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Manpreet Kaur
Assistant Professor, Lyallpur
Khalsa College, Jalandhar,
Punjab, India.

Mid-Day meal scheme: An analysis before and after

Manpreet Kaur

Abstract

The future of any nation depends upon the present of its children. Educated and healthy children can build a strong and powerful nation. To achieve this twin objective of educated and healthy children the government of India initiated a national programme of nutritional support to primary education known as mid-day meal scheme. The present paper attempts to analyze the before and after situation of government's effort in the form of mid-day meal scheme. For this purpose, time series data on enrollment, gross enrollment ratio (GER), dropout rates etc. has been taken from government websites, reports. The study is based on secondary data collected for the years 1951-2014.

Keywords: Midday meal, education, nutrition, children, school

Introduction

Education has an important role to make a child develop gradually to lead a quality life. Child who is the future of a nation is today malnutrition, not getting adequate food. So his priorities are not to become a successful person by educating himself but just to arrange for enough food to satisfy his hunger. Government of India started such a programme which is designed to improve the nutritional status of school age children and to enhance the enrollment, retention and attendance of students in government schools. Under this programme, free mid-day meals are supplied by the government for children in primary and upper primary classes on working days. This programme is known as the mid-day meal scheme which is the National Programme of Nutritional support to Primary education.

This paper attempts to analyse the situation before and after the introduction of mid-day meal scheme keeping all other factors constant. Various factors like enrollment of students, gross enrollment ratio (GER), and dropout rates in school education are taken into account. The study has been done only on primary schools. The paper has been categorised into two sections. Section-I highlights the history, working and performance of mid-day meal scheme. Section-II make comparisons of situations before and after the launch of this scheme by analyzing all above mentioned factors.

Objectives of this paper

1. To accentuate the history of mid-day meal programme.
2. To highlight the objectives, working and performance of mid-day meal scheme.
3. To evaluate the MDM scheme by anatomizing the changes in primary schools after this scheme.
4. To make comparisons of situations before and after nationwide introduction of this scheme.

Methodology

The methodology included secondary data which has been collected from government reports, newspapers, journals and government websites etc. The average change before and after the launch of this scheme has been found and then comparisons have been made whether it is successful in achieving its end or not. The data is based on time series technique.

Correspondence
Manpreet Kaur
Assistant Professor, Lyallpur
Khalsa College, Jalandhar,
Punjab, India.

Section 1

Mid-day meal scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme which was launched on 15th August 1995 as a National Programme of nutritional support to Primary education in order to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children. It aims to inspire children from poor and weaker sections to enroll themselves into schools as well as to attend school regularly and this scheme is also to deal with the problem of malnutrition among children by providing them nutritious food as the level of malnutrition is of great concern in India. With over 40 percent of children being classified as under nourished. Survey among rural population of India, by National nutrition monitoring bureau in 2002 reported prevalence of malnutrition using Gomez classification to be 94.6 percent among 6-9 years and 97.1 percent in 10-13 year old (Dr. James, 2013)

This flagship programme has a long history to go. It was originally introduced by the British government in India in 1925 in Madras Corporation. Then it was introduced in Calcutta city in 1928 as compulsory mid-day tiffin on payment basis followed by the French administration in Pondicherry (Now Puducherry) in 1930 .Maharashtra and Karnataka were also among those states which started it before independence. Many states adopted this scheme in different forms in different years after independence.

Finally, the government of India initiated mid-day meal programme in 1995 as a centrally sponsored scheme with an objective to help improve the nutritional status of primary school children. But initially it was launched in certain parts of the country.

The scheme was implemented all over the country by 1997-98. In 2001, mid-day meal scheme (MDMS) became a cooked MDMS under which every child in every government and government aided primary school was to be served a prepared mid-day meal with a minimum content of 300 calories of energy and 8-12 gram protein per day for a minimum of 200 days. The scheme was further extended in 2002 to cover not only children studying in government, government aided and local body schools but also children studying in education guarantee scheme (EGS) and alternative & innovative Education (AIE) centres (Ministry of human resource development, government of India).

Though it is a centrally sponsored scheme but certain costs are shared by center and states on 75:25 ratio. Central government sponsors 100 percent cost of food grains, transportation, management, monitoring etc. but central assistance for cooking cost is on sharing basis. Besides this, one time central assistance is provided to states for construction of kitchen sheds. An amount of 60,000 per unit and Rs. 5000 for procurement/ replacement of kitchen devices for each school covered under mid-day meal scheme (James, 2013)

Performance

The working and performance of mid-day meal scheme can be analysed from various factors.

1. It has provided a very significant source of employment to rural women especially rural women from backward classes. It does not need any special kind of training but just a woman who knows how to cook meals can get work under this scheme. But this is only one side of a coin. On the other side these cooks are paid very low. By talking to some schools in Punjab, I came to know that they are paid just Rs. 1200/- per month. Akshaya mukul in the times of India has written that joint review mission (JRM) of MDM that visited four states Assam, West Bengal, Telangana and Maharashtra, JRM recommended that honorarium to the cook cum helper be reviewed and raised periodically to mitigate the effect of inflation.
2. This scheme is working appreciably to achieve its objective of providing food to all children enrolled and coming to school. It aims to address classroom hunger and successfully doing that. But there are many loopholes like in many schools, there is unavailability of eating plates .Children are not having any other option apart from using leaves in lieu of plates. At many places children fell ill after eating mid-day meal as it happened in Arwal district in 2013. Twenty three children died in saran district in the same year after eating contaminated mid-day meals.
3. No doubt children are learning good habits like washing one’s hands before and after eating. But food itself is not hygienic. The cooks in the school did not know guidelines to ensure hygiene. The water used for cooking food was not wholesome. (Uma, 2013)
4. It has also hampered the classroom processes because teachers are giving attention to the supervision of this MDM scheme and related activities.
5. Infrastructure facilities are very poor like no proper cooking sheds, utensils, storage space etc. inspite of allocation of funds by government which is an ultimate risk to the life of children.
6. One positive aspect of this scheme is no discrimination on any basis whether it is gender, caste or community. All are served equally.

Section-II (Comparisons)

There are many factors which lead to increase in the enrollment of children in schools or their dropouts from school. Mid-day meal can be one of those factors. It can be analyzed whether MDM scheme has made any difference in enrollment and dropout rates of primary schools of government.

For the purpose of making comparisons, the data has been divided into two sections

1. Before cooked MDM launch (1950-51 to 2000-01)
2. After cooked MDM launch upto 2013-2014

Table 1: Enrollment Primary (I-V)

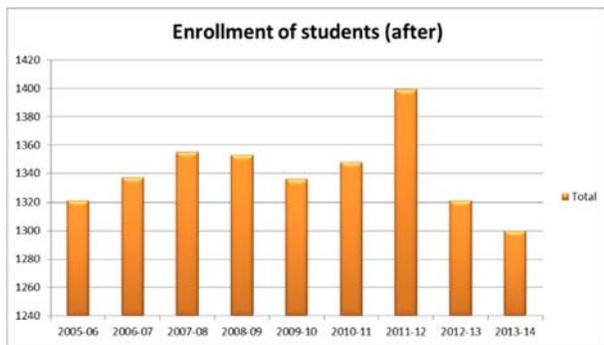
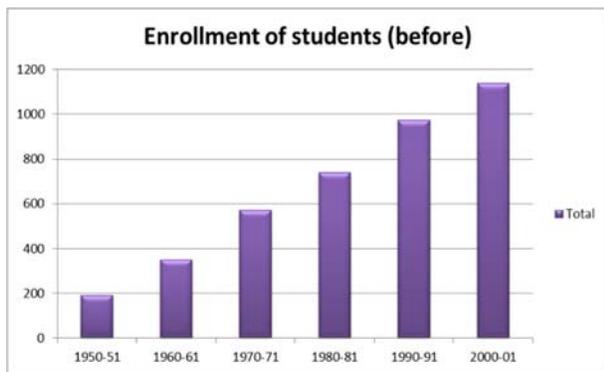
Years (before cooked MDM)	Enrollment (Lakhs)			GER (Gross enrollment ratio)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	138	54	192	60.6	24.8	42.6
1960-61	236	114	350	82.6	41.4	62.4
1970-71	357	213	570	95.5	60.5	78.6
1980-81	453	285	738	95.8	64.1	80.5
1990-91	570	404	974	94.8	71.9	83.8
2000-01	640	498	1138	104.9	85.9	95.7

Years (after cooked MDM)	Enrollment (Lakhs)			GER (Gross enrollment ratio)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2005-06	705	616	1321	112.8	105.8	109.4
2006-07	711	626	1337	114.6	108.0	111.4
2007-08	711	644	1355	115.3	112.6	114.0
2008-09	706	647	1353	114.7	114.0	114.3
2009-10	697	639	1336	113.8	113.8	113.8
2010-11	701	646	1348	114.9	116.3	115.5
2011-12	726	672	1399	105.8	107.1	106.5
2012-13 [p]	681	639	1321	99.3	102.2	100.7
2013-14 [p]	672	628	1300	98.1	100.6	99.3

P-provisional

Source: Educational statistics at a glance a handbook by ministry of human resources development, government of India

GER: Gross enrollment Ratio: it is the total student’s enrollment in a given level of education, regardless of age expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age group population in a given school year



From the above table and graph it can be analyzed, that before the launch of cooked mid-day meal scheme i.e. during the period from 1950-51 to 2000-01 average increase in enrollment of children in primary schools is 18.92 lakh. But after this cooked MDM scheme (data from 2005-06 to 2013-14), there is on an average decline in the enrollment of school children by 2.33 lakh. Talking about GER in the before period it is increased from 42.6 to 95.7 and in after period it is decreased from 109.4 to 99.3.

Table 2: Dropout rates in school education Primary education (I-V)

Years (before cooked MDM)	Boys	Girls	Total
1960-61	61.7	70.9	64.9
1970-71	64.5	70.9	67.0
1980-81	56.2	62.5	58.7
1990-91	40.1	46.0	42.6
2000-01	39.7	41.9	40.7

Years (after cooked MDM)	Boys	Girls	Total
2005-06	28.7	21.8	25.7
2006-07	24.6	26.8	25.6
2007-08	25.7	24.4	25.1
2008-09	29.6	25.8	27.8
2009-10	31.8	28.5	30.3
2010-11	29.0	25.4	27.4
2011-12	23.4	21.0	22.3
2012-13 [p]	23.0	19.4	21.3
2013-14[p]	21.2	18.3	19.8

Source: Educational Statistics at a glance. A Handbook by ministry of human Resource Development, Government of India

Dropout rate: is the percentage of students who dropout from a given grade or cycle or level of education in a given school year.

The above table shows that in the before period (1960-61 to 2000-01) the dropout rate in primary education schools fell on an average by 0.61 percent and in the after period (2000-01 to 2013-14), the dropout rate fell on an average by 0.66 percent.

Conclusion

Mid-day meal scheme (MDM) is a school which talk about one meal in a day for 200 days to all children enrolled and present in the school to provide them nutritious food and ensure their attendance in the school .But the question arises: Is one time food in twenty four hours is sufficient to provide them adequate nutritional level. Moreover what about the Sundays and holidays in which they do not get any kind of help. Secondly ensuring attendance in the school for certain days does not ensure quality education to a child. The above trends shows that before the launch of this scheme on an average enrollment increased in fifty years but after this scheme in few years the average enrollment decreased. There is a fall noticed in dropout rates before and after this scheme. But the change is not so significant. All this indicates that the mid-day meal scheme is not the only factor which attracts children to school or which make their dropout rate low. There are certainly many other factors responsible for enrollment and dropout of children from schools. As far as MDM is concerned, undoubtedly it is a good effort by the government but there is a dare need to introduce some other measures and remove the loopholes for the ensured success of these measures.

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