

Effectiveness of Mid-Day-Meal Scheme in Primary Schools with special reference to Nalbari District, Assam

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Abstract-

Education plays an essential role in the advancement of human potential. Education acts as an indicator of building human capital. It plays an important role in the socio-economic development of a country. The government of India has made education compulsory for 6 to 14 years of age group children. Lacking basic education, the human mind directs to poverty, hunger, and crime. Against this backdrop, the Indian government has undertaken the Mid-Day Meal Scheme to deal with the most critical problems of society. At present, the scheme is being executed in lower primary and upper primary classes. It is one of the primary initiatives undertaken by the Government of India to accomplish the purpose of universalization of primary education through the provision of nutritious support to primary school children. The study is an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of the Mid-Day-Meal scheme in lower-primary and upper-primary schools of the Nalbari District of Assam.

Keyword-

Education, Mid-Day-Meal scheme, Lower primary school, Nalbari District.

Introduction-

Education is the mirror of society and is the kernel as well as blossom of the socio-economic development. Education exceeds human beings from thoughtlessness to enlightenment, from the apparition of social backwardness to the light of improvement and the nation from underdevelopment towards faster social and economic development.

Mid-day meal in schools has a long record in India. In 1925, a Mid-Day Meal program was brought up for needy children in the Madras Municipal Corporation. By the mid-1980s, three states that are Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territory of Pondicherry had universalized a cooked Mid-Day-Meal program with their own help for children studying at the primary stage. By 1990–91 the number of states implementing the Mead-Day-Meal programs with their own help on a universal scale had improved to twelve states.

On 15th August 1995, P.V. Narasimha Rao the Prime Minister of India launched the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) also known as Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM) for the first time in India to deal with classroom hunger by serving hot cooked meal and to improve the nutritional status of children. Initially, it was started 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 allegorical in 2002 to wrap 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) centers. In Assam,

the school meal programme was implemented for the first time in 2005. The Programme involves the provision of lunch free of cost to children of the age group of 4 to 14 years of primary schools on all working days. The key objective of the program is to improve the enrolment and attendance of primary school children by decreasing classroom hunger and by improving socialization among children belonging to all castes and religions and addressing malnutrition.

Review of Literature-

Various studies have been conducted in India about the Mid-Day-Meal scheme. The main purpose of these studies is to examine the relationship between this scheme and students' enrolment, health, attendance, and education in primary school.

Paul and Mondal (2012) found that the mid-day meal scheme had an optimistic impact on the academic achievement of students such as enhancing enrolment, and attendance, and increasing retention.

Angom (2008) found that there is no bias in serving mid-day meals in Manipur and directed high assistance from teachers in serving mid-day meals to children.

Khera (2006) found that the mid-day meal scheme of India has become one of the enormous schemes across the country and confronting challenges in terms of quality and infrastructure.

Uma (2003) suggested that the quality of education and food require awareness in schools to make the scheme triumphant. In addition, it is suggested that teachers should make conscious students about the implication of education.

Dreze and Goyal (2003) indicated that mid-day meal has a major effect on child nutrition, school attendance, and social equity. Further, they suggested that maintaining adequate quality in mid-day meals will boost their full potential and the scheme will aid to make the right food available to students.

T & Avinash (2013) studied that mid-day meal have big consequences on school participation, not just in terms of getting more children enrolled in the registers but also in terms of regular pupil attendance on a daily basis. Many children reach school with an empty belly. Children who do not have lunch box are not able to focus on study. Mid-day meal can help to confound this problem by staving off classroom hunger.

Narad A. (2016) notified that hunger and malnutrition are major impediments in the path of child development. The introduction of the Mid-Day Meal scheme is contemplated as one of the major efforts taken in this regard to improve and strengthen educational development and nutritional status of the children.

Operational definitions-

Education- Education is the transmission of knowledge, skills and traits.

It also implies helping people to understand how to do things and endorse them to think about what they learn.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme- Mid-Day Meal is a school meal program which is undertaken by the government of India. It is the world's biggest launch program under which, a free nutritional mid-day meal for students of primary school is provided.

Lower Primary School- Lower primary school is the first formal educational institution in India. It comprised class I to V and students between the age group of 6 to 11/12 years.

Nalbari District- Nalbari is an administrative district in the state of Assam. According to the 2011 census, Nalbari district has a population of 771639.

Objectives-

- To collect information on the Mid-Day meal scheme to encourage primary and upper primary education by the government.
- To assess the impact of the scheme on the overall classroom performance of primary schools in the Nalbari district.
- To find out the effectiveness of the Mid-day scheme among the students of lower primary and upper primary schools of Nalbari district.

Methodology-

The present study is based on both primary data and secondary data. Primary data has been collected from four different government primary schools in Nalbari district. And the Secondary data has been collected from, journals and books, the Statistical Handbook of Assam, Census reports, the Department of Elementary Education, Educational Blocks, and Government official websites. A qualitative open-ended questionnaire is prepared to gauge the effectiveness of the Mid-day meal scheme among four different schools.

Analysis and Interpretation-

First objective- To collect information on the Mid-Day meal scheme to encourage primary and upper primary education by the government.

Table-1: Position of admission before and after implementing the scheme.

Name of the school	Admission before the scheme (2001-2002)	Admission after the scheme (2005-2006)	Increase in admission
476 No Solmara LP School	52	67	15
2 No Kshudra Makhibaha LP School	54	65	11
1131 No Jalkhana LP School	59	68	9
Pakhura Lakhupur LP School	48	61	13

From the above Table-1 it has found that Admission position had improved a lot after implementing the scheme particularly in primary school. The number of admission after implementing the scheme is more. The children were enticed towards the school because of this scheme. More than 75% of Headteachers and Assistant Teachers said that there is an advancement in the performance of the students. There is an advancement in the children's performance after the implementation of the scheme.

Second Objective- To assess the impact of the scheme on the overall classroom performance of primary schools in the Nalbari district.

Table No-2: Performance of students.

Name of the school	No of children secured above 60% in 2001-02	No of students secured above 60% in 2005-06	Increase number
476 No Solmara LP School	45	63	18
2 No Kshudra Makhibaha LP School	48	59	11
1131 No Jalkhana LP School	51	63	12
Pakhura Lakhupur LP School	42	56	14

The above Table-2 indicates the performance of study before and after implementing the scheme. The performance of children has increased during the year 2005-06. The children indicated a very good performance after implementing the Mid-Day Meal scheme. There was a loss of attendance for almost all children during 2001-02.

Third Objective- To find out the effectiveness of the Mid-day scheme among the students of lower primary and upper primary schools of Nalbari district.

Table-3: Attendance status of students.

Name of the school	Attendance in 2001-02 (per year)	Attendance in 2005-06 (per year)	Increase number
476 No Solmara LP School	170	186	16
2 No Kshudra Makhibaha LP School	167	178	11
1131 No Jalkhana LP School	158	170	12
Pakhura Lakhupur LP School	180	195	15

The above Table no-3 shows the average attendance of the students after implementing the Mid Day Meal scheme. Many of children began again their education because of food protection at the school. The Mid Day Meal Scheme guaranteed food supplies to the school-going children. The children who have come from poor family would drop the school because of food. When the government started this scheme, then onwards they have been attending school regularly. They protected food in the afternoon so they would not drop the school.

Findings of the study-

- The scheme is successful in achieving its objectives like the feeding of hunger children, increasing the attendance ratio, making the teaching and learning process effective, improving attention to learning, etc.
- The poor children are fed satisfactorily and improved their health.
- The Headteacher and Teachers have suggested changing the food menu periodically and improving the quality of food.
- The scheme has helped to Universalize Primary Education in the Nalbari district.
- It has increased the enrolment ratio in Primary schools. It has reduced the drop out ratio. It has increased the attendance ratio. The quality of Primary Education has improved a lot.

Recommendation-

- The schools which do not have kitchens, vessels, and other materials should have all of these.
- Many schools are not having a pure and clean drinking water facility. Such schools should be given water facilities.
- Government should supply good quality food grains on time and the gas agency should supply gas at the proper time.
- The accountabilities of the scheme should not be given to the teachers. It should be given to the local organizations.
- Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the scheme is essential.
- Fruits and eggs should be incorporated into the food menu.

Conclusion-

Insufficient meal and then malnutrition yet hangs around an issue in developing places also have significant consequences on the health condition of children and their educational development. This mid-day meal program tries to relieve community imbalances by regulating a typical outlet. An additional main emphasis of the scheme is actually on advertising attendance, retention, and enrolment of the students along with improvement in their medical status. The consequence of this study demonstrates that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme is playing a significant role in decreasing the classroom craving of students in the surveyed government primary schools of the Nalbari district. It has been commemorated that parents who can not have the money for the expenditures of private institutions are enlisting their children in these schools.

Mid-day meal is a welfare scheme financed by the government of India, which proposes free meals to students in lower as well as in upper primary schools, aiming at improving the healthy status and level of school enrolment. It is the largest lunch program in the country. The future of the nation always depends upon health-fuller and brighter younger children. Government of India put into action on compulsory mid-day meal for the children to eradicate the illiteracy rate from the country. It is very significant for the children who are suffering from malnutrition because the hungry and poor children never come to school at their school age. Mid-day meal programs directly or indirectly help in accomplishing the objective of universalization of primary education, which is a great braid given by the government in the education sector for the improvement of the country in all aspects in the coming future.

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