens (how do you feel) when you do not get enough to eat? Does this affect you during the day? If yes, how is this?

    8. Are you served from the kitchen every day? Is there any food being served that you do not like? If yes, what food is it and how often is this served? Why don't you like it? What happens on the day(s) when you do not like the food being served?

    9. Do you look forward to school on specific day(s) because your favourite meal(s) will be served? How do you feel when this happens?

    10. Are there times when you don't come to school? What are some of the reasons for this? ***Probe for the role of food.*** If yes, do you get a lot to eat at home when you do not go to school? What do you do at home when you do not go to school? Do you work? What kind of work do you do while at home?

    11. Do you have a canteen? If no, where do you eat? How do you find it? Why do you say this?

APPENDIX 15: Access Letter from Regional Director of Education.

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply the
number and date of this
letter should be quoted

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Regional Education Office
P.O. Box 4, E.R.
Tamale.
Tel. No.: 037 - 2023165
Fax No.: 037 - 2024716

My Ref. No. : GSB.254/GES/NR/59

Your Ref. No…...............................

23rd December, 2016

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

I write to introduce Mr. Abdul-Rahim Mohammed a lecturer from the University for Development Studies, Tamale Campus and a PhD. student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield (UK).

As part of his doctoral program he is conducting a research that will involve data collection in two Public Primary Schools in two Districts in the Northern Region.

Kindly grant him the needed assistance.

Thank you.

ALHAJI MOHAMMED HAROON
REGIONAL DIRECTOR (NR)

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cc:-   Mr. Abdul-Rahim Mohammed
University for Development Studies
Tamale Campus

Received by HG
20/05/17 @ 10:25am

APPENDIX 16: Access Letter from District Director of Education.

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply,
the date and reference
number of this letter
should be quoted

Municipal Education Office,
P. O. Box 26,
Savelugu,
Northern Region.

Phone No: 0372 094732

E-mail Address:
savelugudeo@yahoo.com

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

My Ref: GES/NR/SN/PG/VOL.2/97
Your Ref: ……………………………

Date: 8th May, 2017

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Mr. Abdul-Rahim Mohammed is a lecturer from the University for Development Studies and a PhD student in Social Policy at the University of Sheffield (UK).

He is conducting a research as part of his doctoral programme that will involve data collection in your school.

I therefore write to introduce him to you and ask that you kindly grant him the needed assistance.

Thank you.

The Headteacher Concerned
Ghana School Feeding Programme School
Savelugu.

PHILIP ISSAHAKU ZIBLIM

MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
SAVELUGU-NANTON

CC: The Reginal Director (NR)
Ghana Education Service
Tamale

Mr. Abdul-Rahim Mohammed
University for Development Studies
Tamale.

APPENDIXES 17 to 21: Extracts from Field Diary.

Please see the next pages.

May 9th, 2017

1. Went to the school with letter from Regional Director of Education Introducing me and my mission to the school.

Headmaster agrees to the research. Date was scheduled to introduce me to the staff of the school.

Have been introduced to the teaching staff and service provider.

Today, I went round the primary classes introducing myself to students and asked for volunteers. Some students volunteered to help as as such letters were given to pupils to send to their parents.

Today the head teacher organised a meeting with the staff. I spoke to all of them about my research and asked for questions. The teachers were mildly not co-operative and quite apprehensive. They thought I was an inspector of education from the local authority.

Students are seen eating on the bare floor in scorching sun and very dusty. School does not have a cafeteria, so students are forced to queue and take their food in the open field, and then sit on the floor to eat.

Today, some pupils didn't go to the kitchen. I asked them why they did that and they reported that they don't like the food.

July 17th, 2017

The interview with the Care Giver was fairly boring. Two of them today were not forthwith helpful in their responses. The answers were mostly in Yes or No and the body language suggested that she was uncomfortable when i started recording. Hence, i had to turn off the recorder. Even that, the respondent was not forthcoming with comments so i had to cut the interview short.

This interview with CG didn't go on well because of the environment. When i got to the venue of the interview, there were many people in the house who didn't excuse us. While apart from that they were listening on us and this made the interview uncomfortable. They were grown people and it was culturally inappropriate to ask them to excuse us. Also, the respondents responses were fatalistic (Ka wula ka nyay nning?) so i had to stop it.

This CG interview went well. Respondent was welcoming, accomodating and even offered drinks. This was a teacher and this reflected in her responses, being in the middle class. She had no difficulty in providing for her children. So her responses should be seen in that light.

the Interview with the headmaster went very well today. However, he was constantly hedging his statements. For example "I am not betraying anyone but" ---. In this sense, the headteacher was obviously concerned that his responses would would affect those or some people in relation to his responses.

April 12th, 2017

I started ... these 2 of my data collection today by going to the District Directorate of Education in N. Saxelngu.

At the directorate, I was welcomed and introduced to the director. He was welcoming and then offered me a letter of introduction to send to the school. In addition, I was given a list of all the schools in the SN District ... the staff in order to select a school.

I went to school B today. I met the headteacher who was surprisingly welcoming. I showed him all my letters. He took them, and we scheduled a meeting tomorrow so that he had gone through the letter.

I met the headteacher today. He had read all my letters and had even gone to the community to inform them about my arrival. His explanation was that, the community is not open

then they come back after 10 am to cook lunch. After, they go to

May 17th, 2017

While visiting the caterer in School B in rural area, she complained about this system.

Schools have no mechanism to distinguish between eligible pupils and pupils who just enrolled.

In the rural areas, children will only show at meal time and any time of the term. Hence, they enrollments a discrepancy to caterers, because newly enrolled pupils are not being paid for.

In school B, a pupil came to register then went home to buy the book. When the caterer refused to serve him, he went home and brought the parent who was furious her son should been denied food.

Had children not catered in School 2 of rural area. It went well. She however revealed that she was confused when she heard I was looking for her as she didn't know what she had done wrong in mid the political climate.

In Atebubu caterers broke and sacked. Not only caterers, other workers sacked. due to change of government.

After supply the requested items to the headteacher, she still declined the interview. She stated that one time a colleague granted an interview on the school feeding programmes. The teacher was summarily punished by being transferred to the rural areas.

So, she says her school has to be doubly sure because My Cole on mobile.

Today Caleta came to inform the head teacher that she will not be able to cook again after Friday June 9th (Today 7th June) because she has not got firewood and food stuff

JUNE 8TH, 2017

Today service provider cooked, but only for the KG pupils and not the older ones.

Members announce the termination or non extension of current cook's contracts. Cooks are unhappy and have slowed down cooking for the children.

The food cooked today looks watery. The food is cool, even though the former provider serving beans (Ahwoa beah). Some of the pupils are playing with their food. Two girls are moving their spoons through the food in circles. And in the process, they are spilly their food. When asked one of them why? She is said "It's not good. It (the food) is just ixten

APPENDIX 22: Interview Extract with Service Provider 2 U/A.

Q1. How long have you been providing service for the GSFP? And how large is your service?

I started in September 2012. I provide catering services for 1 school, the KG section of the school. I provide the service for 144 students. They were more than 200 students but there is a new KG centre around my school. Therefore, some parents took their wards to those schools. I even asked for a transfer to another school because the children in my school are not many. Because the more you feed them, the highest your amount. But if they are small, the amount too is very small. When you get paid eventually, you don't enjoy it.

Q2. Prior to providing a service for the GSFP, did you provide catering services elsewhere?

Yes. I did catering as a course at the t-poly. But I left it halfway and did painting and decoration because I couldn't afford the ingredients. However, when I graduated, I was running a restaurant and a chop bar. So, when I heard about the school feeding programme, with my experience in rendering catering services, I decided to apply. Fortunately for me, I am also an assembly member. So, I explained to them my experience in catering services and was then offered the contract.

Q3. What is the nature of the financing and payment agreement you have with the assembly or the secretariat?

You will pre-finance yourself because the condition is that you must have the wherewithal to start the programme, so that government reimburses you. But if you are unable to pre-finance it, whether you go for credit supply or you yourself you use your own resources to start it. But, when you go to the market to buy on credit, it is more expensive than paying cash for it. So, when you are buying on credit, you have to tell the market women to number of months you can pay. Whether it would be termly or yearly or monthly. You will have to come to such an agreement. But in my personal case, because I am a salaried worker, I decided to pay monthly. However, when it became too tough to for me to meet the obligations every month, I had to reschedule the agreement to paying termly. But, currently when I am paid my salary, I go to the market to pay for the foodstuff. At any point in time, we have no idea when the government is going to pay us. When it is ready, we will start hearing about it. Whether 10 days, 20 days, or 15 days. They don't repay all the amounts owed. For example, recently we were paid for 25 days out of almost 3 academic terms arrears which is almost getting to 1 year because 3 terms equal to 1 year. Last 2 terms our balance was 35 days. That's the 25 days they have paid with an outstanding of 10 days. Last term not a single day has been paid. This term is also almost over and we have not been paid. So, if the practice is that we are paid every term, our debts would not have been this high. But, there is no plan or schedule. We start hearing rumours about payment or when we make enquiries from the assembly, or coordinator, then they will inform us that they are about to pay 10 or 20 days.

Q4. What do you think about the requirement to pre-finance?

My suggestion is that they should be paying us at least every term. One time we complained about having to pre-finance the service so Bonzali Rural Bank assisted by giving us loans. But we declined to use this facility because of the high-interest rates. The rate was too high, as a result we only took the loan once and didn't try taking it again.

Q4b. what are some of the challenges that arises out of having to pre-finance the service?

Having to pre-finance the service is very expensive. So if you buy goods on credit and you are unable to pay, and then you feel your debts are so much and so you are going to stop providing the service, how are you going to pay your old debts? So, when we were about to start rendering the service, we were expecting a loan but this didn't materialise. The assembly told us that those who could not afford to pre-finance the service should opt-out, so that the contract would be given to another person who could. Accordingly, a lot of squeezed and accepted the contract because we wanted to do the work. We went to market women and took supply of foodstuff on credit. Pepper, Maggie, etc. a full packet of Maggie is 170 cedis, and then buy powdered fish for 400 cedis. But when we started rendering the service we were buying it for 250 (in 2015) cedis on credit basis. But this time because the prices keeps rising sharply, this time if you want to buy it, it will cost 400 cedis. So, we have stopped using it (the fish).

Q5. How much does government pay for each pupil's feeding and what is your view on the amount?

0.80pesewas. In fact, when we started it was worse. It was 0.40 pesewas. After several rounds of agitation, it was increased to 0.50pesewas and then to 0.80pesewas. This latest round of increases is not even up to 1 year. The 0.80pesewas is too low. At least they should increase it to 1.50pesewas because when one of my children is going to school, I give her 2.0 cedis and that's not even enough. By the time she comes home from school, she will spend all the 2 cedis. And I also know that the 2 cedis that I give is her is not enough. Yet, we are paid 0.80 pesewas. Had it not been because the cost of the foodstuff at times is low, it would have meant that we would be working for nothing. In fact, when the secretariat was paying 0.40pesewas per child, some of the caterers stopped proving the service. But because we are assembly members, we have to just sacrifice. If you don't get any reward, the reward will come after your death or your family will benefit from your act of kindness. So, a lot of us are providing the service hoping we will receive the rewards after we die. In fact, the food we cook is for quite a number of people. The teachers, cooks, and occasionally passers-by's stop and eat the food. however, the payment is based strictly on the number of pupils enrolled. So, it is just a sacrificial job.

Q6. How are you able to provide the service in the midst of these issues? How does this affect the food you serve to the children?

As I already said, if you think you are doing the service in the name of God, even if you don't benefit personally, one day your family will benefit or when you die you will benefit. So, we cook the food the way we are supposed to. We cook the food and the quality will be neat, and the quantity will also be great. We hear our colleagues complain that because they have not been paid, they cannot cook the food to the quality standard set. However, in our case, we always do our best to cook to the desired quality. My colleague is an illiterate so I do everything for her including answering interview questions. She's very shy and would run away. Even recently we heard in the news that a number of schools were not cooking, and those which were cooking had low quality

Q7. Did you buy your own water tanks and kitchen?

No. I bought my drums and then store water into them. We have a kitchen and the school provided us with a store for our foodstuff.

Q8. Per the design of the school feeding programme, 80% of foodstuff from local farmers?

Yes. We are able to do that. Even as we speak, the rice I use in cooking is from local farmers. The local farmers have a union, from which we buy. SNV's coordinator introduced us to local farmers

union in order that we can order from them. However, if the secretariat pays us, we buy the foodstuff cash from the farmers. However, if we don't have cash, we buy on credit. Sometimes too, they are unable to supply the foodstuff because they have run short of supply themselves. In which case you go to buy from the market women. Even buying from them on credit as I said, only a handful of farmers sell to us on credit basis. Otherwise, they don't sell their foodstuff on credit. Sometimes the secretariat sells foodstuff to us by force, whether we like it or not. For example, they sell some polished rice to us, and that one is extremely expensive. Because, a full bag of the local rice, is 280 cedis. Even with this amount, you will pay 200 cedis if you are paying cash. But if it is on credit, they will increase the cost to 280 cedis because it is going to take time before you pay. However, the rice supplied by the secretariat is 15 or 16 bowls and they sell it for 180 cedis. The number of bags supplied is according to your enrolment numbers. In the last round, I was supplied 5 bags of rice. At the point of payment, this amount is deducted at source. In fact, one time we were supplied cooking oil as well. This amount was also deducted at source. The rice supplied to us is very expensive. Furthermore, the local rice we use (compared to the polished rice supplied) is more nutritious. However, because we don't want to have problems with the secretariat, they bring the items, force us to accept them, and we take them. There has never been a time when we take these foodstuffs and don't complain among ourselves. Sometimes they will tell you that if you will not accept the foodstuff, then stop providing the service. Thus, you accept it by force (because you don't want to lose your contract). We have tried several times to come together as a group to fight this practice, but each time one of our members snitches. Then you are called and told to stop the service if you can't. Bearing in mind that others are lobbying for it, any caterer who commits the slightest offence is sacked and substituted.

Q9. Has the rising cost of goods and services impacted service delivery? Is there an arrangement to support caterers in terms of the cost incurred from taking credit?

Hmm. Sometimes you are paid by the secretariat and when you honour your debt obligations, you are left with nothing. You come home expecting another payment. That's what we have been doing. They don't care about how expensive the foodstuff are. Whether the cost is high or low, it is the same amount they pay. For example, in the last 2 terms, a bowl of Bambara beans was 10 cedis. However, if you are to buy on credit, each bowl is sold at 10.50pesewas. a bag of Bambara beans contains 40 bowls. So, at the point of payment, you will pay 440 cedis. A bag of cassava used to sell or 50 cedis, however if you are going to buy it on credit, it is being sold for 80 cedis per bag. So, in a term, I used 2 bags of Bambara beans and 4 bags of cassava. It got to a point where we had serious issues with the beans and cassava sellers' due to our inability to honour our debts. As, a result, a lot of the caterers stopped preparing tuubaani and substituted it with gari and beans. Whenever the price of foodstuff increases, you spend all your money on servicing your past debts and that would not even be enough. The sellers give us a lot of pressure, particularly when they hear that school feeding caterers have been paid. Whoever had sold foodstuff to you on credit would knock at your door early dawn.

The school staff are only interested in organising PTA meeting in respect of teaching and learning materials. Where they call upon parents to help in buying books for example. However, in matters relating to the school feeding programme, they are silent.

Q10. What are your general impressions about providing a service since 2012?

Our biggest challenge has to do with the payment… the irregular nature of the payment is a serious problem. Even as it was 0.40 pesewas per head, we wouldn't have had problems if the payments were regular so that we could honour our debts.

APPENDIX 23: Generating Programme Implementation Themes from Codes

1 ladle not enough, unhappy pupil faces…FGDr

All children cannot be served with required quantity..SP4 RA

Caterers do not serve the recommended quantities ''manage' SP1

Struggling for ''kids'' to get a little to eat..sp2 RA

Trying our best on quality and quantity..SP3 RA

Caterers don't serve in the required quantities…Ht/R

Low quantity of food served leads to unsatisfied students….FGDr

Pupils served in smaller quantities SP1 RA

Reduced quantity served to satisfy all students…SP1 RA

Reducing quantity of food served…CG2 R

Serve smaller quantities coping strategy…cg2 r

SFP quantity has reduced..cg4 r

Quantity and quality low (20% of required quality and quant)…..FGDr

Small quantity served to students….FGDr

> Reduced/Inadeq uate Quantity Meals Served

Caterer does not cook according to menu…FGDr

Caterers don't cook according to menu (Ht/R

Cant cook according to menu…sp2 RA

Cant cook according to the menu..SP3 RA

Cooks same menu repeatedly lower quality…..FGDr

Caterers provide cheaper foods…HTR B2

> Cheaper Food Served
>
> Menu Ignored

Caterers stop the service because of funding challenges…SP1 RA

Caterer complains cant cook every day (coping stra)…Ht//SP2 (2)

Caterer does not cook on Fridays (coping strategy)SP2/HT/CG2 (3)

Caterer does not cook on Fridays because of debts…Ht/R

> No Consistency. Meals Not Provided Always

Caterer does not cook on Fridays because of austerity (delayed payments)……FGDr

Food used to be nice, not anymore….FGDr

complaints about poor quality no heeded…Ht/R

Low quality of food served (taste)…Ht/R

low quality of food served…FGDr

Poor quality, you will pity the pupils…FGDr

Previous servings was of high quality and quantity..FGDr

Quality and quantity has gone down…FGDr

Quality served too low…FGDr

low quality and quantity of meals served…FGDr

Reduced/Low Quality Meals Served

Low quality served (no fish)…..FGDr

No more fish and meat (lower quality)……FGDr

Caterer stopped providing meat, low feeding rate SP1 RA

Dropped Ingredients

Constantly rising enrolment figures a challenge…SP1/SP2 (2)

Non-beneficiary kids served for free…SP2/SP4/SP1/FGD (4)

Enrolment keeps increasing…Ht/R

Constantly rising enrolment a challenge...SP1 RA

No of students served higher than that paid for SP1 RA

Small Portions because of rising enrolment…SP1 RA

Can't discriminate against non-beneficiaries…SP2 RA

Empathy for non-beneficiary kids..SP2 RA

Rising Enrolment Figures

Non-Beneficiaries

Local Farmers don't sell on credit…SP4 RA

Cant buy from local farmers…SP3 RA

Farmers hoard produce…Don't sell on credit…SP1 RA

Local farmers unable to meet demand..SP4 RA

Home Grown School Feeding Undermined Local Farmers

Political appointment of caterers affects monitoring……FGDr

Political job, no monitoring…Ht/R

Caterer appointed politically…SP2 RA

Political recruitment affects monitoring…..FGDr

Political recruitment process..SP2 RA

Political party chairman's wife is the caterer…SP1 RA

Politicisation of the SFP..SP4 RA

Caterer unwilling to recommend another caterer..sp1 RA

Caterers worried about being fired, new government..SP4 RA

Repayments announced (politicisation)…sp2 ra

No supervision (1 in 8 years)…Ht/R/ FGD (2)

Monitoring of caterer likely to improve service delivery….FGDr

Application letter written…SP4 RA

Application process apply to assembly…SP3 RA

Politicisation of SFP

Different attitude to class on days no SFP..FGDr

Don't concentrate cos of hunger…HTR B2

Dull, sleepy no participation..HTR B2

Hunger affects concentration in class…S3/Ht/R (2)

Hungry and weak, cant learn…Ht/R

Absenteeism leads to lower performance…FGDr

Hungry students lead to early closure of school..S1 R

Hungry pupils no concentration, stomach pains..S4/S2

Hungry students get headache. Can't concentrate..S1 R

Hungry students lying down, can't concentrate…Ht/R

Hungry students sleeping in class..FGDr

Low concentration, thinking of food (hungry)…FGDr

Hungry pupils ignore teacher, (disinterested in class)…FGDr

Students close 12pm instead of 2 on Fridays..S2 R

Teachers ignore absent students and teach on…FGDr

Teaching and learning not effective on Fridays after break….FGDr

> Academic Performance
>
> Low Concentration
>
> Health/Emotional Effect
>
> Hunger in Classroom
>
> Food Insecurity in Class

Truancy because of food….HTR B2

Days with no SFP, pupils don't return after break…Ht

Falling academic performance as they leave school.Ht

Leave school in search of food..HTR B2

Go home for food..S2/S3 (2)

Pupils go to bush in search of food…Ht/

Pupils leave campus in search of food..HT B2

Pupils sometimes travel to nearby towns for food…Ht/

Pupils absent up to 2 weeks in farming season….FGDr

Students run back home when no food in school..cg6 r

Students leave school break time if no SFP that day….Ht/R

> Truancy
>
> Absenteeism

Low-quality meals, fewer ingredients…S3

Lower quality meals now served (not delicious, little stew)..S2

Feels sick when eats food..S3

Don't like maize (low quality)..S2 R

Disliked food because of quality…S4 R

SFP gotten worse in quality…S1 R

SFP used to be served with oil…S1 R

Student gets stomach aches …S1 R

Quality meals should be served..S3 R

Student does not like the cooked food. No oil or stew…S1 R

Low Quality Meals

Health Effects of Low Quality meals

Parents send pupils to farm (farming season)…Ht/R

Parents take them to farm…HTR B2/S2/S1/S3 (4)

Picking shearnut….FGDr

Girl students always late (going to pick fruits)…FGDr

Go to farm to work..S2/CG1 (2)

Pupils absent for up to a month (harvest season)….Ht/R

Students sent to farm to work to help parents…cg2 r

Students taken to farm during vacation..cg3 r

Children's Work

Child Labour?

Student brings money to school..S4 R

Student buys food with money from home…S1 R

Students brings food from home..S2 R

Student go home for food..S4 R

Student does not eat low quality food…S1 R

Children's Agency/Resilience

Students complain about low quantity served…cg6 r

Students complain about the quantity of meals served …cg2 r

Students don't get enough to eat in school..cg4 r

Small portions served..s3 r

Student don't get satisfied with small quantities..S1/S2 (2)

Students used to eat and bring leftovers home..cg3 r

Inadequate Quantity Meals Served

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