



AN EVALUATIVE STUDY OF MID-DAY MEAL PROGRAMME IN CHANDIGARH AND PANCHKULA

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Abstract

The Government of India ensures in Article 45 of the Indian constitution that, state shall endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age of 6-14 years. With the objectives of providing education and improving health conditions of poor children, Indian government launched the scheme of providing mid-day meals in government and government assisted primary schools. In the present study researcher investigated the various aspects of this scheme like meal menu, locality of kitchen and sheds used for cooking food, quality and quantity of food distributed, frequency of inspection, hygienic condition, effect on student enrolment and retention etc. Researcher visited 20 schools from Chandigarh and 20 schools from Panchkula and a sample of 200 teachers was selected for opinionnaire. Study indicated that the scheme has improved the attendance of students in schools but still could not make up the increased enrolment and retention of students. The scheme is providing sufficient nutrition to the students but the areas like food safety, food variety, distribution time, responsibilities on teachers regarding the scheme and accountability of authorities need much improvement.

Key words: *Mid -day meal scheme, Universalisation of Education, Elementary Education.*

Introduction

Elementary education constitute a very important part of entire structure of education as it provides foundation for the children and provides with first-hand experience. It is the springboard for developing all necessary qualities and fountain head of all learning experiences for making a child a balanced and mature adult. It is crucial for spreading mass literacy, basic requirement for economic development, modernization of social structure and effective functioning of democratic institution. That is why a lot has been done for universalisation of education. One of the most important incentive scheme for DEE is National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) commonly known as Midday meal scheme. It was launched on Aug 15, 1995 to foster equality and improved socialisation among children, for their regular attendance, increased enrolment and most importantly to give nutritional support to the primary children. Mid-day meal scheme

aims to cover not only children studying in class I-V of government, aided and local body schools but also children studying in centres run under the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education Scheme (AIE).

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Mid-day meal is one of the most important incentive schemes to achieve the objectives of universalisation of primary education. Since a large amount of money and efforts are involved in this programme to be successful, it became essential to undertake a study on its sustainability and its impact on different aspects including enrolment, retention and attendance of students. The investigator wanted to look deep into the issues like quality of meal, variety, availability, delivery system, nutritional constituents, hygiene, and effect on students, time consumption and increased workload on the teachers. Mid-day meal procedure was quite different in Chandigarh where food was not cooked in school premises but instead in the centralised kitchen. While in Panchkula food was cooked in the kitchen sheds inside the school and the head teacher was largely responsible for maintaining the quality and distribution of the meal among students. The nature, system, organisational requirements and functioning of scheme was different in both cities and the investigator was interested to evaluate these two set ups with respect to the quality, quantity, variety and impact of the scheme on the enrolment and attendance of the students.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the attitude of teachers towards mid-day meal scheme.
2. To study the problems faced by school authorities in implementing the scheme.
3. To study the role and added responsibilities on teachers in implementing the scheme.
4. To study the impact of Mid-day meal scheme on enrolment and attendance of students.
5. To assess the infrastructure available for Mid-day meal scheme.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of the present study required investigation into the worth and importance of the scheme in Chandigarh and Panchkula thus investigator has resorted to descriptive survey research method.

Sample:

Present study was conducted on randomly selected twenty schools from Chandigarh and twenty schools from Panchkula. From each school five teachers were selected so a total of 200 teachers were selected as sample. A survey of various centralised kitchens situated in different institutes and the kitchen sheds in different school premises was also under taken. Interviews with official incharge of the scheme was also conducted.

Tool used:

A self-developed opinionnaire was used to collect the data. Opinionnaire was developed by the investigator with the help of experts and was finalised on the basis of results and suggestions after a try-out on 50 teachers.

Data Collection:

Required data for the study was collected personally by the investigator. Five teachers including “teacher incharge “from each school were interviewed and then asked to fill the opinionnaire. Investigator experienced full support from the teachers and authorities.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In Chandigarh meals were prepared in centralised kitchens located at sec-17, sec-42 and two in sec-42. The researcher personally visited the kitchens and the findings are tabulated in table 1.

Table 1: showing the parameters studied in the centralised kitchens of Chandigarh

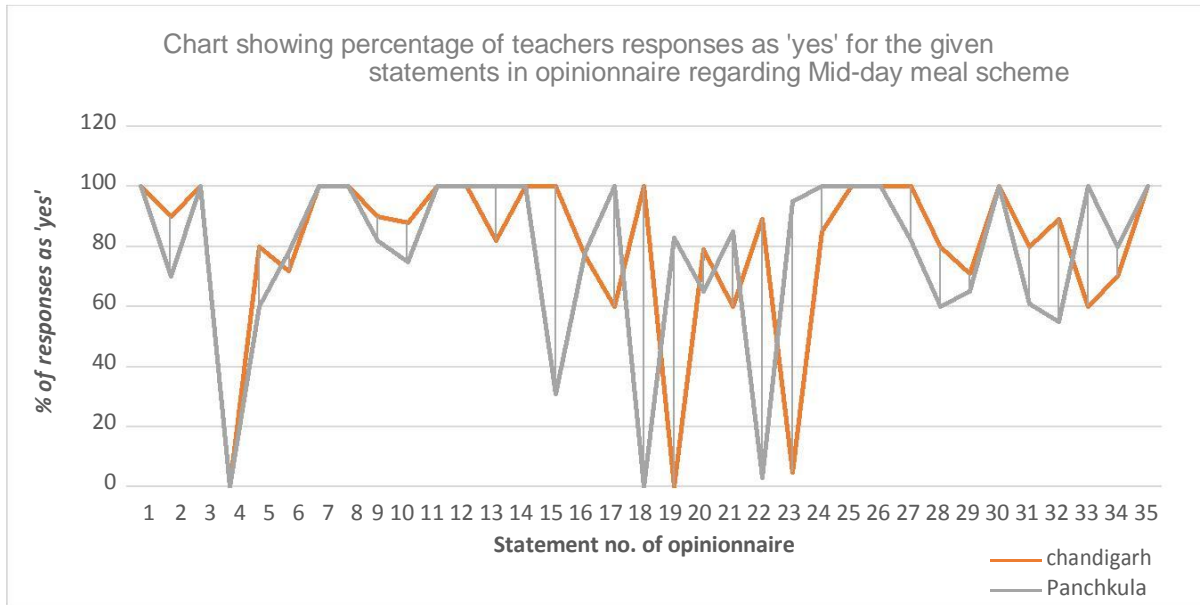
Location of kitchen→ Parameters ↓	CITCO, Sec-17	Food Craft ins., Sec-42	Hotel Management Inst. Sec-42	SWD/working women hostel, sec-24
Prepares cooked meal for:	30 schools	31 schools	47 schools	19 evening schools
Menu	Rice based	Rice based	Wheat based	Sweet and salted Mathis
No. of main cook	2	2	5	7 main halwaiis
No. of second cook	2	3	8	
No. of helpers	21	25	85	16
No. of gas burners	10	11	24	6
No. of Atta kneader machines	2	2	3	Done manually
Location of kitchen	Basement	Behind the Inst.	Separate area with proper ventilation	Separate area for preparation and frying of Mathis
Hygiene	Good	Very good	Excellent	Very good

Meals were regularly checked for nutritional value by Public Analyst Punjab and Haryana. Food grains were lifted from FCI go downs and quality checked by the committee of District Education Officer, Director Health Services, representatives of FCI and principals of various schools.

In Panchkula mid-day meal was prepared in school premises in kitchen shed or room allotted. Meal was prepared by the cook appointed specially for this purpose after the full medical check-up. Mid-day meal was served in the utensils brought by the pupils themselves. A committee of Head teacher and Principal is given the responsibility to execute the scheme properly. Class teachers are made to monitor their pupils for proper intake of meal. Menu of the meal included Meetha Rice, Vegetable Pulao, Khichari, Dalia, Bakli etc. The Block education officer used to come in the schools on monthly basis to inspect the proper execution of the scheme. Food grains were supplied by Food Corporation of India from its go downs directly to school through confed. Other ingredients like Ghee, pulses and spices etc. were purchased from nearby departmental store through a tender of three months which could be cancelled in case of any default. The school incharge maintained all the records regarding purchases and salary of the cook.

Researcher, while visiting the 40 primary schools of Chandigarh and Panchkula, administered an opinionnaire on 200 related teachers (five teachers from each school). Thirty five questions were framed related to various aspects of mid-day meal scheme to which teachers had to answer in “yes” or “no”. A Graphical representation of data based upon the opinionnaire is given in the chart 1.

Chart 1:



Given representation shows the percentage of teachers from Chandigarh and Panchkula who responded as “YES” to the statements/ questions framed in the opinionnaire regarding the various aspects and impact of mid-day meal scheme. 100% of teachers from Chandigarh as well as from Panchkula were in favour of mid-day meal and wanted it to continue in future, also agreed to the nutritional value of the meal for students. 90% teachers from Chandigarh found a positive impact of this scheme on the enrolment and retention of students while 70% of teachers from Panchkula supported this view. None of teachers from Chandigarh and Panchkula favoured the need to change the existing menu but 70% teachers showed their concern towards the quality of food and hygiene of kitchen sheds. Only 5% teachers from Chandigarh and 3% teachers from Panchkula agreed to the incidents of children falling sick due to mid – meal. 88% teachers from Chandigarh agreed to the reduced hungriness and reduced temptation in children of buying unhealthy snacks from outside while this ratio was 70% in Panchkula.

CONCLUSION

From the present study it may be concluded that Mid-day meal scheme is successfully serving the purpose for which it was started. It has brought an increase in attendance rate of children but could not put a complete check on the drop-out rate of students. Mid-day meal gave the children adequate nutritional support but the whole process took so much of time from normal teaching and learning process that it resulted in a reason for spoiled academic environment in schools. Children were found to be satisfied with the quality and quantity of

food distributed while teachers showed their concern for quality and hygiene. Mid-day meal scheme has helped in the socialisation of students but at the same time teachers had faced the problem of indiscipline and overburdening of work load. In spite of these some drawbacks, most of the teachers were in favour of the scheme and supported its continual in future. Mid-day meal scheme has been a great success so far but there ought to be more accountability to have a check on the accidents costing lives of children.

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