
AN OVERVIEW OF MID DAY MEAL SCHEME IN PUNJAB STATE

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ABSTRACT

The present study was made to evaluate of Mid Day Meal Scheme in Punjab State. According to the constitution of India, the government ensures to make elementary education free and compulsory for all the children. For this purpose Government has introduced many schemes like exclusively for girls, sarva shiksha abhiyan, mid day meal scheme to enhance elementary education. Mid Day Meal Scheme is widely known to help allure an increasing number of children towards literacy. In the state of Punjab various scheme like Parrho Punjab, mid day meal schemes etc have been emphasized to bring improvement in elementary education. Cooked mid day meal has become very successful in government schools of Punjab as it is highly useful for lower middle class families. For all round development of body and mind it is necessary that the students get proper nutrition. So a scheme like Mid Day Meal is the need of the hour. As the scholars pointed out in their studies that the scheme has a good impact on child nutrition, school attendance and social equity.

Introduction

Education plays an important part in the all round development of the personality. The government has taken several steps to make primary education compulsory for all. In other words, elementary education is eight years of compulsory schooling that starts from the age of six. The government ensures to make elementary education free and compulsory for all the children. After the inception of DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) in 1994, the government came up with the SSA or "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" in 2001 so as to bring in an improvement in the elementary education system. Lowering the poverty ratio, promoting female literacy, and emphasizing on rural education will help Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan fulfill their desired goal. Since independence, the central and state governments have been

expanding the provision of primary formal and non-formal education to realise the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The challenge now is to sustain and deepen current reforms in education and encourage local planning and management of strategies for expanding and improving primary education. The programme will target: i) teachers and all those involved in education of children; ii) students and parents of students, particularly non-literate parents; and iii) community opinion leaders.

Initiatives Taken to Promote Elementary Education:-

There are many initiatives are taken to promoting elementary education in Punjab. Some are the following:-

Operation Blackboard:- *This scheme launched in 1987, is aimed at improving the school environment and enhancing retention and learning achievement of children by providing minimum essential facilities in all primary schools. The scheme has brought about a remarkable quantitative and qualitative improvement in primary education. In all, 523,000 primary schools have been covered as originally envisaged. These schools have been provided with central assistance.*

National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (School Meal Programme):- *This scheme was launched on 15 August, 1995 to give a boost to Universalisation of Elementary Education in terms of increasing enrolment, retention and attendance in primary classes by supplementing nutritional requirements of children attending primary schools. It is an ambitious scheme that has been operationalised throughout the country in a very short period. The programme envisages provision of nutritious and wholesome cooked meal of 100 gms of food grains per school day, free of cost, to all children in classes I-V by 1997-98.*

District Primary Education Programme:- The DPEP launched in November, 1994 is conceived as a beachhead for overhauling the primary education system in India. The programme aims at operationalising the strategies for achieving UEE through district specific planning and disaggregated target setting. It draws upon the accumulated national experience of several state level initiatives that were started earlier. It moves away from the schematic piecemeal approach of the earlier programmes and takes a holistic view of primary education with emphasis on decentralised management, community mobilisation and district specific planning based on contextually and research based inputs.

Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan:- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. The SSA program is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode.

Primary Education in Punjab

Primary education in Punjab faces fewer infrastructural constraints than in many states in India. During the academic year 2006-07 the average number of teachers per primary school was 4.1; average student-teacher ratio was 32; and the majority of schools had toilets and drinking water. However, available data suggests that children in primary classes are not obtaining a strong foundation in basic language and arithmetic skills. ASER data show that in 2007, nearly half of all Std. 3 children in rural Punjab could not read a Std. 1 level text; nearly half of all Std. 5 children could not solve a 3-digit by 1-digit division problem.² A baseline study of learning levels in all government primary schools conducted by teachers in August 2008 showed even poorer learning outcomes. Given that a large percentage of children in the state attend private, rather than government, schools, this means that children from poor families are likely to learn less than those from families who can afford private school fees.

Parrho Punjab: - Parrho Punjab (PP) is the flagship primary education project in Punjab and has strong support from senior state level officials. In the last 6 months since actual program started on ground, PP has succeeded in: Creating a strong and active group of individuals within the government system at the district and block level, including PP District Coordinators (PPDCs) and Block Master Trainers (BMTs), among others, who work outside of but as far as possible in coordination with the regular government structures responsible for primary education (DEOs, DIETs etc). Training all 42,000 primary teachers in the Pratham methodology. Producing and distributing supplementary TLM to every school in the state. Creating and implementing mechanisms to monitor progress, including a school register where the progress of individual children is recorded and daily diaries where PP staffs record school visits and other activities pertaining to ParrhoPanjab.

Mid-Day-Meal Programme (Annual Work Plan and Budget 2011-2012):- Education plays a vital and important role in fulfilling the basic needs of a common man viz. food, shelter and clothing. The main aim of Education is to prepare and develop the child

physically, mentally and spiritually to lead a quality life. Education is a process through which a child is made capable to attain the necessary competencies and skills to face the challenges in life to survive, and to make struggle for existence. Four important factors are identified for achieving the goal of Education for All. These are Access to Education, Enrolment of children, and Retention of the enrolled children and Achievement. Mid Day Meal scheme is an effort to achieve and facilitate all the four above said. Various schemes were implemented in the primary education sector by the Government to reach the disadvantaged population. Access to Primary Education was universalized through flagship programmes of Govt. like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, however, despite this, a few children are still deprived of Primary Education due to inability of their parents to send them to schools because of their poor economical status. For, these parents, sending their children to school means not only incurring extra financial burden but also depriving them of some money which their children would have earned otherwise by doing labour. That being the attitude of these economically backward parents, one may, perhaps, to motivate the parents and children was to bring their children to school by providing food and nutritional needs.

History of Mid Day Meal Scheme

Government of India, on Oct 2nd 1995, launched the scheme of National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education also known as Mid-Day-Meal Programme. Under this scheme, students of Primary classes were to be provided wheat @ 3 kg per student per month (for 10 months in a year) subject to 80% attendance. Meanwhile, the apex court also intervened and vide its orders dated 28th November, 2001 the Supreme Court directed:-

- We direct the State Government/Union Territories to implement the Mid-Day-Meal scheme by providing every child in every Government and Government Assisted primary schools with a prepared Mid-Day- Meal with minimum contents of 300 calories of energy and 8-12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days. Those Governments providing dry rations instead of cooked meals must within 3 months start providing cooked meals in all Government Aided primary schools in all half the districts of the state(in order of poverty) and must within a further period of 3 months extend the provisions of cooked meals to the remaining parts of the state.
- We direct the Union of India and the FCI to ensure provision of fair average quality grain for the scheme on time. The State/Union Territories and the FCI are directed to

do joint inspection of foodgrains. If the foodgrains is found, on joint inspection, not to be of fair average quality, it will be replaced by the FCI prior to lifting”.

Thus, like many other states, **Punjab** could not switch over to cooked meal scheme from the very beginning due to certain reasons - due to paucity of funds involved in the conversion of food grains to cooked meal. However, in compliance with the Supreme Court’s order dated 28-11- 2001, cooked meal was provided to the children of Primary classes in one block in every district of Punjab during the year 2002-03. The Govt. of Punjab started providing cooked meal to all the students of Primary classes in Govt. schools with effect from September, 2004 and for this purpose, a sum of Rs. 666.00 lacs during the financial year 2004-05 was released to the Deputy Commissioners, who are also the Chairmen of the District level Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee for implementation of this scheme at district level. During the financial year 2005-06, a sum of Rs. 1309.86 lacs was released to the Deputy Commissioners as conversion cost for providing cooked meal to the students in the Government and Government-Aided Private Schools under the Scheme. Subsequently, it was extended to children enrolled under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative Innovative Education (AIE) centres working under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme.

Main Objectives of the Mid Day Meal Programme:-

The main objectives of the programme are:

- To increase enrolment, retention and to tone up the learning abilities of the beneficiaries, especially of children belonging to poor and down trodden sections of the society;
- To provide nutritious meal to the school going children to achieve the goal of Healthy mind in Healthy body;
- To promote friendship and feelings of common brotherhood among the children belonging to different caste, colour and creed by providing meals to them together and also to increase their retention in schools.

Studies Conducted in the field of Mid Day Meal Programme

The research conducted by **Saxena and Mittal (1985)** to find out the impact of Mid Day Meal Program on enrolment and retention at the primary stage and found the influence of Mid Day Meal Program on total enrolment that is indicated in the form of higher (ERT) (total enrolment rate) for Mid Day Meal districts than those of non-mid day meal districts.

They also confirm effectiveness of Mid Day Meal at National level. Futher, **Baber and Hallam (1989)** conducted a study on socio-economic impacts of school feeding program in a South Indian village and evaluated the impact of school feeding programs in Tamil Nadu. The researchers looked at household income family consumption and expenditures, information on the number of child participants, qualities of food and energy/protein intake at school. The study by **Del Rosso, Joy and Marek (1996)** conducted on Class Action : improving school performance in the developing world through Better health and Nutrition and provided a thorough literature review of the relationship between improved nutrition and School performance. They analyzed lessons learned from past School based nutrition and health programs and makes recommendations for the design of such interventions. **Dua (2000)** conducted a study on school related variables and dropout and listed the following causes of dropout and their remedies. Inappropriate curriculum, difficult subject and failure in subjects, distance of school from home, non- availability of basic facilities at school, inefficient teachers, faulty teaching methods, school time-table, low achievement of students in school life and homework. Additionaly, **Ahmed, Akhtar and Del Ninno (2002)** evaluated the Food for Education (FFE) program in Bangladesh, which was started in 1993. The goals of FFE program were to increase school attendance and prevent dropouts. The authors found that the program did meet those goals and increase in enrolment was better for girls than boys. **Alasingaperumal (2003)** reported that after the introduction of Mid Day Meal Scheme in Tamil Nadu, enrolment in class 1 has risen by 10-15% with girls entering school going up by about 25% . Further the nutritional status of school going children has improved considerably. In her study, **Nisha (2004)** investigated the MDM scheme in primary schools of Bathinda district. The study was conducted on sample of 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls), 60 teachers and parents of 50 students of government elementary schools of Bathinda District. The investigator found that in Bathinda district 31% schools are providing MDM to pupils. The funds for MDM are provided by Director of Public Instructions (DPI) to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) who gives these funds to District Education Officer (DEO) from whom Block Education Officer (BEO) get these funds for the Pendu Sikhya Vikas Committee (PASWAK) from whom different primary schools received funds. There is much difficulty for the teachers to distribute meals to prepare record of quantity and type of meal distributed. Views of the teachers and students about MDM scheme are different because where teachers think providing MDM to students is an extra burden on them, students are

comparatively happy about this scheme, because students get relief from some of the teaching periods because their teachers are engaged in meal managing activities, in this way studies of students are hampered to the great extent. There is no difference in the view of boys and girls about MDM scheme because all students get MDM and also relieved from dryness of teaching of teachers for sometime. Parents have positive view regarding MDM scheme. The students are attracted to schools due to this scheme. Moreover, **National Council of Educational Research and Training (2005)** submitted a report entitled learning achievement of students at the end of class 5th which inferred that children covered under Mid Day Meal Programme have higher achievement level than those who were not covered under it. Mid day meal is better managed programme than many other programmes. Additionally, **Monitoring Report of Panjab University on Sarv Siksha Abhiyan for Punjab state (2006)** for the period 1st April 2006 to 30 Sep 2006 which was conducted in Districts of Patiala, Ferozpur, Mansa and Mohali revealed that the Hot cooked food was being served in districts almost regularly after this scheme resumed in 2006. The schools were managing cooks either through self help group or through contactors. **Baru (2008)** found that MDM scheme has made significant contributions to reducing classroom hunger and increasing school attendance especially for girl children. It also advanced social equity by providing an opportunity for children from different castes and religions to eat together and by creating employment opportunities for poor and lower caste women in some states. A study by **Kaur (2010)** conducted a study on the impact of Mid Day Meal on attendance , retention and learning outcomes of students in Ferozpur district and concluded that Mid Day Meal created a lot of problems for teachers as well as administrators, that is, the persons concerned with the scheme directly or indirectly. Various problems faced by teachers and administrators are- Extra burden on teachers and wastage of teaching hours. Lack of funds for scheme and non availability of funds for carriage charges from Government of India. Lack of infrastructure – Lack of kitchens ,cooking sheds , utensils ,water supply and many related facilities is a major problem for teachers. There is problem of fuel. Problem of storage of raw material. Non-availability of staff. **Times of India (2012)** highlight a news, that nearly 500 students, studying at the Pahar Middle school in Keredari block of Hazaribag district, boycotted the midday meal served to them on Wednesday as they were prepared by two dalit cooks.

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Punjab is divided in 20 Administrative Districts, 72 Tehsils, 141 CD Blocks, 216 ED Blocks. And currently Mid-Day-Meal Programme covers 22.23 lacs children in Government, Government Aided Schools, EGS and AIE Centres in 15567 Institutions (Classes I-V) and 5823 Government and Government Aided Schools (Classes VI-VIII)

Salient Features of Mid Day Meal Scheme in Punjab State

The Allotment of Food Grains :- The allotment of Food grains is made by Government of India as per the requirement of the State. The district wise allocation is made by the Nodal Officer at the State Level. Allocation of foodgrains along with allocation of funds is communicated and is made available to the districts in advance so that there is no difficulty in procuring the foodgrains and making payment to the FCI. The transportation agency namely Punjab State Civil Supplies Corporation (PUNSUP) has been identified as the nodal agency by the State Government to lift the foodgrains from the FCI godowns and send it to the schools. As per the Guidelines issued by the Govt. of India Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, Deputy Commissioners / District Magistrates have been asked by the State Government to ensure that the quality of foodgrains lifted from FCI godowns is best available and at least should be FAQ. Regular meetings are held by the District Magistrates to monitor the quality and supply of foodgrains wherein District Manager PUNSUP and District Education Officer participate in such meetings. Quality of foodgrains and its availability in the district and implementation of the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme is also reviewed by the Chief Secretary at the State level in the monthly meeting of Deputy Commissioners.

Punjab State Civil Supplies Corporation (PUNSUP):- Punjab State Civil Supplies Corporation (PUNSUP) has prepared the route chart covering all the schools and supply of food grains is ensured regularly depending upon the consumption of the foodgrains in schools. At the school level, a local committee has been constituted in all the districts to receive the food grains. The school teacher is a Member Secretary of this committee and is responsible for the maintenance of the records. It is ensured by the Deputy Commissioners that the food grains delivered at the schools are stored in appropriate storage bins, though, at some places such storage bins still remains to be provided. Directions have been issued separately allowing the school level committees to procure the storage Bins out of the sale proceeds of the Bardana rendered empty after utilization of food grains.

System for Payment: - System for payment of Honorarium to cook-cum helpers and implementing agencies viz. NGOs/SHGs/trust/centralized kitchens etc. Number of cook-cum-helpers has been determined as per the norm fixed by the Govt. of India depending upon the strength of the children enrolled in a particular school. Names of cooks engaged and their date of engagement is communicated to the District Office where a complete record of the cook-cum-helpers is maintained. Funds for the honorarium of cooks are released to the District Education Officer who on the basis of record releases these funds to the school head. Payment to the cook-cum-helpers is made by the school head by cheque to maintain complete transparency in the system.

System for Procuring Cooking Ingredients:- System for procuring cooking ingredients (pulses, vegetables including leafy ones, salt, condiments, oil & fuel etc), commodities, which are centrally purchased and supplied to schools or locally purchased at school level and rate of cooking cost per child per day provided at school level. The cooking ingredients and other commodities are locally purchased at school level. The rate of cooking cost per child per day is as per the norms fixed by the Govt. of India:-

- Primary Classes (I-V) (1-4-10 to 31-12-10) @ Rs. 2.69 per child per school day
- Upper Primary Classes (VI-VIII) 1-4-10 to 31-12-10 @ Rs. 4.03 per child per school day.

System for cooking, serving and supervising Mid-Day- Meals in the school and measures to prevent any untoward happening.

- Cooks/MSHGs engaged by the Department/Village Panchayats/ VEDCs cook the meal.
- Mothers have been involved in the process of serving and supervising Mid-Day-Meal in the schools. MSHGs have been formed in all the schools.
- NGOs have been engaged in two districts of Ferozepur, and Nawanshaher to provide Mid-Day-Meal in schools by establishing centralized kitchens.

Procedure for Getting Kitchen Shed Constructed:-Funds released under the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme for the construction of kitchen sheds are released to the District Education Officers for transferring the same to school Head Teacher who is a Secretary of the village Education Development Committee to get the kitchen shed constructed. During the year 2006-07, a sum of Rs. 1150.20 lacs for the construction of kitchen shed-cum-store was released by the Finance Department, however, funds were not released by the Treasury.

Further, an amount of Rs. 1592.39 lacs was also not released by the Finance Department. The total unspent balance of Rs.2742.59 lacs (Rs. 1150.20 lacs plus Rs.1592.39 lacs) permitted by the Govt. of India to be carried over to the financial year 2007-08. During the year 2007-08, a sum of Rs. 2742.59 lacs was released. The total amount drawn from the Treasury was sent to all the Deputy Commissioners for construction of Kitchen Sheds in 4571 Primary schools through Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs). These kitchen sheds have been completed. An amount of Rs. 8324.40 lacs for the construction of 13874 kitchen sheds in Primary and Upper Primary Schools released by Govt. of India has been drawn during February, 2009.

Capacity Building and Training:- Capacity building and training conducted for different categories of persons involved in the Mid-Day-Meal Programme under programmes of Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan etc. Regular training programmes are being conducted by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme to all the teachers in the Primary and Upper Primary Schools. A module of Mid Day Meal programme addressing all the aspects of the scheme is an integral part of the training programmes. Further, the trainings are also organized on Mid Day Meal scheme through Edusat project of State government. Medical officers from the Health Department provide invaluable inputs on preventive health care particularly the disease relating to iron deficiency, eyes, ears etc. through Edusat as well as through regular training course run by the SSA. One BRP is specifically trained to monitor the Mid Day Meal scheme under the SSA programme at BRC level so as to build the capacity at the grass root level. In addition the State Government has also created the Mid Day Meal cell at the district level by appointing District Managers and Accountants. The basic qualifications for the District Managers are that he should have an experience of working in the Department of Foodgrains or Finance.

School Committees:- Mid-Day-Meal Programme implementation is the overall responsibility of Committees constituted at school level. Teacher Incharge of Mid-Day-Meal Programme maintains the day to day record of the programme. There are only two registers to be maintained at school level. One register is for maintenance of funds (Cash Book) and second register is kept for foodgrains.

Monthly Report:- At the end of the month, every school submits its monthly report of stock register for foodgrains to the Centre Head Teacher which transmits it to the Block Primary Education Officer. Block Primary Education Officer compiles the reports received from

various schools and communicates to the District Education Officer (EE), who in turn compiles the entire district report and sends to the State Mid-Day-Meal Cell. District Education Officers (EE) convene monthly meeting of Block Primary Education Officers. The following best practices are followed in the schools:-

- All students, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion take the Mid Day Meal and thus spread a message of common brotherhood and also imbibe good traditions of the Indian Society amongst the students;
- Participation of the women, particularly, the mothers in cooking and serving to the children / students is very good practice. It has also enforced the accountability of teachers towards society to impart quality education to students;
- In some of the places, the students have been motivated to produce the vegetables by making use of available land in the schools effectively. This will not only make the school self-sustainable but would also inculcate the habit of self-reliance amongst the students;
- Health Interventions:- Principal Secretary/Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Punjab reviews the issues related to Mid-Day-Meal and Health Department regularly. The Health Department examines the primary students at least twice and upper primary to senior secondary students once a year and provides 100 Tb of 20mgs of Iron and Folic Acid (one tablet daily) once a year and deforming tablets twice a year to all the students from class I -XII under School Health programme.

Chug (2007) highlighted the best practices in the implementation of mid day meal in Punjab.

The study revealed that:-

- In all the schools the provision of meals was never interrupted though there has been delay in the delivery of funding.
- Teachers were able to keep the meal programme going either by spending out of their pockets or borrowing from the store and vegetable vendors on loan basis.
- Teachers make an extra effort and purchase the grocery items and also take food item on loan so that the children get food regularly.
- Though the activity of the teachers has increased on account of the preparation and supervision of mid day meal, but they do not find it as burdensome. It was an encouraging finding that most of the teachers take it as one of their pleasant duties and

many teachers get pleasure to feed the hungry children as they believe no learning is possible with empty stomach.

- Teachers are approaching the trusts and NGOs for resource mobilization. In two of the schools, NGOs have provided utensils, note books and uniform to all the children of school. In one of the schools retired principal was regularly coming to school to help in the management of school. Such support may be sought by other schools.
- The food prepared was delicious in all the schools and the students were seen to be having second helping. Some of the students reported that they found it to be better than prepared at home.
- In few schools the parents were regularly visiting to supervise the quality of food grains and also the cooked food.
- All the schools had displayed on board the attendance for the day. Some schools had also displayed the quantity of food cooked on that day and the expenditure incurred on it.

Final Words

An international commitment to improve educational access in developing countries is lacking. UNESCO and non-governmental organizations are actively engaged in projects and programs toward this end. Governments are also committed to expanding opportunities for education as is evident in the significant percentage of public expenditure allocated to education, even in countries with demonstrably declining economic performance. However, the role of poor health as an intervening factor in education has not been fully recognized. Even as many developing countries have signed on to the World Education Forum declaration promising basic education for all citizens by the year 2015, the educational impact of ill health among school children has been relatively neglected. Together with international organizations, governments are making massive efforts to improve basic education, a core component for building development capacity. However, these efforts raise urgent questions about the impact of the health and nutrition on the school-aged population and the role diet plays in the cognitive development and school performance of children in these countries. Therefore, food is the basic need of every human being and if it is not fulfilled properly than we can't expect any fruitful outcome from them. Children are the Future of our nation. In a country like India where lot of children go to school without food, providing food to them is the basic need. With empty stomach we cannot expect our future

citizens to build a great Nation. For all round development of body and mind it is necessary that the students get proper nutrition. So a scheme like Mid Day Meal is the need of the hour. Overall, as the scholars pointed out in their studies that the scheme has a good impact on child nutrition, school attendance and social equity.

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