

Institution: Cardiff University
Unit of Assessment: 16A
Title of case study: Reforming School Food
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This research furnished evidence for school food reform in the UK, Italy, the USA and developing countries. Examining the pioneering experience of school food reformers in Europe, North America and Africa, the research showed that the power of public purchase can transform the quality of school food. The researchers demonstrated that the most important factor behind successful reform is a political culture that prioritizes the values of sustainability over price and cost-cutting concerns. This insight shaped the creation of the <i>Food for Life</i> programme, which has been implemented in over 4,000 UK schools. Furthermore, the research has influenced international public food policies, such as those of the United Nations. In recognition of these achievements, the research in this case study recently won the Economic and Social Research Council's <i>Celebrating Impact Prize</i> for outstanding impact on public policy.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research was based on two projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) an ESRC-funded project that examined the procurement of healthy school food in Italy, the UK and the USA; (ii) a project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in conjunction with the UN's World Food Programme, which concentrated on low income countries. The primary focus of the research was the power of public procurement and the regulatory, political and cultural factors that shaped the way it was designed and deployed. <p>The key insights of the ESRC research were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory regime: the reform of public procurement regulations in the EU raised the status of sustainability criteria in the awarding of public catering contracts, allowing public bodies to procure higher quality and more locally-produced food than had been the case hitherto (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). • National diversity: the national interplay of culture and politics was found to be the main reason as to why member states interpreted EU regulations differently. Italy and the UK interpreted "best value" in radically different ways because of the different cultural values they attached to food - intrinsically significant in Italy, where the school meal was meant to provide for children's health and educational needs; instrumentally significant in the UK, where school food was not seen as integral to children's education (Morgan and Sonnino, 2007; Sonnino, 2009). • Public procurement: the research demonstrated that in the UK and the USA the power of purchase is in practice hindered by a number of barriers, principally: legal uncertainty as to what is permissible under EU/Federal procurement regulations; a consumer culture that commends quantity over quality in food choice/provision; and a low-cost catering culture that is biased towards "cheap food" options (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). In developing countries, the research showed that public procurement failed to calibrate demand and supply of local and nutritious food due to the inadequacy of the governance structure and an unrealistic timeline chosen for the reform process (Morgan, 2010). • Value for money: the research showed that "value for money" is a highly contested concept that needs to be based on a metric of whole life cost, rather than low upfront cost (Morgan, 2008).

- **Power of purchase:** creative public procurement requires a supportive political milieu and a professional climate in which procurement officers have the confidence and competence to internalise health and environmental costs in their public contracts (Sonnino, 2010).
- **Diffusing good practice:** the research showed that more effective diffusion mechanisms of social learning are needed in the public sector (where performance is highly variable) if good practice is to become the norm, rather than the exception (Morgan, 2008).

The significance of the research stemmed from the fact that it coincided with public outrage (as seen by protesting parents, media coverage) about food insecurity and childhood obesity. This gave the research a high political prominence and robustness because it was based on a new and solid evidence base that examined school food reform in a comparative perspective.

The key researchers involved in this body of research (which was carried out in the period 2005-2009) were Kevin Morgan and Roberta Sonnino, respectively Professor and Reader in the School of Planning and Geography at Cardiff University.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Key academic publications include:

- 1) **Morgan, K. J.** (2010) Local and Green, Global and Fair: the Ethical Foodscape and the Politics of Care. *Environment and Planning A* 42(8) 1852 – 1867. Official URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a42364>
- 2) **Sonnino, R.** (2010) Escaping the Local Trap: Insights on Re-localization from School Food Reform. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 12 (1): 23-40. Official URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15239080903220120>
- 3) **Sonnino, R.** (2009) Quality Food, Public Procurement and Sustainable Development: The School Meal Revolution in Rome. *Environment and Planning A*, 41(2) 425 – 440. Official URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a40112>
- 4) **Morgan, K.J.** and **Sonnino, R.** (2008) *The School Food Revolution: Public Food and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*. London: Earthscan. ISBN: 9781844074822
- 5) **Morgan, K.J.** (2008) Greening the Realm: Sustainable Food Chains and the Public Plate. *Regional Studies*, vol. 42 (9): 1237-1250. Official URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00343400802195154>
- 6) **Morgan, K. J.** and **Sonnino, R.** (2007) Empowering Consumers: Creative Procurement and School Meals in Italy and the UK. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31 (1): 19-25. Official URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2006.00552.x>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

At a time when obesity affects one in seven children, according to the NHS, the research resonated with a wide audience of policy-makers and professional practitioners. This was due in large part to the results being broadcast internationally through a robust dissemination strategy, which included 60 conferences (including the UN) in 16 countries. For example, the Sustainable Food Cities conference (2011) had over 500 delegates, including practitioners from 20 UK cities and 15 NGOs. The dissemination strategy also involved extensive engagement with influential national and international media organisations, including BBC, which in 2011 conferred the Radio 4 Food and Farming Award to the Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) [1], a five-year programme, established by the Soil Association in 2007, which was heavily influenced by the research. As stated by Helen Browning, the Chief Executive of the Soil Association: “Cardiff University’s collation and analysis of international good practice case studies has helped us to visualise better school food services, impacting directly on our own programme of school food transformation through the Food for Life programme” [2]. Funded through a £ 16.9 million grant from the Big

Lottery and involving four charities, the FFLP is the most transformative school food programme in Europe. It is currently being implemented in more than 4,300 English schools, reaching over 500,000 children, and preliminary results show that the initiative has made a genuine difference, especially as regards the number of primary school children eating 5-a-day. Dr. Sonnino's invited participation in the Soil Associations' Catering Mark Standards Committee since 2011 will ensure that the Cardiff team's expertise continues to support this important reform effort in the UK.

In Wales, the research was 'very valuable and relevant' to the government's reform of the national school food policy, *Appetite for Life*, according to Jane Hutt, the Welsh Government's Finance Minister. [3] Morgan and Sonnino were invited to serve on school food reform task forces in Wales (2008) and Scotland (2009) and to be part of the team that designed and wrote the first National Food Strategy for Wales in 2010 – a document commissioned by the Welsh Government to make the national food system more sustainable. Professional practitioners (in Carmarthenshire, East Ayrshire, Greenwich and Rome) have used the research to introduce new criteria into their public contracting processes to ensure that sustainability criteria are allotted parity of esteem with more conventional economic criteria - the first step in the transition to a more sustainable school food system. [4]

In Scotland, the research was instrumental in translating local good practice into national policy through the direct participation of Dr. Sonnino in the task force that designed the national food and drink policy - *Walking the Talk – Getting Government Right* (2009). The adviser on Food Policy from the Food, Drink & Rural Communities Division of the Scottish Government, Robin Gourlay, wrote, "Morgan and Sonnino's ESRC funded research continues to be a vitally important touchstone in my work as it is in many spheres for practitioners involved in sustainable procurement, community planning, health and education." [5]

Morgan and Sonnino were invited to address two sessions of the United Nations, when it convened the Seventeenth Session of its Commission on Sustainable Development (4-15 May 2009), where member countries and NGOs assembled to discuss the design and delivery of sustainable food systems. As a result of these sessions, the researchers were invited to both Zimbabwe and Kenya to discuss the promotion of food security through stronger urban-rural linkages. [6] The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) has drawn extensively on the research to inform its own creative procurement programme - *Purchase for Progress*. [7] In 2012, WFP bought US\$1.1 billion worth of food to feed more than 90 million people.

Furthermore, the research 'strongly contributed to the conceiving and rethinking of programmes such as the *Home Grown School Feeding* (HGSF),' according to the WFP, which had formed a partnership with the Gates Foundation to commission the researchers to deliver a study of HGSF. [8] This allowed the Cardiff team to engage with policy-makers and practitioners in low and medium income countries (principally Brazil, Ghana and South Africa) that were reforming school food systems. [9]

Findings from this research were discussed in a World Bank Report: *Rethinking School Feeding*. As a result of this, Sonnino was invited to participate in a high-profile workshop in London (January 2012) on 'building the evidence-base for school feeding policies' - sponsored and organized by the World Health Organization, the School Food Trust and the World Bank. [10]

Based on these impacts and the extensive engagement of the researchers with policy-makers and practitioners, in 2013 Morgan and Sonnino were awarded the Economic and Social Research Council's *Celebrating Impact Prize* for outstanding impact on public policy. This is the first ever award given to an ESRC-funded project of outstanding social impact, and the competition was extremely strong, with more than 30 applications received for the public policy category. The researchers were invited to a high-profile award ceremony, held in London in May 2013, which received a wide coverage on a range of scientific and government web sites. The Prize has been designed to further enhance the impact of the research; as a first initiative, it will support Sonnino's travelling to the Negev region in December 2013 to provide advice on an Israeli-Palestinian collaborative initiative on procurement and sustainable local development.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Key references:

1. BBC (2011) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b017ckf7> confirms award to Food for Life
2. Soil Association (Food for Life Partnership): A letter from the Chief Executive of the Soil Association confirms the Soil Association's use of the research findings
3. National Assembly for Wales (2012) Sustainable Public Sector Food Procurement: A letter from the Former Minister for Education, Welsh Government (2007-9) confirms the impact of the research on Welsh Government's policy approach
4. Local Government Information Unit Magazine February 2011
<http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Cllr-magazine-Feb-2011.pdf> confirms relevance of the research in Scotland for other local government in the UK
5. Scottish Executive: A letter from the Advisor on Food Policy, Scottish Government confirms the impact of the research on Scottish policy
6. Seventeenth Session of the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development, 4-15 May 2009
<http://www.iisd.ca/csd/csd17/5may.htm> confirms researchers' invitation to share research findings on public procurement and rural-urban linkages
7. World Food Programme, 2013 State of School Feeding Worldwide
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp257481.pdf> confirms impact of the research on WFP's policy
8. World Food Programme (School Feeding Unit):
<http://www.schoolsandhealth.org/Documents/Linking%20school%20feeding%20with%20agriculture%20development.pdf> confirms impact of the research on Home-Grown School Feeding programme
9. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:
<http://www.fao.org/fcit/meetingevents/wuf6-naples/events/a-conversation-about-linking-farmers-to-local-buyers-opportunities-challenges-and-successes/en/> confirms researchers' engagement with policy-makers and practitioners at the UN level
10. World Bank (2009) *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank confirms impact of the research on World Bank's approach to school feeding