



Evaluation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Anantnag & Udhampur Districts of J&K

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Abstract: *The study attempts to assess the impact of MDMS as perceived by teachers & students on attendance, enrolment, drop-out rates, literacy, quality of meal being served & problems associated with scheme, of children in the schools of district Anantnag and Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir. To gather information regarding the impact of the scheme, 75 students & 50 teachers were randomly interviewed through structured questionnaire schedule. In order to know the impact of the scheme data have been tabulated and percentage techniques were employed for interpretation. The results of the study shows that impact of MDMS is impressive in terms of enrolment, attendance and drop-out rates, literacy but the scheme suffers from a number of bottlenecks in the course of its implementation as well.*

Keywords: *Anantnag, drop-out, enrollment, mid-day meal*

A. Introduction

The genesis of mid-day meals goes back much earlier, to 1925, when the Corporation of Madras introduced the scheme for school children. In 1956, the Chief Minister of Madras, K. Kamraj, set up a 'Poor Feeding' programme. Five years later, all corporation and government schools in urban areas were covered in which American aid acted as a catalyst. And in 1982, the legendary chief minister of Tamil Nadu, M G Ramachandran, set up a state-wide scheme called the 'Nutritious Meal Programme'. By the mid-1980, three states, Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and UT of Pondicherry had universalized a cooked Mid-day Meals Programme (MDMP) with their own resources for children studying at the primary stage. By 1990, the number increased to twelve as more states joined in this mission with their own resources namely, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and U.P. In another three states, i.e. Karnataka, Orissa and W.B, the programme was implemented with state resources in combination with international assistance. Another two states namely A.P. and Rajasthan were implementing the programme



entirely with international assistance.

In mid-1995, the government of India introduced a “centrally sponsored scheme” the national programme of nutritional support to primary education. Under this programme, cooked mid-day meals were to be introduced in all government and government aided primary schools within two years. The idea behind implementation of MDMP can be understood by three crucial perspectives: educational advancement, child nutrition, and social equity. Each of these objectives in turn has different aspects. Some are more ambitious than others. To illustrate, one basic contribution of mid-day meals to educational advancement is to boost school enrolment. Going beyond that, mid-day meals may be expected to enhance pupil attendance on a daily basis (and not just annual enrolment). School meals may also enhance learning achievements, in so far as ‘classroom hunger’ undermines the ability of pupils to concentrate and perhaps even affects their learning skills. Finally, a well-organized school meal can have intrinsic educational value, in addition to what it contributes to the routine learning process. For instance, school meals can be used as an opportunity to impart various good habits to children (such as washing one’s hands before and after eating), and to educate them about the importance of clean water, good hygiene, a balanced diet, and related matters. Similarly, the nutritional objective of mid-day meals has several layers, ranging from the elimination of classroom hunger to the healthy growth of school children. In many respects, a mid-day meal programme is (potentially at least) a nutritionist’s dream: the children come every day, on their own, and they eat whatever is given to them. This makes it possible not only to raise their intake of calories and proteins, but also to provide nutritional supplements such as iron and iodine, which need to be ingested in small doses over a period of time.

Mid-day meals scheme was started in Jammu and Kashmir on 1st September 2004. Under the scheme cooked food is supplied to students at primary schools from standard I to V. As per the guidelines of the scheme, 100 grams of rice and 10 grams of dal per student per day are supplied to schools. The Government of India provides rice and Government of Jammu and Kashmir provides fund towards purchase of dal, vegetables, oil, condiments and transportation charges etc. @ of Rs0.64 per beneficiary per day. The government of India provides cooking cost @ Rs 1.00 per day per beneficiary and accordingly Rs 1.64 (Rs 0.64 from state government fund) is being provided per beneficiary per day.

B. Significance

Promoting school participation: Mid-day meals have big effects on school participation, not just in terms of getting more children enrolled in the registers but also in terms of regular pupil attendance on a daily basis.

Preventing classroom hunger: Many children reach school on an empty stomach. Even children who have a



meal before they leave for school get hungry by the afternoon and are not able to concentrate - especially children from families who cannot give them a lunch box or are staying a long distance away from the school. Mid-day meal can help to overcome this problem by preventing “classroom hunger”.

Facilitating the healthy growth of children: Mid-day meal can also act as a regular source of “supplementary nutrition” for children, and facilitate their healthy growth and overall development of personality.

Intrinsic educational value: A well-organized Mid-day meal can be used as an opportunity to impart various good habits to children (such as washing one’s hands before and after eating), and to educate them about the importance of clean water, good hygiene and other related matters.

Fostering social equality: Mid-day meal can help spread egalitarian values, as children from various social backgrounds learn to sit together and share a common meal. In particular, Mid-day meal can help to break the barriers of caste and class among school. Appointing cooks from downtrodden communities is another way of teaching children to overcome caste prejudices.

Enhancing gender equity: The gender gap in school participation tends to narrow, as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme helps erode the barriers that prevent girls from going to school. Mid-Day Meal Scheme also provide a useful source of employment for women, and helps liberate working women from the burden of cooking at home during the day. In these and other ways, women and girl children have a special stake in Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Psychological Benefits: Physiological deprivation leads to low self-esteem, consequent insecurity, anxiety and stress. The Mid Day Meal Scheme can help address this and facilitate cognitive, emotional and social development.

C. Objectives of research:

- 1) The major objectives of the research were:
- 2) To know about the scheme as perceived by students.
- 3) To know about the scheme as perceived by teachers.
- 4) To know the impact of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on education in terms of enrolment, attendance and drop-out rates.
- 5) To make a comparison of urban and rural schools in implementing MDM scheme.

Rationale and need for evaluation of MDMS in Anantnag and Udhampur

Anantnag is one of the districts of the Kashmir Valley situated in its south and south western direction at a distance of 55 Kms of Srinagar. Anantnag is spread over an area of 2917 Sq. Km. with a population of



10.70 lakhs and about 85% of population lives in rural areas. The literacy rate of the district is 64%, male literacy rate is 74% while as for females it is 54%. The district is famous for countless springs and streams and is the gateway to the Kashmir Valley and is called the granary of the Kashmir Valley. To analyse the impact of the scheme, the present study was conducted in the Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir. District Anantnag was deliberately selected because since the inception of the scheme no systematic study has been done to evaluate the impact of the programme on primary education in the district. Empirical data for the study was collected from 25 sample Schools situated in the 7 different blocks of the district.

Further to gather information regarding the impact of the scheme, 75 students and 50 teachers were randomly interviewed through structured questionnaire schedule. Besides primary data on enrolment, attendance and dropout rates of school going children were collected from the school registers and inspection reports. In order to see the impact of the scheme data on enrolment, attendance and drop-outs was collected for both pre and post MDMS periods. For Udhampur few more reasons can be incorporated with MDMS.

D. Methodology:

(i) Sampling: To analyze the impact of the scheme, the present study was conducted in the Anantnag & Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir. District Anantnag & Udhampur were deliberately selected because, since the inception of the scheme no systematic study has been done over evaluation of MDMS with its impact on education in these districts. Empirical data for the study was collected from 25 Schools (where MDM scheme is in run), situated in the 7 different blocks of the districts Anantnag and 4 tehsils of Udhampur. The sample was collected with simple random technique among 631 Primary Schools, 267 Middle Schools & 69 High Schools in Anantnag and 965 schools of Udhampur. Further to gather information, regarding the impact of the scheme, 75 students, and 50 teachers were taken by random sampling through structured questionnaire schedule from both districts. Besides primary data on enrolment, attendance and dropout rates of school going children were collected from the school registers and inspection reports. In order to see the impact of the scheme data on enrolment, attendance and drop-outs was collected for both pre and post MDMS periods.

(ii) Tools Used: For any research or study tools that are used must be valid, reliable, objective and standard. It is the type of the research and nature of the data which determine tool to be used. So far as my study is concerned, the investigator use structured questionnaire and observation of schools records, registers and other documents were studied.

The questionnaire was prepared with the consultation of my guide and all aspects of usability, availability of resources and objectives were taken care of. The said questionnaire consisted of 25 questions in a logical order for gathering the data. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was emphasized in all aspects. The



questionnaire consisted questions for getting responses regarding the objectives.

E. Analysis:

The investigator inspected the data and corrected if any error besides quality check on the collected data. Whole data was thoroughly studied keeping the objectives of research in memory. The investigator analyzed the extreme observations if they were disturbing the distribution.

The investigator was interested to find out the percentages for MDMS as perceived by teachers and students, and for that purpose percentages were calculated on the basis of collected response sheets by using the percentage formula with a particular item.

F. Interpretation:

The research conducted over MDMS in district Anantnag & Udhampur of Jammu and Kashmir State showed that attendance, enrolment, regularity and punctuality of children improved to large extent (80% to 90%). Similar results were found by other studies like; “A study of Birbhum district” Amartya Sen’s Pratichi Research Team (2005); “Situation Analysis of Mid- Day Meal Programme in Rajasthan”. University of Rajasthan and UNICEF (2005); and “Mid day Meal in Madhya Pradesh”: Samaj Pragati Sahyog, (2005).

However, scheme was found to have inherited problems associated with its implementation like; quality food, drinking and cooking water etc. As perceived by teachers and students from (65% to 70%) believed scheme had problems in the said areas.

G. Conclusions and Constraints:

MDMS as perceived by students: MDM scheme as perceived by the students showed mostly the positive impact over the main domain of education. As per the data collected from the students, 80%-90% students believed that MDMS resulted in improvement of attendance, enrolment, regularity, punctuality and reduction of drop-out rates. They believed that scheme acted as reinforcing agent for parents to send their children to schools, thus they believed that scheme improved literacy rate as well. However, good percentage (about 65%) believed that there were some problems inherited with the scheme like storage, safe drinking water, cooking, quality of food etc.

MDMS as perceived by teachers: The scheme of MDM as perceived by the teachers revealed that nearly 87% of teachers believed that scheme had positive impact over attendance, enrollment, regularity, and punctuality on one hand and reduction of drop-out rates on the other hand. They believed that MDMS is goal oriented scheme which achieved the success to great extent with improvement in the health standard of students in



general. Besides those, said scheme generated women employment, more than 81% teachers believed that MDMS provided job opportunities for women in many ways. They believed that scheme also helped in socialization of students by taking meal at the same time. Above 84% teachers shared such views. So far as inconveniences of the scheme were concerned, not less than 75% teachers believed that scheme had some problems associated with; the problem of storage of materials, the quality of food served, cooking and availability of safe water for cooking and drinking. Most of the teachers believed scheme of MDM resulted in extra burden on them. The condition is worse in newly opened schools, where only 2-3 teachers were available. They believed MDMS no doubt, proved advantageous to all sections of the society but disturbed time table, reduced time duration of study as well. The extra work for maintenance of records and bringing of MDM material etc. had created some problems in schools in few domains, such views were shared by not less than 80% of teachers.

Comparison of urban and rural schools in implementing MDMS: The data obtained from the teachers and students of both urban and rural areas regarding the implementation of the scheme, showed almost similar results. The teachers in the rural areas in aggregate (about 87%), believed in improvement in literacy, attendance, regularity and punctuality. In the same way students in the rural areas believed that scheme proved to be beneficent in said areas (86%). Regarding the problems associated with scheme nearly similar results were showed by teachers and students.

Urban teachers and students perceived scheme almost similar to that of rural teachers and students in literacy, attendance, regularity and punctuality. (86% & 85% respectively), however they felt problem associated with scheme more than felt by teachers and students in rural areas.

Parent's views: so as parent's views were concerned over the scheme, which were obtained informally in their leisure time, it was found by the investigator that they shared mixed views. Most of parents looked towards the scheme as a valuable gift from the government. They believed that MDM scheme enhanced the standard of education and helped in the UEE.

Most importantly MDM scheme made all round development of the entire school system- leading to better infrastructures in schools, better teaching facilities, a School Health Service and community involvement as per parents. Sound social behavior among children and dispel feelings of difference between various castes by the said scheme were perceived by parents. Some parents believed that MDM also contributed to gender equality by reducing the gender gap in education by boosting female attendance in school.

Constraints:

Main constraints on the basis of information gathered were;

- 1) Majority of stakeholders particularly parents and teachers felt that whatever they were receiving was free, and hence there was no reason of raising questions regarding its weaknesses in implementation



- process.
- 2) Most of the teachers were lacking appropriate level of orientation regarding objectives of the MDMS and hence felt it as wastage of the time and energy. Although every year there is a compulsory 20 days training for all teachers where there is a module on MDM also under SSA.
 - 3) MDMS, which started with an aim to improve the status of primary education, is yet to have scientific & precise assessment of the impact of the scheme with respect to the increase in enrolment, attendance and retention level of children. Further, state governments have not found to have attempted to establish any system for measuring a direct relationship between the increase in attendance and the MDMS scheme.
 - 4) Evaluation team was not able to see any systematic Government mechanism to assess the outcome of the scheme in terms of well-defined parameters during evaluation period.
 - 5) It was also observed in some cases that part of ration was sold for purchase of kitchen devices as they were spoiled after a long use. It was found that these devices were supplied in the beginning of the MDM.
 - 6) Schools were not receiving ration for their preprimary section. They were getting ration only for LPS students hence finding it difficult to serve cooked meal to all their students for all five days.
 - 7) The level of People's participation in the programme was found very low. This reflected the awareness level and programme ownership of the society.
 - 8) Administrative officials were also found not properly trained in maintaining accounts and also expressed the problem of financial deficiency to bear the responsibilities of MDMS.

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