

# PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS REGARDING MID DAY MEAL SCHEME AND IT'S IMPACT ON ENROLMENT IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

DR. ANITA MENON

## ABSTRACT

The study attempt to assess the perception of teachers, students and parents regarding mid day meal scheme [MDMS] and its impact on enrolment, of students in primary schools of Amritsar district in Punjab. To gather information regarding the perceptions and impact of the scheme, 100 students, 60 parents, 40 teachers and 20 government officials were requested and asked to fill the questionnaire. In order to know the impact of the scheme data have been divided in two period's pre Mid-Day meals period (1999-00 to 2003-04) and post Mid-Day meals period (2005-06 to 2010-11) The results of the study shows that students, parents and, teachers have positive perceptions regarding MDMs and also the impact of MDMS is impressive in terms of enrolment and strength of students.

## INTRODUCTION

“School is the center of education.”

We all are agreeing with this statement but now the concept of education is not limited to just provide education only but also filling the empty stomach. An empty stomach makes a noise, which becomes the hurdle in the teaching learning process. Hence, the government has launched the program of mid-day-meal in the schools.

## MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME

The Midday Meal Program / Scheme is the popular name for school meal programme in India which started in the 1960s. So, The meal provided in the mid of the day is called mid-day meal which is normally known as lunch, but here the term is related to the children of Government school who are provided lunch in the schools by the Government free of cost during the lunch break for

---

\* Asst. Prof., Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar. Punjab

---

improvement of enrolment, attendance and retention of the children as a motivational incentive to get higher rate of literacy (up to 100%) throughout the country. The key objectives of the scheme are: protecting children from classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment and attendance, improved socialisation among children belonging to all castes, addressing malnutrition, and social empowerment through provision of employment to women.

### **HISTORY**

Mid-day meals scheme (MDMS) has a long history. The scheme for school students were first introduced in a Japanese private school in the late 1800s, in Brazil in the year 1938 and in the United States in the year 1946. Seeing the experiences of countries like Japan, Brazil, and United States, the Indian Government also motivated to implement this program

In India also mid-day meal in schools has had a long history. One of the pioneers of the scheme is Madras that started providing cooked meals to children in corporation schools in the Madras city in 1923. The program was introduced in a large scale in 1960s under the Chief Ministership of K. Kamaraj after visiting Sourashtra Higher Secondary School – Madurai. Linguistic minority people had implemented this program since 1922. The first major thrust came in 1982 when Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. M. G. Ramachandran, decided to universalise the scheme for all children up to class 10. Tamil Nadu's midday meal program is among the best known in the country. Less known, but equally interesting is the history of Pondicherry, which started universal school feeding as early as 1930.

There is an interesting story about how K. Kamaraj got the idea of a noon meal scheme. He saw a few boys busy with their cows and goats. He asked one small boy, "What are you doing with these cows? Why didn't you go to school?" The boy immediately answered, "If I go to school, will you give me food to eat? I can learn only if I eat." The boy's retort sparked the entire process into establishing the midday meal program.

Several other states of India also have programs. The most notable among them is Gujarat that has had it since the late 1980s. Kerala started providing cooked meals in schools since 1995 and so did Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in small pockets. On November 28, 2001 the Supreme Court of India gave a landmark direction to government to provide cooked meals to all children in all government and government assisted primary schools. State governments resisted the direction vigorously initially, but the program has become almost universal by 2005. Recently Govt. of India has launched new mid day meal

scheme Website i.e. <http://mdm.nic.in>.

By 1990-91 the number of states implementing the mid day meal programme with their own resources on a large scale increased to twelve states. With a view to enhancing enrolment, attendance and retention of the students and simultaneously to improve the nutritional levels of the children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) had launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE MDMS**

The main objectives of the programme are:

- To increase the enrolment, retention of the students in the schools and to tone up the learning abilities of the beneficiaries, especially children belonging to poor and down-trodden sections of the society.
- To provide nutritious meal to the school going children for achieving the goal of healthy mind in a healthy body.
- To promote friendship and feelings of brotherhood among the children belonging to different castes, colour and creed by providing them meals together.

### **SYSTEM FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS**

Funds are sanctioned and released at the State level by Finance Department. Director General of School Education draws the funds from the Treasury and funds are remitted to the District Education Officers through electronic transfer. Funds are released by District Education Officers to the Implementing Agency at village level i.e. Village Education Development Committee (VEDC)/Head Teacher of the schools.

In pursuance of the guidelines given in the Regional Review Meeting held on 06 Nov 2008, Mid-Day Meal Society has been registered. Release of funds to the society directly may further improve the situation.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Twenty schools from different blocks of Amritsar districts were selected for the study. Schools were identified on the basis of good practices followed in the implementation of mid day meal scheme. Fifteen schools out of twenty schools were elementary only and the remaining five schools were middle school.

The schools visited were having varying enrolments ranging from 71 to 303 in the primary sections. The attendance was short of the actual enrolment in all

the sampled schools. Number of teachers also varied from 1 to 10. Except for two schools, the remaining schools did not have sufficient number of teachers. Therefore the involvement of the teachers in the implementation of the mid day meal scheme was observed to be having additional responsibility as the teachers were involved in the multi grade teaching in eight schools.

### **TOOL**

The self-made questionnaire was administered to the 40 teachers, 60 parents and 100 students of 20 government schools of Amritsar district only.

The investigator first explained the purpose of research to the Head of the school and teachers. They were requested to complete the objective responses to the questionnaire and convince their students that they should give their true, free and frank responses and opinions to the investigator.

It was made clear to all of them that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. They were ensured that the reply would be used only for the research purpose.

### **STATISTICAL TREATMENT**

For assessing the perception of the teachers, parents and students about mid-day meal program percentages were calculated.

### **ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION**

After the administering of questionnaire and collection of data from different sources, the data was tabulated and analyzed. Results were interpreted and conclusions were drawn.

The result are discussed under the following sub-heads :

#### **A]. PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS ABOUT MDMS**

- The reaction of students regarding the impact of MDMS has shown positive outcome.
- 73% students were of the view that they attend the school regularly unless they had serious health problem.
- 88% students supported their view regarding enjoyment of school timing after mid-day meal.
- There is a little percentage of students (9%) who gave the negative response regarding the preparation of the mid-day meal whereas 91% said that the preparation of mid-day meal is good.
- Regarding the raw material like vegetables, 76% of students responded

that the raw material, which is brought to the school, is of good quality and fresh vegetables are brought for preparation of mid-day meal.

- 84% students supported the view that the food served to them is of satisfactory level and enough quantity of food is served to them.
- When the researcher asked regarding the wastage of food, 21% students gave their view that sometime they left the food if they do not like the menu of the day otherwise they don't. 79% students stated that they never wasted the food as they assumed that if they waste it today then how they will eat tomorrow?
- Almost all the students (93%) are in the favors that their teachers are serving the sufficient quantity of food to them every day.
- 85% students supported that they get the nutritional food under the MDMS.
- Almost all students (98%) felt that they never had any problem after eating the MDM.
- 87% students responded that they were unable to pay attention with empty stomach but after the provision of mid-day meal they are enjoying the studies.
- 76% students felt that they do not only enjoy the studies rather they have developed good habits like washing hands with soap before and after eating the food whereas 24% students stated that they had already following these manners before introduction of mid-day meal.
- After the introduction of mid-day meal, 93% students want to continue their study as they realize the importance of education and want to become something in their life.
- 83% supported that they get the right proportion of food.
- Regarding the varieties of food, 78% supported that they get different dishes on different days to maintain the variety in the food.
- Regarding the provision of the food by MDMP 83% students felt that they get the food according to their age group. They get the sufficient quantity of food as per their requirement.
- 83% of students enjoy the school timing as compared to home because they learn social behaviors from each other as well as from the teacher,

whereas 17% of students enjoy the home as they feel free from any types of restriction.

- 76% students reported that quality of food provided in the school is better than the home whereas 24% students bring their lunch from their home.
- 86% students felt that their teachers are regular in the class.
- Nearly 93% students were supported the provision of the food during vacations and even in holidays.
- Regarding the positive change in the educational environment after MDM, 80% of students felt that it is conducive.
- Almost 74% girls students were of opinion that they get more time to study as the food is served in the school free of cost and preparation of food is not required at home and they get rid of home chores.
- 96% students supported their view regarding the purity of the food. They said they never found any insect or impurities in the prepared food whereas 4% said that sometime they found insects/odd materials in the prepared pulses. It may be due to the reason that their school has no kitchen shed.
- When investigator tried to take opinion regarding the sweet dish, 100% students gave response that they get sweet dish on Monday as well as on Saturday.
- 88% students have faith on their teachers and even they never saw their teachers took some portion of the food to their home whereas 12% students gave their opinion that they are not aware about this fact.

#### B]. PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS ABOUT MDMS

- About 96% parents felt that their children are attending school regularly and they enjoy the school hours and for this the credit goes to MDMS.
- Regarding the quality of the meal, 84% parents gave their opinion that their children are happy with the meal served to them whereas 16% parents were of view that they do not like the sweet dish which is served on Saturday.
- 81% parents felt that they noticed improvement in their spirit and activeness as their stomach are not empty and they do their home works at home actively whereas 19% parents felt that they do not found any kind of improvement in the spirit and activeness in their child.
- Most of the parents (88%) reported that even on holidays their children are ready to attend the school with the same enthusiasm. 12% parents gave

their view that little break is also important in the continuous study to make the mind fresh.

- Almost all the parents (96%) were in the favor of provision of food during the holidays. They said that at least for few hours the school should be open whereas negligible percent (4%) gave negative response.
- 78% parents felt that their children learn punctuality due to the reflection of MDMP whereas 22% parents are not supported the positive response as they felt that it is the responsibility of the parents to sent the child to the school in time.
- Regarding the interest in the study among the students, 88% parents felt that their child is showing the positive response in the studies whereas 12% parents showed negative response.
- 88% parents felt that after the provision of MDM at least they were escaped from the arrangement of lunch for their children every day.
- Nearly 92% parents would like to continue the study of their children because their children showing interest in the studies.
- 84% parents felt that after sending their girl child to the school their daughters are now free from the house chores.
- After the reflection of the MDM, 90% parents are in the favor of sending their girl child to school for education.
- Most of the students who come under the umbrella of MDMP belong to SC/ST and their parents do the labor work through which they hardly get the nutritional food. They felt that school is providing them the better food as compared to home. Most of the parents (88%) gave the positive response whereas about (12%) was not in the favor of this.
- 79% parents were of view that the changes in menu is also required like the government should also provide a fruit at least once a weak whereas 21% said that they are happy with the menu as at least their children are getting the lunch every day. This is enough for them.
- Most of the parents (91%) felt that their children are happily obeying the instructions given by us at home because they learnt many good things due to MDMP whereas 9% were disagreed with this.
- 76% parents felt that before MDMP, when children came back from the school they were very lazy, feel lethargic due to hunger or empty stomach but after the introduction of the MDMP, their children actively take participation in the home activity too.
- 96% of parents felt that their children are getting the dual benefit of food as

well as education during the school hours whereas 4% of parents do not favor the above statement.

- 93% of parents reported that their children are getting the food regularly.
- With the introduction of MDMP nearly 88% parents felt that their children become conscious regarding cleanliness and health. Not only this some were of view that health and nutritious status is also improved as their children got the opportunity of eating the nutritional meal in the school, which they would not get at home.
- All parents (100%) were aware of the MDMP and they too realized the positive impact of MDMP and said that it is the good step taken by the government.
- 98% of the parents were of the view that their children never had any problem after eating MDM in the school whereas negligible percentage (2%) were of opinion that problem occurs may be due to MDM or otherwise.

#### C]. PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ABOUT MDM PROGRAMME

- 99% teachers feel that the reason behind the miracle of improved enrolment and retention rate of the children is nothing but the MDMP. Teachers feel that earlier children who went home for lunch never returned for afternoon session but after the introduction of MDMS the retention is observed not only for the whole day but also for the whole session.
- Nearly 83% of teachers said that the improvement regarding their mannerism, punctuality, obedience are also observed among the students whereas 17% are not agreed with the above statement.
- Many teachers (91%) felt that after the introduction of MDMP, many parents are now ready to send their girl child to school.
- Most of the teachers (83%) reported that the status of the girl child was also improved as they are also eating the same meal with the other children in the school.
- Nearly 93% teachers supported their view regarding drop-out that due to the reflection of MDMP it is reduced to a great extent.
- Most of the teachers (88%) said that children had also improved their

eating habits and the credit goes to the MDMP whereas 12% of teachers gave the reason of improvement in the eating habits among the students is the efforts made by the teachers.

- The present study reported that nearly 81 % of the teachers believe that due to MDMP children become aware about taking the clean drinking water.
- 79% of the teachers observed that personal hygiene has also been improved among the children due to the reflection of the MDMP whereas 21% of teachers felt that the credit goes to parents as well as the teachers.
- Most of the teachers (78%) felt that the children are sure that they will get the meal so they do not worry about filling the empty stomach hence they give their full concentration on the study whereas 22% of teachers reported that after eating the meal students look lazy and dull.
- As the impact of MDMP showed the positive outcome regarding the attendance during the afternoon session throughout India, similarly the present study also showed the positive outcome in Amritsar district as 83% of teachers observed the enhancement in the attendance in the afternoon session whereas the 17% of teachers are disagreed with this as they believe that it is the interest or the curiosity to learn which calls them back to the school from the home during the noon session.
- The 84% of the teachers reported that they have observed the regularity of the SC/ST students after the reflection of the MDMP because they have realized the importance of education and they enjoy the studies. On the other side some percentage of the teachers (16%) do not agree with this.
- MDMS covered many advantages, it is not only confined to the enrolment and retention rather it also improved the sense of discipline among the students.87% of the teachers supported the above statement rest of the percentage of the teachers (13%) are of view that the credit goes to the respective teachers who teaches them about how to maintain the discipline in the school.
- Regarding the academic performance of the children, 84% teachers gave positive response. They opined that children not only showed their interest in studies rather maintain the discipline in the school.
- 93% of the teachers felt that students not only actively participate in the co-

curricular activities rather they also showed their desire to participate at the state level and make the schools and parents proud.

- It is the MDMP due to which the students are getting the dual benefit of the education as well as food in the school. 96% of the teachers supported the said statement.
- 42.5% of the teachers reported that most of the teaching hours are spent on the purchasing /provision of the MDM whereas 57.5% were disagreed with this.
- Regarding the problem of provision of the MDM 42.5% of the teachers were of the opinion that lots of time is required for clearing the bills whereas the rest percentage of the teachers (57.5%) believed that they never had confronted with such problem till date.
- The burden on the shoulders of the teachers are raised due to the MDMP because 75% of the teachers reported that they have to maintain the record /files of the MDM which should be transferred to the other special persons appointed by the government. The teachers if free from such kind of burden, the result may be better than today. 35% of the teachers reported that all the teachers must share this kind of responsibility so that they never face any kind of the problem.
- Regarding MDM as a burden on the teachers, 70% teachers felt it as a burden as lot of time is required to maintain the record files, for clearing the bills and provision of MDM in schools.
- Due to number of responsibilities on the shoulder of the teachers, 60% of teachers believe on the suggestion of availability of more teachers to share these responsibilities. 40% of the teachers have never faced any problem regarding MDMP so they are happy with staff available.
- Despite so much of burden, 78% teachers observed the positive response on the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meet but 22% of the teachers gave opinion that parents of some children could not sacrifice their one day income to attend the parent teacher meeting as they belong to labour class.
- 86% of the teachers reported that children are also showing their interest in the studies as they come back to school next day after the completion of the home works given by the teachers.
- 73% of the teachers opined that children never had any kind of health and nutritional problem after eating the mid-day meal whereas 27 % of teachers were disagreed with this.

- 89% of the teachers reported that the cooked food is properly utilized because they prepare the food quantity on the basis of the daily strength present in the school.

#### D]. ENROLMENT AND STRENGTH OF STUDENTS :

- Enrolment and Retention of Students in Primary Schools is one of the major concerns of the planners and policy makers in India. Scheme like midday meals has been launched to achieve this objective.
- We found that mid day meals lead to large and statistically significant increases in primary school enrolment. It was also observed that significant 13% increase in primary school enrolment, amounting to around 14 additional students in each primary school.

#### CONCLUSION

- Majority of the students felt that the quality and quantity of mid-day-meal is good and sufficient.
- It has a positive impact on the student's health and academic achievement.
- Majority of parents felt that their students are getting not only better meal but also ample opportunity for studies and that is why parents are sending even their girl child to school along with boys.
- Without any discrimination on the basis of gender, class, colour and creed all the children are taking the benefit of the MDMS.
- The SC/ST students show their desired interest in the field of education.
- Drop out rates have been reduced to great extent after the provision of MDMP.
- Eating habits, sense of discipline and personal hygiene is also improved among the students after the introduction of MDMS.
- The staff feels that there is a need to increase the number of teachers or separate staff should be appointed to look after the provision of mid-day-meal, maintaining the record files and clearing of the bills for strengthening the scheme.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Chugh S. A Study of Best Practices in the Implementation of Mid-Day Meal Programme in Maharashtra. New Delhi: NUEPA; 2008.
- Chugh S. A Study of Best Practices in the Implementation of Mid-Day Meal Programme in Punjab. New Delhi : NUEPA; 2008.
- Dreze J and Goyal A. Future of mid-day meals (Newspaper – Economic and political weekly of 1<sup>st</sup> Nov); 2003.
- Kaushal S. A Study of Best practices in the implementation of mid-day meal programme in Rajasthan. New Delhi : NUEPA; 2009.
- Kumari R. Mid day meals in Rajasthan. (Newspaper – The Hindu of 13<sup>th</sup> Nov.; 2002.
- Kumari S; Devi R; Sarda M and Rani BS. Impact of mid-day meal programme in Tribal Areas of East Godavri District of A. P. Journal of Community Guidance and Research. 2009; 26 (1) : 49-54.
- Narula M. A Study on Best Practices Adopted in Mid-Day-Meal Scheme: Case Study of Haryana. New Delhi : NUEPA; 2008.
- Narula M. A Study of Jharkhand: A Study on best practices adopted in Mid-Day-Meal Scheme. New Delhi : NUEPA; 2009.
- Nielsen. Mid-day meal programme for school children. Akshayapatra-Unlimited food for life. 2007.
- Sexena RR and Mittal SC. Impact of mid-day meal programme on enrolment and retention at primary Stage. Fourth Survey of Research in Education (1983-88). NCERT; 2: 1278.
- Srinivas K. A Study on Best practices in the implementation of mid-day meal programme in Karnataka. New Delhi : NUEPA; 2008.
- Vetukuri PSR. A Study of Best practices in the implementation of mid day meal scheme in Assam. New Delhi : NUEPA; 2009.
- Yadav S and Sharmila. A study of Mid-day Meals Programme in Primary Schools of Jatusana Block of Rewari District of Haryana. Journal of Educational and Psychological Research. 1 (2) : 39-42.