Impression of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on Enrolment & Daily Attendance of School Children

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Abstract

For achieving the goal of education, the enrolment of children and their daily presence in schools is essential. Mid-Day Meal Scheme is an effort to achieve and facilitate the goal. The purpose of present study is to assess the impression of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on enrolment and daily attendance of children studying in class I to VIII class and to suggest some measures the sample size is of 250 children and 11 headmasters. The study tries to prove that the selected scheme plays an important role in improving enrolment and daily attendance of children. Results revealed that this scheme proves a major means in improving enrolment and attendance comparatively. More efforts could be made to increase enrolment and attendance of students by increasing variety and quality of Mid-Day Meal and by incorporating interesting method of teaching.

Keywords: Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Enrolment, Daily Attendance, Upper Primary School Children.

Introduction

The government is continuously trying to achieve the aim of universalisation of primary education by launching various schemes to increase enrolment and daily attendance of school children. Mid-Day Meal Scheme is one of the schemes launched by government with the aim of improving nutritional level, increasing enrolment, encouraging poor children belonging to disadvantaged sections to attend school more regularly and help them to concentrate in classroom. Positive intervention of Mid-Day Meal was reported in

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universalisation of primary education by increasing enrolment and attendance\textsuperscript{i}. It was stated that the introduction of menu based Mid-Day Meal has a positive impact on enrolment and attendance of children\textsuperscript{ii}.

Education is the foremost thing for development of human potential. On an estimation basis, elementary school children (6-14 years) form about 20\% of the total population\textsuperscript{iii}. For elementary school children, free and compulsory education is constitutional commitment. Another important point to consider is that every year a huge amount of budget is spent on this scheme. For example in 2003-04 the expenditure was Rs. 1400 crores and 2007-2008 budget of the central government has allocated about Rs. 7324 crores for the MDM scheme. Performance audit (2011) conducted by Centre for Environment and Food Security on food security schemes in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The sample survey in 130 villages spread over 12 districts of Orissa and Uttar Pradesh (Bundelkhand) was carried out and reported that performance of MDM scheme is far better in Orissa in comparison with the Uttar Pradesh. An overwhelming 86.7 per cent of Orissa’s children were getting second best category of MDM (regular but inadequate and unsatisfactory meal), only 51.8 per cent of children in UP were getting regular but inadequate and unsatisfactory meal in their schools\textsuperscript{iv}. So, the above discussion makes it necessary to evaluate meal on enrolment and attendance of school children up to class VIII.

\textbf{Review of Literature}

Many studies have been conducted about Mid-Day Meal Scheme which showed that there is a positive relationship between scheme and enrolment and daily attendance of children.

Sail (1970) examined that children in rural areas were physically stunned and their diets were deficient in calories, protein, vitamin A, calcium and riboflavin. A school lunch providing cereal, legume and liberal amount of leafy vegetables could correct the basic deficiencies in
the diet of school children. Care-India (1977) examined the impact of school feeding on enrolment and attendance in Karnataka and found that the mean percentage of attendance increased. Absenteeism not only decreased but the Mid-Day Meal Scheme also produced stability in attendance and increased the enrolment rate by 4%. Verma (1996) pointed out that the factors like illiteracy and poverty of parent’s, inadequate teaching staff, single teacher schools and lack of accommodation were responsible for low enrolment of students at elementary stage in the tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. The study suggested that there should be provisions of co-curricular activities in every district, scholarships, free text books and mid-day meals which would lead to high enrolment at elementary stage.

A study by Centre for Equity in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Karnataka underlies the positive impact of Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The major findings of the study revealed that Mid-day meals were in place in all three sampled States. In 76 out of 81 schools, investigators found that the mid-day meal was regularly being served. In 5 schools, temporary bottlenecks were observed. However, aside from the stray instances, the programme runs smoothly in all the three States. Facilities available for the programme like cooking sheds, water supply, utensils and so on – vary between different States and districts, and are in many cases, unsatisfactory. However, the meals are usually ready by mid-day. In Rajasthan, ghoogri is served every day. Ghoogri is a gruel made from boiled wheat mixed with gur (jaggery). In Chhattisgarh, lunch usually consists of rice and dal or vegetables, with a bit of variation during the week. Karnataka boasts the best menu; apart from rice and sambhar, school children enjoy vegetables, Pongal, lemon rice and even sweets like Kshira. Some poor households explained the meal as “festival food”. There is a significant improvement on school enrolment during the 1990’s, which was about 2%. A bulk of the increase is likely to a reflection of the impact of mid-day meals. There is plenty of informal
evidence to suggest that mid-day meal improves daily school attendance, not just annual enrolment. Teachers reported that this programme makes it easier to retain children in school after the lunch break, since children who go home for lunch often do not return to school. Providing the children mid-day meals puts an end to the phenomenon of “classroom hunger” which invariably affects their performance. The experience so far clearly shows that mid-day meal programme has much to contribute to the wellbeing and future of Indian children. Financial allocations need to be raised and the infrastructure for Mid-Day Meal Programme requires urgent improvement. Mid-day meal could disrupt classroom processes when the infrastructure is inadequate for instance, in schools that have no cooking sheds and mid-day meals are often cooked close to the classrooms.

Parrekh and Yasmeen (2004)vi observed that free mid-day meals for school students were first introduced in a Japanese private school in the late 1800s, in Brazil in the year 1938 and in the United States in the year 1946. In other countries like Brazil, the United States and Japan, the Mid Day Meal Scheme should not be discarded by the government in India.

Blue (2005)vii evaluated the impact of mid-day meal on tribal communities and subsistence farmers in rural Udaipur and revealed that cooked mid-day meal had become a permanent part of the daily routine of rural primary schools in Udaipur. There were efforts in introducing variety of menus. Mid-Day Meal Scheme is helping to improve the nutritional needs of poor children. Enrolment and attendance had increased.

Jain and Shah (2005)viii conducted a survey in 70 most backward villages of Madhya Pradesh and found that 90% of teachers and cooks said that the meal is provided regularly. 96% of the parents felt that the Scheme should continue. They also felt that it had ended classroom hunger. 63% of the parents felt that meal has positively affected the learning abilities
of school children and 74% of the teachers said that it has positively affected the students. Overall there was a 15% increase in enrolment. Moreover the increase was marked in the case of SC and ST children (43%). The rise in the enrolment of girls was 38%, out of this the increase in enrolment of SC and ST girls was 41%. While 60% of the parents felt that meal was good or very good, only 10% felt that the meal was not satisfactory. However, there were inter-regional variations. In Tikamgarh, 45% of the parents felt that meal was bad. The report also indicated that there is huge improvement in the quality of meal.

CART (2006) conducted a study in Chittorgarh district Rajasthan found that: “...overall implementation of MDM scheme is good and has had some impact on enrolment, retention and attendance of students in primary schools. Quality of education, nutrition and health has also improved to some extent. But the schools are still lacking in infrastructure facilities like kitchens, storerooms, latrines and sufficient classrooms. Water facility is also not available in many schools”. The study, covering 211 schools in 14 blocks of Chittorgarh district also found that the enrolment and retention had increased in about 64 per cent of schools over the last three years.

Brinda Viswanathan (2006)ix analysed data from the National Sample Survey for the year 1999-2000 to discern access to nutritious meals across states in both urban and rural areas. She reports that only a few states had a scheme in place and that Tamil Nadu had better access rates that included girls (rural areas were better targeted than urban areas). Her study shows evidence of overall improved literacy rates and educational attainment in states that had a scheme.

Baru et al. (2008) stated that provision of dry rations and biscuits, which were part of the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education before the Supreme Court order on cooked meals, have shown that children often did not consume these. Through Mid-Day Meal
Scheme has ensured enrolment but it had little impact on attendance and retention levels.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2010 reported that in 83.4% schools served MDM on a day of visit and 81.3% schools were having kitchen sheds for cooking mid-day meal. A vastly improved availability of mid-day meals had contributed to the increase in enrolment.

A review of literature on Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) shows that the study on this subject is already been done by many researchers. But as the scheme is still in existence and to make it more effective and beneficial, more study could be done on various points of this scheme.

**Need for Evaluation of Study**

As a huge amount of funds are invested in this scheme so researchers have to assess that up to what extent this scheme is successful in increasing enrolments and daily attendance of elementary school children. Moreover some useful suggestions could be given after the study.

**Objectives of the Study**

In view of above, it is imperative to evaluate the impression of MDMS on enrolment and daily attendance. Additional objective is to suggest some measures, for the better functioning of scheme, on the basis of general observations.

**Hypotheses**

- The MDMS does not help in increasing enrolments of students.
- MDMS does not help in increasing the daily school attendance.

**Methodology**

Evaluation study of MDMS in government schools of Rajasthan was carried out to assess the impression of MDMS on enrolments and daily
school attendance of children. Simple random sampling was used to select the schools and children.

**Selection of Beneficiary Students and Headmasters**

In total, 11 schools were taken for the study. For this research study an opinion survey was conducted among 11 school's headmasters and 250 school children (from I to VIII standard) taken from different government schools situated in Rajasthan in which cooked Mid-Day Meal is supplied or being cooked in schools itself.

**Tools developed**

A predesigned and pretested proforma (questionnaire) was used as a tool for collection of primary information from headmasters and children.

**Data Collection**

Primary data was collected and being used in the study. Various primary, middle and upper primary government schools in Rajasthan in which MDM is being provided are covered. Sudden visits were made to observe the various facts regarding the MDMS. Headmasters and students are questions to fulfil the objectives of the study.

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The data so collected is being analysed to determine the impression of MDMS on daily school attendance and enrolment of children. This study also includes an analysis of data collected by representing it in a tabular form along with interpretations. The hypotheses are tested by using the Chi-square test and t-test. Finally, conclusions are drawn and suggestions are offered.

**Testing of Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1

H₀ – The MDMS does not help in increasing enrollments of students.
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Table 1: Increase in Students Enrolment Due to MDMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than 10%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10% &amp; 20%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 20% &amp; 40%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 40%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals the percentage increase in student enrolment due to MDMS in the schools surveyed. All 11 (100%) schools, 3 (27.75%) respondents reported less than 10% increase, 6 (54.55%) respondents reported increase between 10% & 20%, 1 (9.09%) respondent mentioned increase between 20% & 40% and the remaining 1 (9.09%) respondent reported above 40% increase in student enrollment because of MDMS.

It can be said that there is an increase in student enrolment due to MDMS in all the schools. Although the percentage of increase is not the same but MDMS is helpful in increasing the enrolment of students.

Testing of Hypothesis 2

Table 2: Increase in Enrolments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Respondents (X)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than 10%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10% &amp; 20%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 20% &amp; 40%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 40%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Σ)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table value at 5% level of significance = ± 3.182 and calculated t-test value = –2.9851 (i.e. t_{tab}<t_{cal}). Since calculated value is more than critical value (i.e. –2.951 > –3.182), therefore, null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected.
and it can be said that the MDMS helps in increasing enrolments of students in schools.

**Table 3: Regularity of Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coming Regularly</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>88.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Coming Regularly</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the regularity of students in the school. It is clearly evident from above that about 220 (88%) of the students come to school regularly. The percentage of students who are not regular in schools is very less.

It can be concluded that by and large students come to school regularly for taking education. Further, students are encouraged to go to school regularly on account of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

**Table 4: Increase in Daily Attendance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual Frequency</td>
<td>Expected Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming Regularly</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Coming Regularly</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Σ)</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table value of 1 at 5% level of significance = 3.841 and calculated chi-square value = 144.4 (i.e. \(\chi^2_{\text{tab}} < \chi^2_{\text{cal}}\)). Since calculated value is more than critical value (i.e. 144.4 > 3.841), therefore, null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and it can be concluded that MDMS helps in increasing the daily school attendance.
Conclusion and Suggestions

All the schools covered in this research study were government schools in which either cooked MDM is being supplied or being cooked in the school. It is clear from the study that children in the schools avails the facility of MDM. Moreover, the tremendous growth in enrolments and school participation shows the success of this scheme.

From the above study, it is clear that this scheme is successful in achieving its objectives of increase in enrolment and daily attendance of children. So, it can be say that there is positive impression of MDMS on enrolment and daily attendance of school children. More efforts could be made to increase enrolment and attendance of students by increasing variety and quality of Mid-Day Meal and by incorporating interesting methods of teaching. Students should be asked about their taste and choice. Weekly or Monthly feedback form the students, parents and teachers should be taken to make required improvements in the scheme.

References

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