

Teachers' Perceptions towards National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme)

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Abstract

This study was conducted in Government Primary Schools of Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh to find out preceptions of primary school teachers about the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme). A sample of 70 teachers, which included both males and females, were selected using purposive sampling technique. In the present study teachers' preceptions were studied by using a questionnaire. Along with this various problems related to implementation of this scheme were identified and suggestions were provided for making the scheme more effective. This study will be very helpful to the politicians, bureaucrats, researches, teachers and all others who are concerned with the mission to develop elementary education and reach the goal of UEE in India.

INTRODUCTION

Neither a child that is hungry, nor a child that is ill can be expected to learn. Due to problems of malnutrition on UEE, a centrally sponsored scheme National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Commonly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme) was launched on 15th August 1995 with two fold objectives;

(i) To enhance the nutritional status of school age children and

(ii) Hasten the march of UEE by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance

The programme originally covered children of primary stage (I-V Class) in government, local body and government-aided schools, and was extended in October, 2002, to cover children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres also. As on October, 2004 serving of cooked meal could not be

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universalised in six States and in many of the remaining States, quality of the meal served to the children was not satisfactory. The scheme was revised firstly in September, 2004 to provide cooked meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein and secondly the scheme was revised with effect from June, 2006 to provide meal with 450 calories and 12 grams of protein.

Government of India vide its D.O. No. 9-1/2008-EE-2(MDM) of dated 14.01.2008 allowed the extension of Mid-Day Meal Scheme to Upper primary Stage (Classes VI-VIII) across the country from the year 2008.

In the state of Himachal Pradesh uncooked food grains (Rice) @ 3kg per month per student, were provided to the children of classes (I-V), with 80% or more attendance for 10 academic months in all the Govt./Government aided Primary schools of entire State, till May, 2003. Thereafter, in view of the orders of Honorable Supreme Court of India, Government of Himachal Pradesh decided to provide a supplementary meal which is protein rich, nutritionally balanced with appropriate micro-nutrients. Currently the scheme is in progress covering the primary and upper primary schools (Government/Government Aided) throughout the State.

Objectives

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study teachers' perceptions towards National Programme of

Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme).

2. To identify various problems related to National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme).
3. To provide suggestions for making the scheme more effective.

National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme)

It is revised Central Government scheme to provide cooked nutritive meal to every student studying from class (I-V) in every Government and Government assisted primary schools having a minimum content of 450 calories and 12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days in recess or half time.

Methodology

In the present study survey technique under descriptive method of research was used.

Sampling

A sample of 70 Government primary school teachers both males and females was selected by using purposive sampling procedures.

Tool

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the purpose of obtaining responses from the teachers. This questionnaire consisted of three parts in which Part-I is introductory, Parts-II consisted of closed type 26 items concerning all the important aspect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme and

Parts-III consisted of open ended questions in which teachers were allowed to write down freely the problems related to implementation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme and also the suggestions for its improvements and making the scheme more effective.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data collected through questionnaire were analysed. Here percentage was used for the interpretation of data.

Conclusions

The major findings of the present study corresponding to its objectives are given below:

1. Major Findings of the Study based on Teachers' Perceptions

- ◆ Most of the primary school teachers (87.14%) were of the opinion that mid-day meal which is provided to the students in their schools in nutritious and balanced diet. And it can protect the children from malnutrition and other diseases caused by malnutrition.
- ◆ The perceptions of 70% teachers were that the mid-day meal scheme is helping to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education.
- ◆ 58.57% primary school teachers were satisfied with quality of meal provided in their schools.
- ◆ There is very little increase in the enrolment of students in Government primary schools of Himachal Pradesh after the introduction of mid-day meal scheme as per the responses of 92.85% teachers.
- ◆ The perception of 40% teachers were that attendance of students has increased very much due to this scheme, but 31.42% teachers were hold the views that there is little increase in attendance and 28.57% teachers noticed no boost in attendance due to Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- ◆ On the question regarding improvement of learning level of students especially belonging to disadvantaged section and society only 47.14% teachers were in favour of this statement.
- ◆ Majority of teachers 91.43% and 97.14% responded that the scheme is developing hygienic values in the children and there is no discrimination with any child respectively.
- ◆ The views of 85.71% teachers were that Mid-Day Meal Scheme is able to eradicate discrimination based on caste and other factors.
- ◆ Still 60% teachers considered the previous scheme of providing uncooked food grains as better scheme as compared to hot cooked meal.
- ◆ The perceptions of 71.43% teachers were that this scheme wastes the teaching-learning time of teachers and students.

- ◆ Majority of teachers 91.42% and 94.28% responded that the meal is liked by the students and meal is prepared with all possible precaution and cleanliness respectively.
- ◆ Average quality of raw material of provided by Food Corporation of India (FCI) as per the perception of 68.57% teachers.
- ◆ The perceptions of 77.14% teachers were that there is no help on the part of local people regarding the implementation of this scheme.

2. Problems Related to Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Part-III of the questionnaire was concerned with problems related to implementation of the scheme. The major problems in schools in relation to this scheme are:


- ◆ Mid-Day Meal Scheme wastes the time of teachers. Teachers' time is consumed in maintaining records of Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Thus they do not give proper time for the teaching-learning process.
- ◆ There is no separate kitchen-cum-store and due to this many problems are faced by the teachers.
- ◆ Lack of adequate number of teaching staff in the primary schools creates various problems.
- ◆ Most of the teachers are not in favour of implementation of this scheme.

- ◆ The honorarium for helpers and cooks is very less and it is difficult to find suitable person for the job within this amount.
- ◆ There is always a fear in the mind of teachers about theft of food articles and cooking devices from the schools.
- ◆ There is very less time left for students to play games and other physical activities.
- ◆ The teachers are over burdened due to Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- ◆ In most of the schools it is reported by teachers that the time table of the school get disturbed due to this scheme.

3. Suggestions for Making the Scheme More Effective

There are some suggestions provided by the teachers to make this scheme more effective in Government primary schools of Himachal Pradesh:

- ◆ Maximum teachers suggested that proper arrangement must be there before launching any scheme.
- ◆ There must be some incentive in the form of some extra amount with salary for the teachers who are dealing with the management of mid-day meal in school.
- ◆ Separate provision of kitchen-cum-store should be made available to all schools.

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- ◆ There should be the provision of local available fresh fruits in place of meal for twice or thrice a week.
 - ◆ Teachers must be free from the responsibility of implementation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme as soon as possible and the scheme should be handed over to any private local agency because no scheme should be implemented at the cost of teaching time of the teachers.
 - ◆ The participation of local community in context to this scheme should be encouraged.
 - ◆ Adequate number of teaching staff must be there in all Government primary schools, only then this scheme and other schemes like SSA can be implemented effectively.