

EFFECTIVENESS OF MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME (MDMS) IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: Education enhances the knowledge of a child, allows exploring his potentials and living as a respected citizen of civilised nations. Lacking in basic education narrow down the human mind and leads to poverty, hunger and crime. The government of India has made education compulsory for 6 to 14 years age group children. In this backdrop, government of India has launched Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) to address the most critical problems of the society. Presently, the scheme is being implemented in lower primary (LP) and upper primary (UP) classes. The study is an attempt to analyse effectiveness of MDMS in LP and UP schools of Golaghat district in Assam. The study covers both primary and secondary data. Secondary data collected from newspapers, research articles and published documents of government departments to support the research objectives. A qualitative open ended questionnaire was prepared to measure the effectiveness of MDMS in three schools. A set of questionnaires were prepared for the survey of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCSCA) department of district, headmaster/mistress and primary school students. Collected data was analysed using MS Excel tools to get the conclusions. The findings of research can be categorised in three different areas such as Department of FCSCA; headmaster/mistress of UP and LP schools; Students of UP and LP Schools. The study concludes with few recommendations such as continuing of MDMS, focus on hygiene environment, monitoring mechanism and suggested for a complete education package for school students. Continuing of MDMS will prevent child labour and children's from poor family backgrounds will get educated.

Keywords: Mid-Day Meal (MDM), Primary Schools, Students, Education, Golaghat

INTRODUCTION

Mid-day meal in schools has a long history in India. In 1925, a Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programme was introduced for disadvantaged children in the Madras Municipal Corporation. By the mid-1980s, three states viz. Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Pondicherry had universalized a cooked MDM programme with their own resources for children studying at the primary stage. By 1990–91 the number of states implementing the MDM programme with their own resources on a universal or a large scale had increased to twelve states.

With a view to enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme on 15th August 1995, initially in 2408

blocks in the country. By the year 1997–98 the NP-NSPE was introduced in all blocks of the country. It was further extended in 2002 to cover not only children in classes I–V of government, government aided and local body schools, but also children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres. Central assistance under the scheme consisted of free supply of food grains at 100 grams per child per school day, and subsidy for transportation of food grains up to a maximum of US\$0.75¹ per quintal. From time to time the scheme was revised to suit the necessity of the development and to improve the efficiency of the scheme.

In the financial year 2009–10, 84.1 million in primary and 33.6 million upper primary school children, i.e. a total of 117.7 million children were estimated to be benefited from

¹ All currency amounts are in US\$ unless otherwise specified; US\$1=INR66.99 on May 15, 2016.

MDM scheme. However, total 110.4 million children were covered under the MDM scheme during 2009–10. During 2010–11, 113.6 million children include 79.7 million children in primary and 33.9 million children in upper primary school had been covered in 1.263 million institutions. During 2011–12 total coverage of children against enrolment was 105.2 million including 77.1 million of primary schools and 33.6 million of upper primary schools children. During 2012–13, 106.8 million children of elementary level had been covered in 1.212 million schools. However, 104.5 million children were covered in 1.158 million schools during the year 2013–14.² Presently, the scheme is being implemented in lower primary and upper primary classes. The study is an attempt to analyse the effectiveness of MDM scheme in lower primary (LP) and upper primary (UP) schools of Golaghat district of Assam.

OBJECTIVES

The key objective of the study is to measure the effectiveness of a mid-day meal scheme (MDMS) in UP and LP schools. The specific research objectives are as follows:

- To identify the coverage of the MDMS by Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCSCA) in the LP and UP schools of Golaghat district.
- To examine the implementation of the MDMS in different schools of Golaghat district.
- To find out the effectiveness of the MDMS among the students of LP and UP schools.
- To uncover the students' level of satisfaction towards a mid-day meal in LP and UP schools.
- To provide recommendations to increase efficiency of the MDMS.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been conducted in India about the MDMS to examine the relationship between MDMS with students' enrolment, attendance, education and health of primary school students. Paul and Mondal (2012) revealed that the mid-day meal programme had a significant positive impact on academic achievement of students such as enhancing enrolment, attendance, increasing retention and lowering drop out of students. Researchers suggested to focus on health awareness programmes of the government

and to combine with MDM to get satisfactory results. Angom (2008) found that there is no discrimination in serving MDM in Manipur and required high contribution from teachers in serving MDM to children. Further indicates that a total number of 0.23 million children enrolled in institutions and attendance has gone up in Manipur.

Khera (2006) have indicated that the MDM scheme of Indian primary schools has become one of the largest schemes across the country and facing challenges in terms quality and infrastructure. Uma (2003) recommended that the quality of education and food need an attention in schools to make the scheme successful. In addition, it is recommended that teachers should make aware student about the importance of education. Dreze and Goyal (2003) revealed that MDM has a major impact on child nutrition, school attendances and social equity. Further, they indicated that maintaining of adequate quality in MDM will increase its full potential and scheme will assist to make the right food available to students. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to evaluate the implementation, effectiveness and success of the mid-day meal programme in three lower primary and upper primary schools of Golaghat district in Assam.

METHODOLOGY

The study covers both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from newspapers, research articles and published documents of government departments to support the research objectives. A qualitative open ended questionnaire is prepared to measure the effectiveness of the MDM scheme among three different schools.

A set of three different questionnaires was prepared for the survey of FCSCA department, headmaster/mistress and primary school students. In step 1, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs department of the district was visited to know the coverage of MDM scheme in the district.

In step 2, headmaster/mistress were contacted to know the implementation and success of the MDM scheme in their respective schools. In step 3, data were collected from school students by administering and asking the questions randomly to 20 students from each school. A total of 60 school students and respective headmaster/mistress were contacted from two UP and one LP schools. The schools surveyed are Kushal Konwar Balya Bhawan (KKBB), town number 4 Kumarpatty LP School and Kuruka ME School from Golaghat district. The collected data was analysed using MS Excel tools to get the conclusions.

² About the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Available at <http://mdm.nic.in/>

In this research three schools were chosen on the basis of the availability of mid-day meal. The MDMS was provided by these three schools in the area of Kumarpatty and Rangajan region in Golaghat district during the survey time. The population category was basically the student of class 4, class 5, and class 6 standard of these three schools. Moreover, these students were selected on the basis of their ability to answer the response of the survey questions by themselves only. However, the sample size was taken conveniently on the basis of students' availability in the class during the survey time. Due to this reason survey sample was less in numbers.

FINDINGS

The findings of research were categorised into three different areas namely, department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs; views of Headmaster/mistress of primary schools; students feedbacks.

MDMS UNDER FOOD, CIVIL SUPPLIES & CONSUMER AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Published records from Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs department of Golaghat district revealed that (i) total allocation of mid-day meal (MDM) rice for LP schools for

the fourth quarter of the financial year 2014–15 (January–March, 2015) was 4772.61 quintals against total enrolment of 91,972 students. District Department have been providing mid-day meal to the children of LP school by keeping norms at 1.726 Kilograms approximately for altogether 19 days at 90.85 grams approximately per day per student per month. (ii) For UP schools total allocation of MDM rice for fourth quarter of the financial year 2014–15 was 3734.88 quintals against the enrolment of 50,629 students. Under MDMS for providing cooked mid-day-meal to the children of UP schools by keeping norms at 2.458 Kilograms approximately per month for altogether 20 days at 122.91 grams approximately per day per student. The Department is providing funding under the MDM scheme in several categories such as contingency fund, cooking cost, transportation charge, honorarium and cost of food grains.³

VIEWS FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL

The opinion of headmaster/mistress concludes that more focus should be given to make the MDMS successful and to make it available for the poor and growing children of the society through the proper supply of nutritious food (see Table 1).

³ Published Data. Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs department, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Golaghat District, Assam, Dated: 3rd March, 2015.

Table 1: Views from Head of School (headmaster/mistress)

Questions	Kushal Konwar Balya Bhawan	Town Kumarpatty L. P. School	Kuruka M. E. School
Time of MDMS implementation	June 2009	November 2006	September 2009
Items served in the menu	Boil Rice, Dal, Vegetables, Paneer, Egg, Kheer	Rice, Dal, Egg, Khichidi, Soybean, Mix-Vegetables, Leafy Vegetables, Pulao	Rice, Dal, Vegetables
Funds or bill amount of time	Yes	Yes	Yes
Students response regarding MDM	Positive	Very much Satisfied	Yes, student responded to MDM
Students overall likeability about food	Yes (good)	Really like the food	Yes (good)
Opinions regarding MDMS	Success to drive education in school among growing students (children)	Success to drive education in school because students are increasing due to the Mid-day meal	Helps poor student to provide nutrition

Source: Primary Data, (n=3).

FEEDBACK OF SCHOOL STUDENTS

Students have given more importance on food because many of them belonging to poor section of society and unable to

get sufficient nutritious meal in their home (see Table 2, see Table 3, and see Table 4). However, the findings highlighted that instead of mid-day meal some of the students prefer books, uniforms and a park to play in the school (see Table 2, see Table 3, and see Table 4).

Table 2: Summary of Student Response from Kushal Konwar Balya Bhawan School

Questions	Response
Availability of meal in school	Food was provided on time, daily basis.
Varieties of food items provided	The school provides different types of food items in their meals.
Happiness is regarding meal	Students were happy with the meal because of good taste, nutritious food and cleanliness.
Necessity of meal at School	Students feel it really necessary because it is healthy and gives energy. (Some of them said that) many poor students do not get sufficient amount of nutritious food in their home. Students get it in school, so it is very much necessary.
Alternative of MDM	Instead of a Mid-day meal some wants books, uniforms, a park to play and some of them want nothing.

Source: Primary Data, (n=20).

Table 3: Summary of Student Response from Kuruka M. E. School

Questions	Response
Availability of meal in school	Food was provided daily on time.
Varieties of food items provided	The school provides different types of food items.
Happiness is regarding meal	Students were happy with the meal because they were healthy, delicious and tasty.

Necessity of meal at School	Student feel it is necessary because many of them are from poor backgrounds and they do not get nutritious and a sufficient meal in their home. In school they get both food and education.
Alternative of MDM	Instead of a Mid-day meal student want nothing because they were provided with books and uniforms.

Source: Primary Data, (n=20).

Table 4: Summary of Student Response from 4 No Town Kumarapatty L. P. School

Questions	Response
Availability of meal in school	As per the response obtained from the student, it seems that food was provided daily on time.
Varieties of food items provided	The school provides different types of food item as agreed by the students.
Happiness is regarding meal	Students were happy with the meal because they were healthy, delicious and tasty.
Necessity of meal at school	The student thinks it is very necessary because food were very healthy for them.
Alternative of MDM	Instead of a Mid-day meal students want nothing because they were provided with books and uniforms

Source: Primary Data, (n=20).

DEMOGRAPHIC OF THE STUDENTS

Out of 60 students 28 students belong to Hinduism and 32 students belong to Islam (see Table 5). Data highlights that 26 students were Boy and 34 students were Girl (see Table 5).

Table 5: Community and Gender Wise Students Breakdown (in numbers)

Name of School	Hindu			Islam			Total
	Boy	Girl	Sub-Total	Boy	Girl	Sub-Total	
4 No Town Kumarapatty L. P. School	2	6	8	7	5	12	20
Kushal Konwar Balya Bhawan School	10	8	18	1	1	2	20
Kuruka M. E. School	0	2	2	6	12	18	20
Total	12	16	28	14	18	32	60

Source: Primary Data, (n=60).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The MDMS started in India on 1995 focusing students' enrolment, retention and attendance in primary school and to improve nutritional levels among children. Review of literature has indicated that the MDMS has a positive impact on students' increase attendance, retention and lowering

drop out of students. Moreover, it increases child nutrition by providing adequate food. Research has revealed that MDM was provided to LP and UP schools by district Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs department. Every school administered the process of making availability of food grains to students. However, schools are mainly serving Rice, Dal, Vegetables, Paneer, Egg, Kheer items in their

menus to students. Findings have highlighted that mid-day meal helps poor students to get nutrition on their food and increase students' attendance in schools. Food is the main importance in the MDMS although some students prefer books, uniforms and playground instead of mid-day meal in their school. Research has revealed that food was served daily basis on time in schools and students indicated that due to nutritious level and taste it gives them energy.

On the contrary, research has some limitations relating to the data because the study was mainly concentrated on three schools of Golaghat. Moreover, community wise sample size is not equal to the study and the difference between the ratios of students' gender. The research may give different conclusion if wider sample is considered increasing the number of schools from different regions of Assam.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The research concludes with few recommendations (i) continuing of MDMS, (ii) focus on hygiene environment, (iii) monitoring mechanism, and (iv) suggestions for a complete education package for primary school students. Continuing of MDMS without any default will prevent child labour and many children's from poor family backgrounds will get educated. To maintain the hygiene environment of food in schools and food grains to supply from retailers, authority has to develop an efficient tracking mechanism to monitor

the activities. Monitoring team may consist of nutritionist expert, guardians of students and person from district food and civil supply department to check the quality of food and food grain supply to the schools. Moreover, to up-bring the society with education, government should focus on some additional scheme with MDMS covering cloths, books, pens/pencils and bags etc. providing a complete educational package to the student.

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