

School Feeding Programme in Trinidad and Tobago Then and Now



AUTHORS

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HYPOTHESIS STATEMENT– Why there was a need for the implementation of the School Feeding Programme in Trinidad and Tobago and the changes that have occurred over the years in the Programme.

DISCUSSION OF SOURCES

At the National Heritage library which is located on the second floor of the National Library and Information System Authority in Port of Spain, we looked at the only main source available at the library:

- ✚ School Feeding Programme file filled with newspapers articles dated from the 1980s to 2000s, which came from the three major newspapers – Trinidad Express, Trinidad Guardian and Newsday.
- ✚ In the same file we discovered one Parliamentary document dated in 1978.
- ✚ Interview with Vanessa Martina Nutrition Manager of The National School Nutrition Programme dated 26th January 2012, at her office National Schools Dietary Services Limited 6 Newbold Street, St Clair.

We consulted number of secondary sources including:

- ✚ A textbook entitled, Endless Education Main Currents in the Education System of Modern Trinidad and Tobago 1939 – 1986 by Campbell, Carl C. Published by Press UWI 1997. Printed in Canada.
- ✚ A number of internet sources were used to also gather information:
 - http://www.moe.gov.tt/school_feeding_prog.html
 - http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/file_download.php/aa5df5dc6a74959fe9c58b06ef31a2a0School-feeding-programs.pdf
 - <http://www.wfp.org/school-meals>
 - www.villagehopeinc.org/Reports/VHTR6Schoolfeedingprograms.doc.

INTRODUCTION

We chose this topic because it was interesting to note the changes that took place in the School Feeding Programme. Many of us remember the menu of milk and cookies, while others were too young to be exposed to the former menu. We wanted to investigate the reason for the implementation of the School Feeding Programme and the changes that took place from then until now. Despite the programme being a good initiative by the government then, it was plagued with many challenges. However, the government persisted and the programme is still in existence today.

The major objectives of the Programme are as follows according to the National School Dietary Services Limited:

- ❖ To provide approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the recommended daily allowances of nutrients for the underprivileged child, through breakfast and lunch respectively.
- ❖ To contribute to the improvement of the nutritional status of the needy child thereby enhancing the child's ability to learn.
- ❖ To further stimulate the agricultural sector by utilizing local produce wherever possible in the meal plan.

We, the researchers categorised our findings under four major headings. They are as follows:

IMPLEMENTATION

In the 1940s the World Health Organization decided to implement a programme that would provide needy children with a meal of milk and biscuits in primary schools. The World Health Organization recognised that providing students with a meal will “motivate parents to enrol their children and have them attend school regularly. It will alleviate short term hunger in malnourished or otherwise well- nourished schoolchildren. This will help increase the attention and concentration of students producing gains in cognitive function and learning.”¹ Dr. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago saw the need to enhance and expand the milk and cookies programme. He wanted to provide a hot meal for every child in the primary school system. He saw the programme as a “necessary package of inputs for improving education.”²

¹ School Feeding Program: Improving Effectiveness and Increasing the benefit to Education. The Partnership for Child Development. Del Rosso J. 1999

² School Feeding Program: Improving Effectiveness and Increasing the benefit to Education. The Partnership for Child Development. Del Rosso J. 1999

In 1977, the School Task Force was convened to formulate proposals for the implementation of a free School Feeding Programme. In their report, they recommended that the programme be run in three phases. They are outlined in the following document:

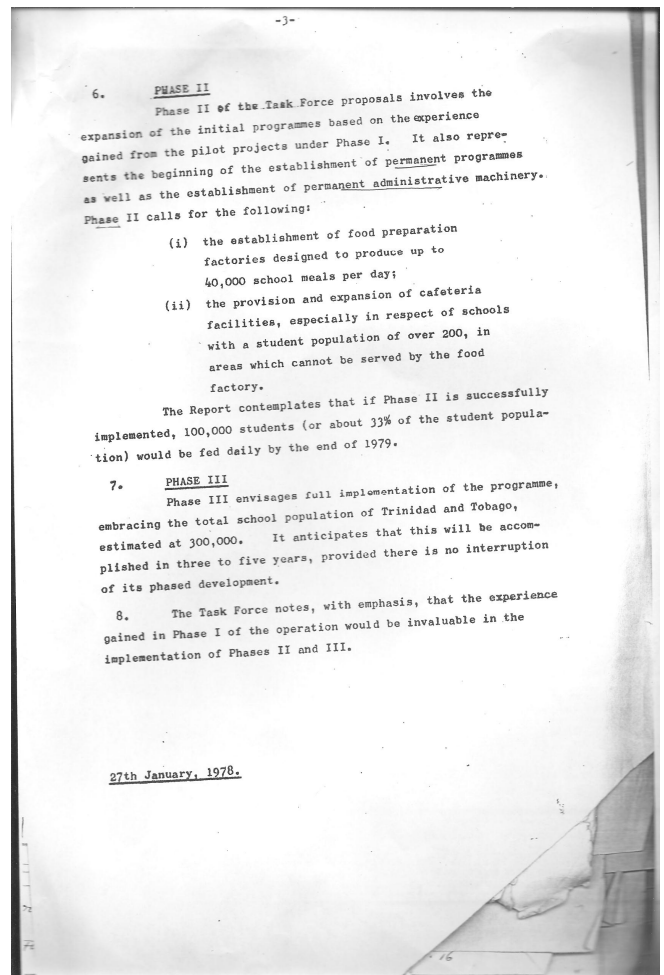
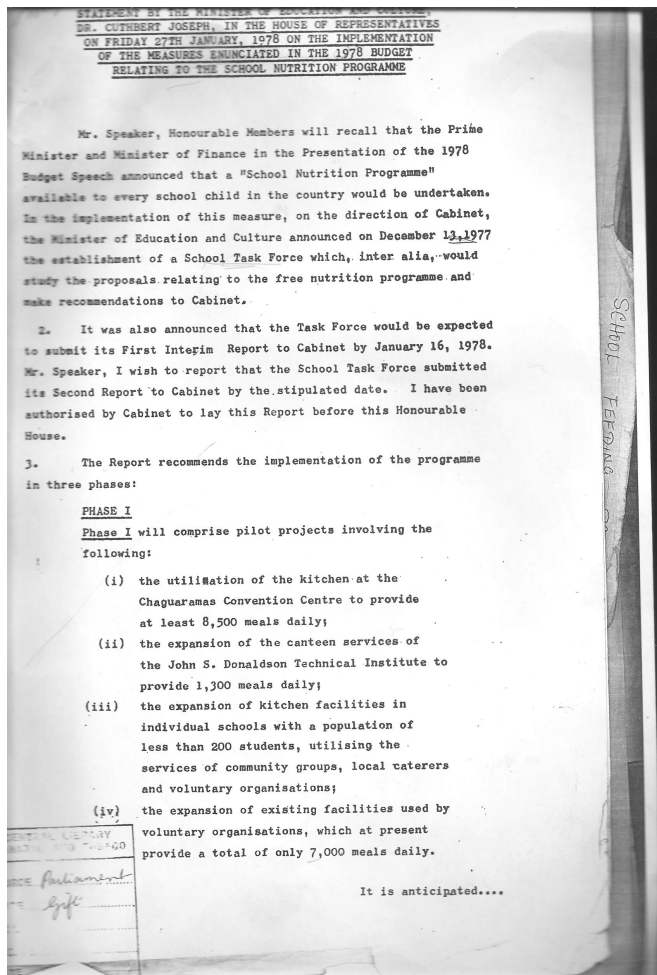


Fig 1 Minister Report³

³ Address by the Minister of Education Dr. Cuthbert Joseph In Parliament 1978

CHALLENGES TO THE PROGRAMME

Even though the initiative was a good one, there were many setbacks to the programme. Originally it was carded to begin in September 1978 whereby all students would “receive one hot meal a day in Trinidad primary schools.”⁴ However, the programme did not start until May 1979, where only one thousand plus students received a meal. From our research we have concluded that money was a major obstacle, which hampered the smooth running of the programme. Added to this factor the programme encountered many interruptions such as inadequate transportation, no electricity, inclement weather, inadequate facilities, as well as non payment of catering services. It even reached a point where the programme was stopped in 1986. It must be noted that the programme was later restarted in 1989, where 29,000 students were to receive a meal, three times a week.

Here are a couple of articles that highlight the problems that existed in the programme.



Fig 3 Excerpt from Express Newspaper⁵



Fig 4 Excerpt from Express Newspaper⁶

⁴ Endless Education Main Currents in the Education System of Modern Trinidad and Tobago 1939 – 1986 by Campbell, Carl C. Published by Press UWI 1997. Printed in Canada.

⁵ Free Meals for 29,000. Sankar, C. Trinidad Express 16/4/89 page 1



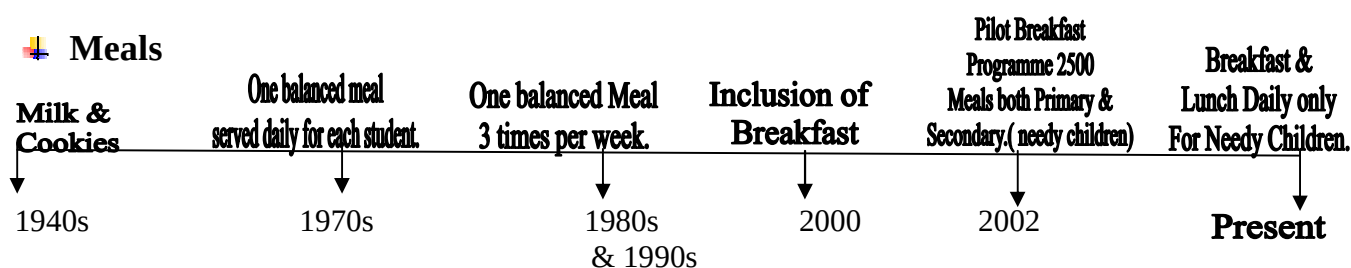
Fig 5⁷ Excerpt from Sunday Guardian

⁶ Money Worries. Late start to school feeding Program. Trinidad Express 14/09/86 page 4

⁷ School Feeding Program in danger. Solomon, N. Sunday Guardian. 17/08/86 page 1

CHANGES TO THE PROGRAMME

From the inception of the Programme in 1979 to present, there have been many changes. The name of the company has changed over the years. Originally its name was School Nutrition Company (1979). The company was dissolved in 1987 and restructured in 1989 and renamed School Feeding Programme. In 1996 the name was again changed to School Nutrition Programme. In 2002 the National School Dietary Services Ltd. was formed. This name has remained to date.



The timeline shows how the meals were catered from inception to present. It must be noted that the National Dietary Services Limited followed the guidelines of the World Food Programme for the Timing of Meals. Our Programme follows the highlighted row in figure 6. This guideline is followed by countries that have the School Feeding Programme.

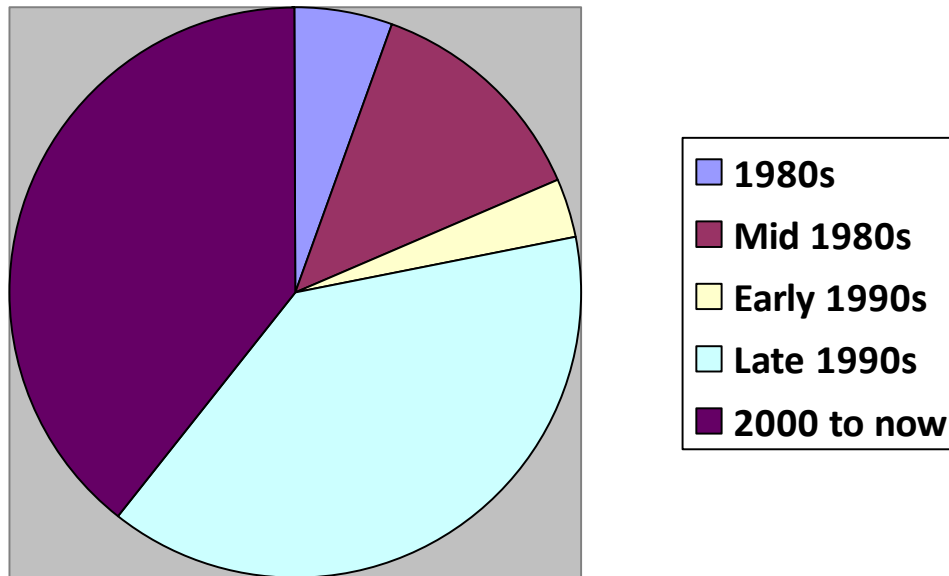
Number and Timing of Meals.

Type of School	Number of Meals	Timing of Meals
Half-day school	2	At start of classes and at mid-morning
Day school	2	At the start of classes (or mid-morning meal) & lunch
Boarding school	3	Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Fig 6⁸

⁸ Table taken from Briggs B. Village Hope Technical Report 6 School Feeding Programs: Summary of the Literature and Best Practices.

Cost



The above diagram (fig 7) shows the cost of the School Feeding Programme from inception to present. In the 1980s the cost was 9.7 million by the 1990s it was 68 million and from 2000 present it is over 68 million. Globally the School Feeding Programme is very expensive as well. In Horton 1992, the study shows the comparison of the cost of School Feeding Programme in different countries. For example in Gambia ration 858, days per year 196, cost per 1000kcal/day/365days/year(US\$) 81.46, number of Beneficiaries 376,202 compared to Guatemala ration 456, 165 days per year, cost per 1000kcal/day/365days/year(US\$) 19.25, number of Beneficiaries 1,093,000.⁹

⁹ Horton, S. (1992) "Unit Costs, Cost-Effectiveness, and Financing of Nutrition Interventions." PHN Working Paper 952. World Bank, Human Development Department, Washington, D.C. In School Feeding Program: Improving Effectiveness and Increasing the benefit to Education. The Partnership for Child Development. Del Rosso J. 1999

Geographical Location

The preparation and distribution of lunches were initially centralised in the area of South Trinidad, specifically in Barrackpore. Then it was expanded to the areas of Chaguaramas and Mausica, which were used in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These centres provided lunches for schools in those areas. For example the Chaguaramas kitchen provided lunches for schools in the Port of Spain area, Carenage, Diego Martin etc.

Then in 1988, the then Minister of Education Clive Pantin stated that the School Feeding Programme will be “decentralised with caterers familiar with dietary preferences of their areas being chosen to prepare meals”.¹⁰ Therefore each area had its own caterer responsible for the preparation and distribution of lunches. However, it must be noted that the Barrackpore kitchen remained the most modernised kitchen. Tobago came on board in the mid 1980s and the major kitchen was located in Scarborough. Bon Accord, Mason Hall and Charlotteville kitchens were also added for the preparation and distribution of lunches in Tobago. Below is a map of Trinidad and Tobago. The centralised areas were Barrackpore located in the Victoria District, Chaguaramas in St George. Scarborough and Charlotteville in Tobago.



Fig 9 Map of Trinidad and Tobago¹¹

¹⁰ Quote from the article \$9.7 million for new school feeding programme in the Trinidad Express 07/06/88 page 5

¹¹ Image from <http://www.mapsofworld.com/trinidad-and-tobago/>

Number of children served

Over the years the number of children served steadily increased. Initially it began with 3,400 meals being served. At present approximately 147,000 meals are served daily. This is inclusive of both breakfast and lunch.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the National School Nutrition Programme has evolved over the years into an organisation that provides meal to needy students from Pre School to Secondary school. It has managed to overcome many challenges, and is still a functioning entity that provides nutritious meals for the Nation's needy. The National School Dietary Services Limited has upheld the standards accepted globally by the World Food Programme. Their objectives and vision are in line with the steps of effective running Programme as stated in School Feeding Programs: improving effectiveness and increasing the benefit to education. The Partnership for child Development Del Rosso J. The steps are as follows:

- Build a consensus on a policy and objectives that focuses on how school feeding can effectively contribute to improving education and to meeting the nutrition and health needs of school – age children
- Develop targeting criteria and mechanisms that concentrate program resources on high risk children and communities.
- Analyze and identify alternative financing and cost options for School Feeding Programs.
- Elaborate appropriate guidelines for rations composition and timing of school meals.
- Identify and address any potential bottlenecks in implementation.
- Develop systems that focus on program processes, that is, how a program is functioning, and institute an evaluation system to assess the impact of the program on specific outcomes.
- Integrate feeding programs with other interventions that address the primary nutrition and health problems of the school – age population.¹² It must be noted that this last step is not implemented our School Feeding Programme.

Please view the video link on the running of the School Feeding Programme in Trinidad and Tobago. http://www.moe.gov.tt/school_feeding_prog.html¹³

¹² School Feeding Program: Improving Effectiveness and Increasing the benefit to Education. The Partnership for Child Development. Del Rosso J. 1999

¹³ Video from the Ministry of Education website
http://www.moe.gov.tt/school_feeding_prog.html

Finally, “evidence has shown that whenever canteens have been closed, immediate and high absenteeism follows...”(WFP 1995;1996).¹⁴ This problem occurs as well in certain areas in Trinidad and Tobago mainly the impoverished areas. Therefore the School Feeding Programme is an integral part in our education system.

¹⁴ School Feeding Program:Improving Effectiveness and Increasing the benefit to Education. The Partnership for Child Development. Del Rosso,J.1999

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Briggs, B. 2008 Village Hope Technical Report 6 School Feeding Programs: Summary of the Literature and Best Practices. www.villagehopeinc.org/Reports/VHTR6Schoolfeedingprograms.doc. Retrieved on 22nd February 2012.

This word document explores a comprehensive research on globally School Feeding Programme. It examines the overview of the programme, designing a School Feeding Programme and the best practices and guiding principles of School Feeding Programme.

Campbell, Carl C. (1997). A textbook entailed Endless Education Main Currents in the Education System of Modern Trinidad and Tobago 1939 – 1986.

This book explores the Education System in Trinidad and Tobago during the period 1939 – 1986. It focused on teacher training, emergent of Denominational Schools, the School Feeding Programme and other areas that dealt with education during that time period.

Del Rosso, J. 1999. School Feeding Program: Improving Effectiveness and Increasing the benefit to Education. The Partnership for Child Development.

http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/file_download.php/aa5df5dc6a74959fe9c58b06ef31a2a0School-feeding-programs.pdf Retrieved on 25th February 2012

This pdf file was a comprehensive research on the School Feeding Programme globally. It focused on all areas in running a smooth programme, the objectives of the programme. It showcased the comparison of the costing of the programme in different parts of the world.

Money Worries Late start to school feeding programme. (1986) Express. Page 4.

This article examined the late allocation of funds which would incur the School Feeding Programme not beginning as schedule.

National School Dietary Services Limited website

http://www.moe.gov.tt/school_feeding_prog.html Retrieved on 25th January 2012.

This website contains a video that can be viewed showcasing the School Nutrition Programme in Trinidad and Tobago. The video highlights the inception of the programme, the preparation and safety of the meals and objectives, vision and mission of the National School Dietary Services.

Sankar, C. (1989). Free Meals for 29,000. The Trinidad Express. Page 1.

The article explored parents' emotions towards the return of the School Feeding Programme while some were happy, others expressed disappointment as their children were unable to receive a meal. Due to the factor that meals were to be distributed 3 times per weekend not all children would receive a meal due to insufficient funding.

Solomon, N. (1986) School Feeding Programme in Danger. Sunday Guardian. Page 1.

This article looked at the lack of funds the School Feeding Programme was in danger of closure and may not be able to provide free meals to children.

World Food Programme- School Meals. <http://www.wfp.org/school-meals>. Retrieved on the 24th February 2012.

This website explores the reasons for the implementation of the School Feeding Programme globally.