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**Awareness, Effectiveness & Implementation of Mid Day Meal Scheme - Perspective of Stakeholders**

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**Abstract**

‘Mid-Day Meal’ program is centrally sponsored school meal program of Government of India. This program aims to improve and strengthen the enrollment, retention, attendance and nutritional status of children in schools. Under these scheme students of primary and upper primary gets free cooked meal in the schools nationwide. This scheme was launched on 15 August 1995 named “National program of Nutritional Support To Primary Education” (NP-NSPE). In 2007 its name got changed to “National program of Mid Day Meal in Schools” when this scheme extended to cover upper primary children studying in Educational Backward Block (EBB’s) as well. This paper presents a study on the Awareness and Effectiveness in enhancing attendance, enrolment, retention, nutritional status of elementary school children. The study also intends to explore its implementation from the perspective of its stakeholders i.e. students, parents & teachers. Data is collected from the self generated questionnaire supplemented by an interview. The purpose is to study the awareness level of parents about the scheme itself, their contribution in its effective implementation. The impact of the scheme on the elementary school students from the view of parents & teachers is also covered in this. Study found that there is a gap between perception of teachers and parents on the awareness level of MDM scheme’s different aspects like nutritional value, its impact on the health of students and its relevance on the academic performance of the students.

**Key Words:** Mid Day Meal, effectiveness, stakeholders

**INTRODUCTION**

Mid day meal scheme as it is commonly called is one of its own kind largest school lunch program of Indian Government in the world. Mid Day Meal Programme was introduced for disadvantaged children in Madras Municipal Corporation in year 1925. After independence this scheme in the mid 1980s was implemented by three States viz. Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the UT of Pondicherry with their own resources for children studying at the primary stage .By

1990-91 the number of States implementing the mid day meal programme with their own resources on a universal or a large scale had increased to twelve. This scheme was then formally launched by Government of India on 15 August 1995 named as “National program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education “(NP-NSPE). In 2007 its name got changed to “National program of Mid Day Meal in Schools” when scheme extended to cover Upper primary children studying in Educational Backward Block (EBB’s) as well. In March 2008 this scheme

was extended to all areas across the country. In 2001 the supreme court passed an order stating “A Basic entitlement of every child in every Government assisted primary schools with a prepared Mid day Meal with a minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 school days”.

In October 2007 the calorific value of a mid-day meal at upper primary stage has been fixed at a minimum of 700 calories and 20 grams of protein by providing 150 grams of food grains (rice/wheat) per child/school day.

According to article 24, para2c [4] of the Convention on the rights of the child, India has committed to provide “adequate nutritious foods” for children. This scheme is also covered by the National Food security act, 2013 which ensures availability of nutritious food to the individual in a country where almost 40% of children are undernourished.

The objectives of mid day meal scheme are to improve the nutritional status of children in class I-VIII in Government, local and Government aided primary schools , Education Guarantee schools (EGS ),Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE )centers, recognized as well as unrecognized Madrasas/Maqtabs supported under SSA . This scheme aimed to encourage poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities by avoiding classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment, providing nutritional support to children with the provision of serving meal in drought affected areas during summer

vacation. The scheme is being reviewed and revised time to time to achieve its objectives.

This paper presents the study on the Awareness, Effectiveness & Implementation of Mid Day Meal scheme from the perspective of its stakeholders i.e. students, parents & teachers. Data is collected through a questionnaire along with interviews especially designed to study the level of awareness amongst the parents, students and teachers about the scheme and their contribution in its effective implementation. The data is collected from schools of north-west district of Delhi.

### **Review of Literature**

Over the past two decades many researches have been conducted and policies were framed for successful implementation of Mid-day-Meal Scheme.

Dreze and Goyal (2003) conducted a survey between January and April 2003 in 3 sample states Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The survey included 81 randomly selected villages (i.e. 27 villages in each state, and involved interviews with teachers, parent, cooks and others. They argued that well devised school meals could contribute to the advancement of elementary education, child nutrition and social equity. They found that infrastructural facilities for cooking, water and utensils were very poor, same menu is repeated everyday and lower caste children and cooks in some areas were observed facing prejudices and discrimination. It was also observed that children were falling sick after consuming mid day meals. Classroom processes were disrupted as teachers had to oversee the mid

day meal operations. Funds per meal allocated was just 50 paisa which was very low as compared to some states such as Karnataka and Tamilnadu where it was Re1/-

But beside these findings some positive effects of the MDMS were also revealed. School enrollment improved about 15-29% especially in case of girls students. School attendance and retention also improved through the day. This scheme proved supportive to non-income families, good management of food logistics in terms of delivery and supply was found.

SmritiBhargav&AsthaBhargav, 2011, Kurukshetra University conducted ‘An evaluative study of opinion and awareness of primary school teachers towards implementation of mid-day meal program’.

Sahoo P, 2015,C I College of Nursing, Berhampur, Odisha ,India conducted “A Descriptive Study On Effectiveness of Mid-day Meal Programme” in Selected Government Primary School of Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The objectives of the study were to understand the infrastructure and institutional arrangements, to assess the performance of mid day meal scheme in the State and to study the Impact of scheme on enrollment, attendance and nutritional status of children and also to find out the association between socio-demographic variable of students & success rate of mid-day programme. On the basis of study Infrastructure level was found perfect in all the areas but some need to improve like school need the funding to built up proper storage facilities, school should have place to keep raw ingredients in a safe place, school need to have separate cooking place,

school need wide veranda for serving food etc. Many school teachers felt this burden due to shortage of staff.

Amita Gautam ,2012-13, CIE, Delhi University studied “Effectiveness of Mid-day meal scheme at Upper Primary school Education in North- East district of Delhi”. She found that-with adequate resources and quality safeguards, MDM can play major role in –Improving school attendance, eliminating classroom hunger and fostering social equity. But to achieve MDMS full potential qualitative improvements are urgently required. Teachers feel that MDMS is disrupting the teaching environment in schools by engaging teachers in its meal procedures and care has been taken to see that teachers are not burdened by meal procedures. This study also concluded that monitoring of meal program is taking place but monitoring of school functioning is also required. Teachers have accepted that enrollment and attendance has increased due to MDMS. The quality& quantity of MDM needs to be improved. There is a need to go beyond providing the minimum in terms of nutrients, so far what is provided doesn't justify the term ‘mid day’ meal. Efforts must also be made to ensure that supplementary benefits of the scheme are explored.

Biswajit Nath & Indrajit Nath, 2015, Viswabhartai Santiniketan, conducted “A study of the impact of mid day meal programme on enrollment & retention of primary school children” in Bolpur-Sriniketan block, Birbhum District. The objectives of the study were to find out the impact of MDM programme on retention, enrollment and achievement level of students. They also studied the opinion of

students, teachers and parents towards MDM program. It was found out that after introduction of MDM scheme, the enrolment & retention of primary school children has increased i.e. the difference between enrolment and retention has decreased significantly in comparison to the difference before implementation of this scheme. The rural teachers and headman have showed positive attitude towards the introduction of mid day meal programme at primary level. It is also observed that now parents are more interested in sending their children to school.

Professor Amartya Sen's Pratichi Research Team (2005) conducted a study on "Cooked Mid-Day meal programme in West Bengal Birbhum district". The study showed that Mid Day Meal Scheme has made positive intervention in promoting primary education by increasing enrollment and attendance especially to girls and children belonging to SC/ST categories. The study also points out that Mid Day Meal scheme has contributed to reduction in teacher absenteeism and a narrowing of social distances.

University of Rajasthan and UNICEF (2005) conducted a study on "Situation Analysis of Mid- Day Meal Programme in Rajasthan". The study analyzed that the introduction of menu based mid day meal has positively impacted enrollment and attendance of children. It has contributed to social equity, as children sit together and share a common meal irrespective of caste and class. It has further contributed to gender equity in that it has provided employment to women.

Supreme Court Commissioners are monitoring all welfare Schemes of the Central Government including Mid Day

Meal Scheme. The seven States monitored by them during 2010-11 were viz. Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Orissa and West Bengal. The main recommendations of the reports are as under:

- i) Delay in release of funds to school / implementing agencies.
- ii) The mid day meal should be expected to cover all children in the school going age irrespective of whether they are enrolled in school. The location of meal served can continue to be the school; this might further encourage those out of school to join schools.
- iii) The provision for cooking costs under the mid day meal should be increased based on Price Index developed for Mid Day Meal Scheme to counter the effect of inflation.
- iv) Proper infrastructure for mid day meals should be mandatory, including cooking sheds storage space, drinking water, ventilation, utensils etc.
- v) Mobilization for kitchen garden in school premises should be encouraged.
- vi) Priority should be given to disadvantaged communities (especially Dalits and Adivasis) in the appointment of cooks and helpers. All cooks and helpers should be paid not less than statutory minimum wage.
- vii) Mid day meal should be linked with nutrition education and related educational activities. State Government should be encouraged to adept their text books for this purpose, as the NCERT has already done for some text books.
- viii) Nutritious items such as eggs and green vegetables should be provided

regularly.

ix) Serious action should be taken in the event of any form of social discrimination in mid day meal such as discrimination against dalit children or dalit cooks.

x) Community participation in the monitoring of Mid day meal should be strengthened, particularly to prevent corruption and ensure quality.

xi) Mid day meal should be integrated with school health services, including immunization, de-worming, growth monitoring, health checkups and micronutrient supplementation.

xii) Grievance redressed mechanism must be within easily reachable distance of complainant and should therefore be decentralized to Panchayat level. It could also consist of mobile camps that reach out to each village.

### Objectives

1. To assess the role of mid-day meal in academic achievement of students.
2. To assess the nutritional value of mid day meal as comparison between understanding of teachers and parents
3. To understand the level of awareness of mid day meal scheme between students and parents
4. To understand the improvement in the health of students after mid day meal scheme in perception of teachers and parents

### Hypothesis

1. There is no relationship between the academic performance of the

students with the mid day meal scheme.

2. Parents and teachers do not share a common understanding about the nutritional value of mid day meal scheme.
3. There is difference in level of awareness between parents and students about of mid day meal scheme.
4. There is no common understanding between teachers and parents about the improvement in the health of students after mid day meal scheme.

### Scope and Design of the Study

The data for the purpose of the study was collected through primary source. A questionnaire was administered to 250 elementary class students, 250 parents & 50 teachers of five Govt. Sarvodaya Schools of North & West Delhi along with interview to study all the dimensions in detail. Three different types of instruments were designed each for students, parents & teachers to measure their understanding of the implementation of the scheme.

### Methodology

The data collected from different schools was coded, tabulated & analyzed by using various statistical techniques. Mean, standard deviation was calculated for all the variables. T- Test analysis was done to know the significant level of difference between different stakeholder's responses for different variables. Chi square test was also applied to assess the level of goodness between the observed values and those expected theoretically under null hypothesis.

**Analysis of Survey Results**

The analysis of survey results has been taken up section wise-

Six questions asked from the teachers were analyzed to understand the relationship between the academic performance of the students & the free food provided to them under MDMS.

**Section 1**

**THE IMPACT OF MIDDAY MEAL ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS**

**RESULT**

*Objective: To assess the role of mid-day meal in academic achievement of students.*

Variables compared	Calculated value ( $\chi^2$ )	Critical value (5% level)	Critical value (1% level)
Mid-day Meal program and student's academic achievement	1.23	P < 0.05	P < 0.01

Significant at 1%

Significant at 5%

It is observed that value of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) i.e., 1.23 is less than the critical values both at 5 % and 1 % level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. So, we can conclude that there is a significant association between mid-day meal

program and academic performance of students.

**SECTION 2**

Seven questions were specifically designed and asked from the parents & six from the teachers to understand the nutritional value of food provided under MDMS

**RESULT**

*Objective: To assess the nutritional value of mid day meal as comparison between understanding of teachers and parents*

Stakeholder	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Significant level	
				5%	1%

Teachers	0.88	0.32	0.39*	p>0.05	p>0.01
Parents	0.67	0.40			

\*Significant at 1%

\*Significant at 5%

As shown in above table the comparison on the dimension of nutritional value parents and teachers is significantly different. The mean value for teachers is 0.88 and standard deviation is 0.32. For parents the value of mean and standard deviation is 0.67 and 0.40 respectively. The mean value is higher in case of teachers as compared to parents with a significant t-value of 0.39. Therefore, teachers consider the nutritional value of

mid day meal more as compared to parents.

### SECTION 3

A separate section in questionnaire was designed to know the level of awareness about different aspects of mid day scheme amongst parents & students for e.g. availability, distribution method, inspection committee etc.

## RESULT

*Objective: To understand the level of awareness of mid day meal scheme between students and parents*

Stakeholder	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Significant level	
				5%	1%
Parents	0.76	0.23	0.21*	p>0.05	p>0.01
Students	0.54	0.31			

\*Significant at 1%

\*Significant at 5%

As shown in above table the comparison for level of awareness between parents and students is significantly different. The mean value for parents is 0.76 and for students is 0.54. The mean value is higher in case of parents as compared to teachers with a significant t-value.

Therefore, parents are more aware about mid day meal scheme as compared to students.

### SECTION 4

A number of questions were designed and asked from parents & teachers to understand

the impact of the food provided under MDMS on improving the health of students.

**RESULT**

*Objective: To understand the improvement in the health of students after mid day meal scheme in perception of teachers and parents*

Stakeholder	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Significant level	
				5%	1%
Parents	0.76	0.21	0.28*	p>0.05	p>0.01
Teachers	0.93	0.37			

\*Significant at 1%

\*Significant at 5%

As shown in above table the comparison on the dimension of improvement in health of students after mid day meal scheme is significantly different in perception of parents and teachers. The mean value for teachers is 0.93 and standard deviation is 0.37. For parents the value of mean and standard deviation is 0.76 and 0.21 respectively. The mean value is higher in case of teachers as compared to parents with a significant t-value of 0.28. Therefore, teachers consider a significant improvement in health of students more as compared to parents.

**CONCLUSION**

A. It is observed that awareness level of parents regarding different aspects of the scheme like Nutritional Value, Impact on Health of the students, Relevance for the Academic Performance of the students need to be upgraded so that they can understand the importance of MDMS. It is also felt that

there is absolute gap between perception of teachers and parents on these parameters.

B. As the study proves that there is significant relationship between MDM program and academic performance of students. Mid day meal scheme has contributed in eliminating classroom hunger and thus helped in improving the student's concentration in the class.

This scheme needs to be further strengthened in terms of quantity as well as quality to give even better results. There has to be continuous monitoring on the nutritional value of food provided to give the desired results.

C. The research indicates as if either the parents are not much aware about the nutritional value of the food provided or they lack information in this context completely. The response of the parents reflects that they don't consider food to be making really any difference in the academic performance of the students or to

their health. This is a clear indication of mismatch between the perception of policy makers and the real beneficiaries of the scheme.

### Suggestions

A. It is suggested that parents should be made more aware about the whole scheme and they should be involved from the stage of planning to its execution and monitoring.

B. It is also suggested that continuous feedback system from all stakeholders need to be developed and incorporated in existing scheme and during future planning of the scheme as well.

C. The scheme may be extended to further higher grades in schools. As it is observed that there is an expectation of meal from secondary level students as well.

According to the MHRD guidelines issued from the department of school education and literacy, MDM division on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015 to focus more intensively on the Food safety, personal hygiene of students and distributors --following points needs strict monitoring and practice:

- a) A separate time need to be mentioned in the time table for hand wash and many counters should be ensured so that all the children follow it seriously but it was observed that no such time is generally mentioned and followed while preparing the time table.
- b) In the Single Dish Meals it is mentioned that broken wheat or rice must be mixed with some amount of a pulse or soya beans with a seasonal vegetable/green leafy

vegetable to increase the nutritional value of the food which is also observed is not followed properly so this is a emergent need to upgrade the monitoring system so that these guidelines are enforced and observed regularly.

D. Many significant facts are brought in light during the interview process. Some of them are as follows-----

- It is found that sometimes parents do not allow or encourage their children to eat mid day meal in the school as they don't trust its quality and hygiene. Children revealed that sometimes they are not satisfied with the taste of food served. So it is suggested that food served should be palatable. Food's quality parameters should be measured. Meal preparation should be under professional supervision and in hygienic conditions.
- It was learned that food is served to students in their own lunch boxes or containers brought from home. It has been often observed that students fail to clean previously served – in lunch boxes and food is again served in same unclean lunch boxes subsequent day, this fungus infested containers further jeopardize their health. This problem can be overcome if students get the plates/utensils in the school itself and their cleanliness should be monitored every day before the meal served.
- During the interview this fact clearly came out that there is absolute need of improving the variety of meals

specially including fruits, milk, salad and green vegetables which otherwise these students don't get an opportunity to have them at homes. The same nutritional value may be maintained by creating attractive menu from the student's perspective.

- Children and teachers want meal menu to be revised in every six months for their sustained interest in the mid day meal scheme .As they get bored with the same meal menu followed week after week and months after months.
- To foster feeling of social equity mid day meal should be distributed in more appropriate way. Instead of distributing it in school corridors, classrooms or grounds ,a separate place must be allocated for the students for having their meals together. Schools infrastructure may be improved by providing a mess in the school where students can have their meals by properly sitting in a

peaceful manner. This will also help in promoting socialization amongst children.

- It is observed that mid day meal in charges in schools have to maintain a register for MDM distribution but no guide or document describing the different aspects of scheme issued by the government are provided to them. If in charges are given updated circulars or documents regarding MDM scheme then this will help them in understanding the scheme in its true sense and spirit.

#### **Abbreviations Used**

MDMS- Mid day meal scheme

NP-NSPE - National program of Nutritional Support To Primary Education

EBB -Educational Backward Block

EGS - Education Guarantee schools

AIE - Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE )

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