

**Implementation of Mid-Day-Meal Scheme in the Imphal West District,
Manipur**

***Dr. Keisham Shitaljit Singh**

Assistant Professor

Department of Education

Manipur University, Canchipur I-795003

Email: jackeisham@gmail.com

&

****Tampha Ibemma Devi Nongthombam**

Research Scholar

Department of Education

Manipur University, Canchipur I-795001

Email: tampha.82@gmail.com

Abstract

The MDM has been introduced on the basis of the philosophy that a hungry child is not able to focus and concentrate in his/her studies. The MDM is a major intervention of the Government of India intended to protect the right to education, the right of the child to food, the right to life and other aspects of growth and development. The scheme addresses the underlying and basic determinants of child malnutrition, initiated primarily to protect the nutritional requirement of growing children as well as to protect the right to education of children guaranteed by the Constitution of India. In cognizance with the Constitutional provision to provide 'Free and Compulsory Education', to children between 6-14 years of age, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme on 15th of August 1995, in 2408 blocks in the country as a dry ration scheme with the objective to boost "Universalization of Elementary Education" by increasing enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impacting on the nutritional status of the elementary stage students. The MDM scheme is perceived within the framework of a "Rights Based Approach" and as the right of every child cutting across the barriers of regional disparity, caste, social discrimination, gender and others to boost UEE. The present paper focuses on the implementation of MDM scheme in the Imphal West district of Manipur. MDM scheme implemented in the state of Manipur aims to boost the UEE by increasing enrollment, attendance and retention and to improve the nutritional status of students at the elementary education stage.

Keywords: *Universalization of Elementary Education, Mid-Day-Meal Scheme, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) and Free and Compulsory Education.*

Introduction

The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) popularly called as the Mid-Day-Meal scheme was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme on the 15th August 1995, in 2408 blocks in the country as a dry ration scheme with the objective to boost the larger goal of UEE and to improve the general health of elementary stage students. The scheme was introduced in all the blocks of the country by 1997-98. The NP-NSPE was extended in 2002 to cover not only children in class I-V of Government, Government-Aided, and Local Body schools, but also children studying in the non-formal education centers run under the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternate and Innovative Education Scheme (AIE). The Supreme Court of India passed a judgement that the ‘Right to Education’ must be seen in conjunction with the ‘Right to Life’. Right to life of every citizen as given in Article 21 and ‘Right to Food’ is implicit in it. On 28th November, 2001 in a petition, popularly known as the “Right to Food Case”, a landmark interim order was passed in Peoples Union for Civil Liberties verses Union of India & Ors a [Writ Petition(Civil) No. 196 of 2001] on MDM scheme which directed the State Governments and UT’s to implement the MDM scheme by providing every child in every Government and Government assisted primary school with a prepared MDM with a minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days”.

The Supreme Court further directed those Governments providing dry ration instead of cooked meal must within three months i.e. 28th February, 2002, start providing cooked meals in all Government and Government assisted primary schools in half of the districts of the State (in order of priority) and must within a further period of three months i.e. 28th May 2002, extend the provision of cooked meals to the remaining parts of the state”. But the Supreme Court’s order dated 28th November, 2001 had not been fully implemented even after three and half years by most of the States and UT’s. The Supreme Court further issued a series of follow-up orders in April, 2004 to speed up the implementation of earlier directives. The orders directed the State Government to submit compliances in time, no charge for the MDM, priority to ST/SC cooks and helpers, extension to summer vacation in drought affected areas, make provision for construction of kitchen –sheds and contribute to cooking cost, overall improvement of the scheme i.e. infrastructure, improved facilities, safe drinking water, closer monitoring, other quality safeguards (hygiene, safety, etc.) improving the quality and nutrient contents of the meal, fair quality grain, extension of the programme, and others. The Central Government committed to make cooked MDM scheme universal and was reflected in the budget speech of the Union Finance Ministers budget speech in July 2004, which stated: “the poor want basic education for their children: we shall provide it...we shall also make sure that the child is not hungry while she or he is at school...”. In October 2004, the Supreme Court noted that there had been some progress made with the implementation of earlier orders on MDM provided in primary schools.

The MDM scheme (NP-NSPE) introduced in 1995 was revised in September 2004 to provide cooked MDM with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to all children studying in classes I-V in Government, Government-Aided, local body school and EGS and AIE centres. The MDM scheme is expected to reduce dropout rates, improve childrens' level of learning and boost self esteem. It is also expected to increase girl child enrollment and reduce social and gender gaps.

MDM AND NUTRITION RELATED ASPECTS

Malnourishment is the cause for ruining the health of growing children; it also adversely affects their achievement level in school. This is evident as a malnourished child hardly attends school if she/he is unhealthy and sickly most of the time which affects the goal of UEE. The impact of health and nutritional status of children on education cannot be neglected because it can incapacitate the learners by severely hampering the motor, sensory, cognitive, social and emotional development of children. Therefore, it has become imperative to recognize the holistic nature of development of growing children and develop policies and services to provide adequate nutrition needed for the growth of children in accordance with Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI). The data analysis of NFHS-3 on prevalence of under nutrition has revealed that nearly half of the Indian children are stunted and wasted. In order to assess the nutritional status in children, the WHO suggested that countries with high stunting rates use BMI (body mass index) for age i.e. $BMI = \text{Body Weight} / \text{Height}^2$ (in meters), as the index for assessing the nutritional status of children. The MDM has proved to be the most important source of access to balance diet for the poor child. In order to obtain the full benefit of the scheme, it is important to conceive MDM as a supplement to the food at home and not a supplement for it.

MDM AND ITS IMPACT ON GENDER AND SOCIAL EQUITY

The MDM covers out of school and other vulnerable children, which include street children, homeless children, children in chronic hunger, children of migrant workers, children with disability, child workers and girl children belonging to backward communities , children belonging to weaker section of the society like ST and SC, minorities, children from tribal areas, slum dwellers, etc. MDM has been introduced in schools in India to end not just classroom hunger but also to eliminate class, caste and gender discrimination as well. In a study by Dreze and Goyal, it has been reflected that MDM facilitates the abolition of classroom hunger and children shared each other's company by sitting and eating together. They socialize in the process of eating together. They further found that MDM reduces gender gap in education. The scheme also helped in providing employment to poor women. The study found that in Karnataka all cooks are women and about $\frac{1}{4}$ th (one fourth) are widows. The NCF (2005) emphasized the significance of strengthening MDM programme in order to ensure health, nutrition and an inclusive school environment empowering every child in learning, across barrier of caste, religion, gender and disability.

MDM AND ITS EFFECT ON ENROLLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

Elementary education has twin purposes, firstly to produce a literate and numerate population that can deal with problems at home and at work and secondly, to serve as a foundation upon which further secondary and tertiary education is built. Some of the most pressing problem in attaining the goal of UEE, are non-enrollment, low attendance and low-retention rate. Several programme have been taken up by the Government of India to achieve the goal of UEE, and the MDM is also one such effort made to achieve it. Many studies have revealed that MDM scheme has a positive influence on enrollment and attendance at school. In a study by Dreze and Goyal on MDMS in the states of Chattisgarh and Rajasthan they found that there was a clear nexus between improved student enrollment and retention and school MDM programme. In yet another study conducted by Dreze and Kingdon in (2002), it was found that the MDM scheme increased enrollment of girls but not boys in primary stage. Shiv Kumar (2003) found that the MDM programme increases the possibility of retaining children in school for a longer period during day which increases the learning opportunities for them.

Saihjee Aarti(2003) in a survey found that almost 95% school in Tamil Nadu had reported that noon meal program has increased enrollment and retention of girls. Contradicting comments have been found where Baru et.al. (2008) highlighted that although MDMS has increased enrollment, it has little impact on attendance and retention level.

Stephanie Bond(2012) in a study revealed that the MDM scheme in India , exerts a positive influence on enrollment rate and not only that, the MDM was found to be more beneficial and promising for those students whose parents belonged to lowest income group and were least educated.

MDM IN MANIPUR STATE

The Scheme “National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education” commonly known as Mid-Day-Meal scheme was launched on the 15th August, 1995 on a national wide scale by the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. In Manipur, the Centrally sponsored Mid-Day-Meal Scheme was implemented with effect from November, 1995. Further in compliance with the Hon’ble Supreme Court orders passed on 20-4-2004 in W.P(C) No. 196 of 2001 the State Government took up steps to provide cooked food to all the schools of primary stage (Government /Government Aided) with effect from 14-11-2004. Initially the scheme was extended to 548 Upper Primary attached with Primary classes of Manipur with effect from 1st August, 2008 onwards and later 166 Upper Primary schools without primary classes were also covered from April 2009 onwards. During 1995-2004, the State Government however, implemented the scheme by distributing raw rice to eligible children entitled to avail the MDM in primary schools owing to absence of the provision in the State Government’s annual budget. The State Government started implementing MDM scheme in the EGS and AIE centres from the financial year 2010-2011.

Mid-Day-Meal scheme implemented in the State of Manipur aims to boost the Universalisation of Elementary Education by increasing enrollment, retention and attendance and

to simultaneously impact on nutritional status of the students at elementary education stage. The Directorate of School Education is the Nodal Department for the implementation of MDMS in the State. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is implemented in both the valley and hill districts of the State. The scheme covers children studying in primary and upper primary classes in the Government, Local Body, Government-Aided schools and AIE and EGS centres, Madrasas and Makhtabs supported under SSA. Manipur has a population of 2,721,756 (Census 2011). Of this total, 58.9% live in the valley and the remaining 41.1% in the hilly region. As per census 2011, the overall literacy rate is 79.85% which is a little more than the national average of 74.04%. The literacy rate of male is 86.49% and that of female is 73.17%. Imphal West district – the area of the district is 519 sq.km. The sub-divisions of the districts are Lamsang, Patsoi, Lamphelpat and Wangoi. The total population of the district is 5,14,683 (Census 2011). The total literacy percentage in the district is 86.70, out of this literacy percentage of male in the district is 92.93 and that of female is 80.71.

The experience of the Mid-Day-Meal programme has so far shown that, the programme has full potential to reach to those sections of the school going student who belong to poor household and socially disadvantaged section of the society. It has much to contribute to the well being and future of our young children. However, both qualitative as well as quantitative improvement needs attention. The quality of the meal need to be improved to make sure that school going children eat the meal without fail; this with the view to meet their nutritional requirements as they are at their crucial stage of growth and development. The MDM is a supplement to the food already provided at home, but in most cases it serves as the substitute to home food, this is true for the children who come from very low income family. In the present study it is found that parents intervened and enquired when MDM was not cooked due to certain unavoidable circumstances. The study found that the infrastructure for MDM needs to be improved, and where MDM infrastructure is available, renovation and maintenance is required. It is found that even if enrollment and attendance has increased, improvements are required in this area. Girl's enrollment got a boost, with the introduction of MDM; and other facilities provided to students under SSA. Regular inspection and monitoring can help in improving the process of providing MDM to school going children. The MDMS has been able to retain children in school for long school hours that is they do not leave school until the school hour gets over; they are much more attentive and interested in studies.

The statement of the study:

The present study has been stated as “**Implementation of the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme in the Imphal West District, Manipur**”.

The objectives of the study:

1. To find out the effects with the implementation of Mid-Day-Meal Scheme on social and gender equity of children at the elementary education stage in the Imphal West district of Manipur.
2. To find out the impact with the implementation of Mid-Day-Meal Scheme in the Imphal West district of Manipur.

- To find out the monitoring and evaluation process of Mid-Day-Meal Scheme has been carried out effectively in the Imphal West district of Manipur.

Methodology of the study:

The normative survey method is adopted in the present study with directional type of hypothesis

Tool: For the collection of data, the present investigators have been used a self developed questionnaire consisting of 66 items. It was used as an interview schedule.

Sample of the study:

Altogether 20 schools from Imphal West District were selected randomly as the sample schools of the present study, 20 Head Master/ Head Mistress were interviewed regarding the implementation of MDM scheme, in the respective schools.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Table. 1.2.: Social and Gender Equity

Sl. No.	Question	Response of the Headmaster/Headmistress			
		Responses	No. of responses	% of responses	Total
1	Sitting arrangement while eating	All children sit together	17	85%	100
		Children of different caste separately	0	0	
		Boys and girls separately	0	0	
		Grade-Wise	2	10%	
		Others	0	0	
		NR	1	5%	
2	Discrimination on the ground of gender	Yes	0	0	100
		No	19	95%	
		NR	1	05%	
3	Discrimination on the ground of class, caste, religion, community, etc.	Yes	0	0	100
		No	19	95%	
		NR	1	05%	
4	Any objection by	Yes	19	95%	100

	parent for sharing meal	No	0	0	
		NR	1	05%	
5	Any objection by children for sharing meal	Yes	19	95%	100
		No	0	0	
		NR	1	05%	

Findings:

1. 85% pupils (boys and girls) sit together and eat MDM in the school, 10% eat separately in the classroom due to space constraint and 5% is not available for interview.
2. 95% schools responded that there is no discrimination on the ground of gender, all the pupils boys and girls are treated equally as they share the MDM with much enthusiasm , 5% not interviewed.
3. 95% sample schools responded that there is no discrimination on the ground of class, caste, religion, community, etc., parents are very concerned about the school meal programme, and they are inquisitive if the meal is missed for one day. This shows that they are aware and sensitized about the provisions that a school attending child is entitled to receive under the RTE ACT, 2009 and schemes generated by the SSA and 5% not interviewed.
4. 95% parent have no objection to their children sharing a meal with children of other castes, creed, religion, etc., in fact parent are more enthusiastic and happy with MDM provision while 5% not available for interview.
5. 95% pupils do not have any objection sharing a meal with children from other castes, religion, community, etc. 5% not interviewed.

Table 1.3.MDM Impact

Sl No.	Question	Response of the Headmaster/Headmistress			
		Responses	No. of Response	% Of Response	Total
1	Improvement in enrollment and retention	YES	18	90%	100
		NO	1	5%	
		NR	1	5%	
2	Improvement in nutritional status	YES	18	90%	100
		NO	0	0	
		NR	2	10%	

Findings:

1. 90% schools responded that there has been an increase in enrollment and retention rate, 5% responded negatively, 5% not available for interview.

2. 90% schools responded that there has been an improvement in nutritional status of pupils, they gain energy and are not tired or exhausted after the MDM and give more attention to the classroom activities, 5% did not respond and 5% not available for interview.

Table. 1.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

SI No.	Question	Response of Headmaster/Headmistress			
		Responses	No. of Responses	% of Response	Total
1	MDM programme inspection	YES	18	90%	100
		NO	0	0	
		NR	2	10%	
2	<u>Monitoring the MDM at school level</u>	In the sample school , at the school level SMC, VEC especially the Headmaster/Headmistress, teacher and sometimes parents monitor the implementation of MDM			100
3	Increase in pupil enrollment	YES	15	75%	100
		NO	1	5%	
		CAN'T SAY	3	15%	
		NR	1	5%	
4	Increase in girl pupil enrollment	YES	15	75%	100
		NO	1	5%	
		CAN'T SAY	3	15%	
		NR	1	5%	
5	Reduction in pupil absenteeism	YES	15	75%	100
		NO	2	10%	
		OTHERS	1	5%	
		NR	2	10%	

Findings:

1 .90% schools responded that the monitoring and inspection by District Level Officials takes place at regular interval while 5% did not respond and 5% not available for interview.

2 .95% schools responded that the MDM is inspected by the Head Master/Head Mistress, SMC, VEC, parents and teachers at the school level; however 5% school is not interviewed.

3. 75% schools admitted that there has been an increase in the enrollment rate with the implementation of the scheme, 5% did not give a positive response and maintained that there is no increase in the enrollment rate, while 15% maintained that they can't say whether there has been an increase or not (as enrollment fluctuates and is not constant, students enroll at the beginning of the academic year but during the academic year student get transferred to other

private schools, in places where there are brick kiln and migrant workers come to work as labour; the children of these labourers drop out from the school and migrate to other places, they seek admission somewhere else at other places), 5% not available for interview.

4. 75% school admitted that there has been an increase in the enrollment rate for girls with the implementation of the scheme, 5% did not give a positive response and maintained that there is no increase in the enrollment rate for girls, while 15% maintained that they can't say whether there has been an increase or not and 5% not available for interview.

5. 75% schools admitted that there has been reduction in absenteeism, 10% responded that there has been no reduction in absenteeism, 5% responded that this year there were some disturbances due to construction work and absenteeism take place, 5% did not respond while 5% not available for interview.

Conclusion

From the above findings, it can be concluded that the MDM has now become the legal entitlement of every child in India between the age group 6-14 years to get one time meal, at noon time when the child is attending a school in his or her neighborhood school, it has become a moral obligation of the government and its agencies to allocate and deliver food grain @ 100 gm per child/school day (in classes I-V) and food grain @ 150 gm per child/school day (in classes VI-VIII), provide transport subsidy, cooking cost, kitchen facility and other recurring expenditures. The MDM scheme is expected to enhance enrollment, attendance and retention; the scheme will also facilitate Universalization of Elementary Education and fulfill the provision of RTE ACT, 2009. It will boost enrollment of girl child and reduce gender and social gap, the school meal programme (MDM) will simultaneously impact the health status of school going children in India, since the country has a high incidence of child malnutrition.

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