

**EVALUATING THE NATIONAL ‘MID-DAY MEAL’ PROGRAMME WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HARYANA**

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Abstract:

This paper examines the problematic areas of National mid-day meal programme for school-going children of India with special reference to Haryana. It also includes various problematic areas of this national multi-objective programme. The study also touches the ‘pit falls’ of the programme which lie with implementation fronts. In order to analysis the levels of satisfaction of this programme, an empirical study has been carried out in some of selected government and schools, situated in six blocks of selected six districts of Haryana. On the basis of findings of this study which includes the results of t-tests which indicates different levels of satisfaction for the respondents, belong to different schools, situated in relatively more and less developed regions of Haryana. The paper also touches various problematic areas of this national programme, which urgently required adequate reforms so that the programme may render its flaw-less services for achieving its desired results.

Keywords: Mid-day-meal programme, pit falls, periodic review, execution front, constant vigil, fully transparency.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a vehicle of civilization. Without healthy body, the mind does not develop without good food. It is therefore, become most essential to have a good and nutritious food for our growing children. It is quite obvious from the studies, carried out from time to time, indicate a considerable regional disparity in ‘intake’ taken by the children, and belong to rural and urban areas. Similarly, the children belonging to tribal and non tribal areas also indicate a considerable variability in the ‘calories consumed by the children, belong to this major category. Since independence, the constitution of India has provided constitutional safeguards to the children of India. In spite of numerous recommendations and suggestions given by Kothari Commission (1964-66) and

National Education Policy (1986), the problem of school going children, especially in the rural areas have remained more or less same, as indicated by numerous of studies. It has been observed that the problems of these children are either directly or indirectly related to economic status of the families from where these students came off. And the economic conditions of these students directly affect the health of the children, who are studying in various schools in India.

In order to reduce the dropout rate and compensate the 'deficiency of the intake calories' among the school going children, a National Programme of nutritional support to primary education was started in August 15, 1995 in Rohtak district of Haryana. This programme involve supply of food grain to the district authorizes and reimbursement of transportation cost for movement of food grain from the nearest go downs of Food Corporation of India to the villages and the schools to give a boost to universalization of primary education and nutritional support. It is believed that this programme has increased the strength of the children in the schools and helped for universalization of primary education. The civil writ petition No. 196, of 2001 of people's union liberties vs Govt. of India in the Supreme Court of India indicate a the necessity of mid-day-meal scheme for the children, studying in the various schools. According to this decision, "cooked food should be given to the students of the government and government aided schools under the mid-day meal scheme, which contains 300 calories and 8-12 gm protein. A budgetary allocation of funds for this national programme has been funded during different successive five year plans. A proposal for central assistance for mid-day-meal has been prepared by the ministry of Human Resource Development. This involves assistance for conversion costs/ one rupee per day, up to Vth from sept. 1, 2004 and extension to class 8th from Nov. 14, 2004, which is estimated cost: Rs. 1860 crores, and the amount of Rs. 1675 crores, made available by the ministry and subsequently a growing trend of finance resources has been funded during different successive periods. Despite increasing trend of funding for this programme, a varied response has been observed by the respondents belong to different regions of Haryana.

In order to examine different trends of implementation of this programme, various authors and the scholars belong to different streams have thrown an adequate light on some of problematic areas of Mid-day-Meal program in India. In this context Khera, R (2006) has examined the achievements and challenges posed by the 'Mid-day-Meal programme in the primary school level students and drawn some of vital inferences about 'Mid-day-Meal' programme in India. Dreze J.Goyal .A (2003) has projected some

of projections on this 'Mid- Day-Meal' programme Goyal has pointed out some of strong points for this programme and chalked out the 'Capacity' for this programme and also assessed its potential for its 'sustainability' for long period. Jain J. Shah M.(2005) has carried out the study on 'Mid-day- Meal' programme for some of pockets of Madhya Pradesh. The authors have highlighted some of strong points and referred the programme as 'Antyodaya Anna Yojana 'especially for down trodden section of rural society. DeA. Samason M, Noronhac (2005) have carried out the study on 'Mid-day-Meal' programme and assessed the benefits particularly for 'Dalits' and the people belonged to down trodden section of society. It is because of socio- economic conditions of 'Dalits and downtrodden' have often been deprived from nutritious diets from their own sources. The programme has been proved conducive for supplement this deficiency with this programme.

Thorat S. Lee J (2005) have examined the actual implementing process for this programme in the field conditions, which reveal a true picture of discriminated behavior for the children belong to scheduled castes and other backward classes in rural areas. It has been pointed out that the programme is implemented with lop-sided approach and a discriminated behavior has often been observed in their meal distribution system. Mitra Deshpande, Rajiv Des Gupta R, Ram Basu and Arpana (2006) have conducted a study for 'Mid-day-Meal' programme especially on the 'cooked meal' which often suffered with some of 'pit-falls' and 'draw backs'. And the authors have also suggested some of positive suggestions for make an improvement over this programme. Jha, Jyotsana Dhir, Jhingan (2002) have also examined

this programme by SWOT Analysis of the distribution system, especially among the poorest and other deprived section of rural society. Hence, it is obvious that the authors belong to different streams have thrown an adequate light on multifaceted problematic issues of 'Mid-day-Meal' programme for various parts of India. They have carried out various studies on different segments of 'Mid-day-Meal' programme policy formulation and implementation fronts. They have also recommended some of recommendations for further ameliorate the programme, so that the whole programme may be effectively implemented throughout India.

Historic past: The 'Mid-Day-Meal' programme has a long history which involved during different successive periods. In 1925, a 'mid-day-meal' programme was introduced for the children; belong to poor socio economic status in the 'Madras Corporation Area'. In 1928, Keshav Academy of Kolkata introduced compulsory mid-

day Tiffin for primary school boys on payment basis at the rate of four annas per child per month. In 1942, implementing a free mid-day-meal' scheme was introduced in Bangalore city. Similarly, in 1953, Uttar Pradesh government had introduced a scheme on voluntary basis for providing meals consist of boiled and roasted grams, ground nuts, puffed rice, boiled potato or seasonal fruits. In 1950, large number of states have introduced mid-day-meal' programme with the assistance of different international organizations like Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, CARE, U.S. Meals for millions etc. also came forward to assist in these programme. During 1958-59, an expanded Nutrition programme was introduced jointly by FAO, WHO, UNICEF and Govt. of India which was subsequently expended in to Applied Nutrition Programme. In 1982, the idea of food of learning with FAO commodity assistance was introduced. This was absolutely meant for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls. The department of education in the Central Government and inter ministerial consultations, prepared a scheme as per the guidelines of the World Food Programme. In 1983, there were

13.6 million SC children and 10.09 ST girls students, studying in 1st class to Vth have been covered in 15 states and 3 UTs' enrolled of ST/Sc girls students. A programme with assistance with Central government for the 'mid day meal's for children in primary school throughout country was again considered during the year 1984-85. The broad rationales for the programme were as follows:

- Mid-Day-Meal' programme for primary schools could be considered as an anti poverty educational programme.
- Implementation of this programme for the age group of 6-11 years may enhance the enrolments and reduce the dropout rates of the children.
- It was expected to pave the way to assisting to provide the required nutrition to under feed and nourished children in the rural areas.

In December 1988, the department of education formulated a proposal for covering 994 ICDS blocks with consideration of SC/ST children. It was suggested that if the programme was to be implemented in all the ICDS blocks with consideration of SC/ST children. It will surely come with fruitful results. It was suggested that if the programme was to be implemented in all the KDS blocks with concentration of tribal and scheduled caste population with Rs. 1/- per child per day for primary school children, the annual school expenditure was Rs. 277.32 crores. The important elements of the guidelines for this scheme which were based on earlier guide lines prepared by the Planning

Commission. Seventeen states governments have implemented mid-day-meal programme for primary school students within the age group of 6-11 years (1990-91). There were 12 states, where the execution of mid-day-meal programme with their own resources. These states are Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal. The implementation of programme was partly with their own resources and partly with the assistance of 'CARE', an International Non-Governmental Organization.

In Haryana, now mid-day-meal scheme has been extended up to 8th class students. The Haryana government has decided to launch a pilot project on mid-day-meal programme for all girl students, studying in class 9th to 12th in government schools, in six districts of the state. At present, mid-day-meal is provided to all boys and girls studying in government primary and middle schools on school days, all over the state.

MECHANISM OF FOOD MONEY

- Centre release funds to states in two instalments-60 percent by June and second 40percent by October through e-transfer to state account in the RBI.
- State finance departments issues sanction orders to release funds to each districts.
- District authorities order the district treasury to pay District Education Officer.
- The DEO sanctions money to Block Education Officer (BEOs) through treasury.
- The BEO releases money through sanction orders to accounts of respective schools. Money is finally deposited in the mid-day meal account of the school.

It usually takes four to six months from beginning to end. Till then, the school operate on loan or credit. The cooks are paid only when the sum reaches schools. During this period, often Panchayats or the parents of the children extend credit.

PRESENT SCENARIO: A GREAT CHALLENGE

In its long journey of 19 years, the national mid-day meal programme has never been suffered a setback as huge as the one it suffered as on July, 2013, when 23 children died in Chapra in Bihar state. On the basis of forensic examination of the food, served, to the children was found contaminated by pesticide. This tragedy which unfold at Dharmasti Primary school put question marks on the very structure and operation of the world's largest school feeding programme, which has been hailed in global forums, as a 'scheme to emulate. Out of Rs 13,215 crores earmarked in this year's budget estimates for the programme, nearly Rs 226 crores is set aside for monitoring and evaluation of the scheme, which means food quality, delivery aspects, inspections and reviews. This component is the weakest link in the entire chain with half the states reporting less than 50 percent utilization of the monitoring and review funds. During the year 2012-13, total

allocation for monitoring the scheme is Rs 19,320.54 crores. On the other hand, the utilization nationally was just 85 per cent. Every state is supposed to send a quarterly progress report on the scheme in their schools. The analysis of the latest report from states (The Tribune, July 21, 2013) shows that less than 50 per cent schools have been inspected in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram and Meghalaya. In the rest, nearly 80 per cent of the schools were inspected. In this context, inspection in all the schools was reported by no state.

It is very well known fact that the programme of this gigantic scale, covering close to 12 crores children daily, the quality of food and delivery would always be a challenge. Monitoring is a soul of programme and it has to be strengthened locally. Parents have to engage themselves in the progress and demand accountability from the schools. Dr. Prema Ramachandran, leading nutrition experts who has helped to frame nutrition norms for the scheme. According to this expert, that the disaster could have happened anywhere. For this to be averted, locals need to take leadership in the programme. Only they can demand accountability from the schools. The safety of food being served is paramount and no one can understand this better than the mother of a child who is being served. Also, testing the food before serving it? The same principles should be applied to mid-day-meals too.

CONSTRAINED FACILITIES

There are challenges in this direction. Firstly, the availability of safe water for drinking and cooking in the schools. The center's review report that only 17 states have the facility of drinking water in all the schools of Goa, Mizoram, Karnataka, MP, Daman, Andaman and Niko bar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan Delhi, west Bengal, Puduchery, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The remaining states are still struggling despite the facts that the Right to Education Act., 2009, mandated to provision of nine infrastructure requirements, including drinking water, within three years of the Act implementation. The dead line had already been expired on March 31, 2013.

The Government of India has sanctioned 9, 97,663 Kitchen sheds for schools up to 2012-13. At the end 2012-13 financial years, only 6, 26,154 (63 per cent) sheds have been constructed. The slowest on account are Andhra Pradesh (Only 4 per cent) and Kerala (13 per cent), Haryana (35 per cent) and J&K (40 per cent). As a result, it has been noticed that there are lizards, rodents and pest infested food grain where there are no storage sheds and covered spaces. According to HRD Ministry officials that the incidents

of pest infestation of food grains and condiments and poisoning of food by lizards have become common place. In this problematic area, safe storage is only solution.

SUPPLY CRUNCH

In this context, another challenge is the timely lifting of food grains for meals. The scheme aimed at providing 450 and 700 calories of energy to primary and upper primary students respectively. In order to facilitate this, it offers 100 gms of food grains (wheat or rice) for primary and 150 gms for upper primary every day per students. In addition, cooking cost is provided at the cost of Rs 3.11 and Rs 4.65 per student per day for primary and upper primary levels, respectively. It is a norm of the programme that the consumption of food grains and utilization of cooking costs should match, but nationally against 84 per cent utilization of cooking cost. This means that the states are consuming less food grain, of which the lifting from Food Corporation of India godowns remains poor, allowing school teachers to procure low grade food stuff from the local sources, whereas the FCI has clearly given the instructions to provide grains of at least ‘ Fair Average Quality’

On reviewing the financial front, various reports reveal that at a national level, only 86 per cent of the allocated grains were lifted last year. Lifting was less than the national average in Chandigarh, Haryana, West Bengal, Assam, Puduchery, Tamil Nadu, Manipur, J&K, Delhi and Rajasthan. It has been noticed that the inadequate lifting of food grain allows local level corruption. As it was happened in Bihar. In 2010, that the Principal of the school was procuring rations from her husband’s shop. If the states can streamline the food grain lifting, this type of practices can be curbed, as a result the probability of “Chapra type” of incidents can be minimized. A recent study carried out by the Ministry of HRD which has reviewed that the food grain delivery system revealed several ‘pitfalls’. The study indicates that the state like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, it was found pilferage at every level to the extent of 5 Kg per 100 Kg sack of food grains. It was also found that while norms require 100 gms to be given per student per day in Bihar schools, only 75 gms was being given in UP schools 82 gms was being given to the students.

This PAISA study has recommended to the center to develop Gujarat and Tamil Nadu Modals, which have delinked the food grain delivery system for ‘mid-day-meal from PDS structure and built a separate food grain delivery system. Keeping in view post Bihar tragedy, the Centre has decided to expedite its pending scheme of setting up an Integrated Voice Responsive System (IVRS) for real time monitoring of mid-day-meal

scheme and for daily data receipts. Right now, the only way to review the performance of the states is through quarterly progress reports. The IVRS system is at an advanced stage with the Centre having moved the Finance Ministry for approvals. It will cost Rs 20 crores annually and will work quite simply. Around seven services provider will be engaged at national level and each assigned 1.5 lacs schools. The data for each school is now being collected, including the cell phone numbers of teachers at every school.

Once IVRS is tenders and becomes functional the services providers will have the responsibility of real-time monitoring of MDM in his respective states. He will be given a standard set of questions to ask individual teachers such as whether the meal was tested before being served; whether the salary of cooks arrived in time; and whether food grain were lifted in time. According to R. Bhattacharya,” This system will make individual schools

accountable and give us real time date. On the scheme, it will boost our programme monitoring capabilities.

As we have reviewed the national scenario of this national programme. In this context, in order to highlight the points of appraisal of this programme at the state level, a ‘Regional survey’ has been carried out.. Keeping in view some of problematic areas of this national programme, the present study is expected to contribute significantly for diagnosing the pit falls which lie in the functioning of the programme, especially at implementation front. Further, this type of study is also expected to give a periodic feedback to the policy makers, so that the Total Quality Management may be maintained in the whole programme.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the programme was increase the enrollment of students in the primary schools. Secondly, it was also aimed at improvement in retention and attendance and provides nutrition to the students in primary education. Meaning thereby, giving a boost to universalisation of primary education.

The objective of the present study is aimed to evaluate the mid-day-meal programme in some of selected villages, located in the different blocks/districts in Haryana. It also includes the ‘level of satisfaction’ of the programme in the study area. On the basis of empirical study, some of recommendations are to be made for further improvement of this programme. Secondly, to evaluate this national programme in accordance with changing present scenario. Thirdly, to suggest some of suggestions for further ameliorate the programme, so that the TQM, a total quality management position may be

maintained not only in Haryana, but throughout country too.

In order to evaluating the mid-day-meal programme in the state, six villages have been selected from six different blocks from six districts located in different region of Haryana. These villages are having different socio-economic and physiographic background with varied demographic profile. Though the main stay of economy of the villages, have been agriculture but the villages are varied in occupational structure, land ownership, size of land holding and the impact of urbanism on the people, living in different areas of Haryana. The following villages have been selected for carrying out the study:

SAMPLE VILLAGES

Sr. No.	Villages	Blocks	District
1.	Gijadod	Jhajjar	Jhajjar
2.	Sanjarwaj	Dadri-I	Bhiwani
3.	Kawi	Madhlauda	Panipat
4.	Ghasera	Nuh	Mewat
5.	Mandna	Morni	Punchkula
6.	Nathupuri Chopta	Nathupuri Chopta	Sirsa

Size of Sample: There are fifty respondents which have selected from the each village. It means, total 300 respondents represent whole of Haryana. The sample of the respondents have selected from the students, belong to government schools. In this context, a random sampling technique has been applied for gender selectivity for the student, studying in different schools.

METHODOLOGY

In order to evaluate the ‘satisfactory level’ of the services, rendered by the local bodies like Gram Panchayats and concerned school teachers have selected. A structured questionnaire technique has been employed for knowing the ‘satisfactory level’ from the students and the parents of the students, who have been benefitted from this programme. In order to know the uniformity/ variability in the level of satisfaction, a ‘t-test’ technique has been employed for the services of ‘mid-day-meal’ in different schools of Haryana.

DATA ANALYSES

In order to summarize the results, the observed data has been analyzed for drawing the inferences from observations, taken in the field. Data analyses indicate the ‘cause-effect relationship’ among various qualitative and quantitative parameters, for the study.

Testing of Hypothesis: In order to testing the hypothesis a ‘t-test’ technique has been

employed for drawing the desired inferences.

t- test

t =

Here 't' is based on (n - 2) degree of freedom. If the calculated value of 't' exceed 0.05 for d.f. we say that the value 'r' is significant at 5 per cent levels.

Table 1

Village/Block/District wise Level of Satisfaction of Respondents

Sr. No.	Village	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied	No Opinion	Un-Satisfied	Strongly Un-Satisfied	Total Respondents
1.	Gijarod (Jhajjar)	20 (46.51)	14 (32.56)	2 (4.65)	2 (4.65)	5 (11.63)	43 (100)
2.	Sanjarwas (Bhiwani)	18 (45.00)	15 (37.50)	3 (7.50)	2 (5.00)	2 (5.00)	40 (100)
3.	Kawi (Panipat)	10 (38.46)	9 (34.62)	3 (11.54)	1 (3.85)	3 (11.54)	26 (100)
4.	Marora(Mewat)	14 (48.28)	8 (37.50)	3 (10.34)	2 (6.90)	2 (6.90)	29 (100)
5.	Mandna (Punchkula)	12 (40.00)	8 (26.67)	2 (6.67)	5 (16.67)	3 (10.00)	30 (100)
6.	Nathupur Chopta (Sirsa)	15 (46.88)	3 (9.38)	2 (6.25)	4 (12.50)	8 (25.00)	32 (100)
Total Respondents		89 (44.50)	57 (28.5)	15 (7.50)	16 (8.00)	23 (11.50)	200 (100)

Source: Primary data

(Percentages are given in brackets)

In the present problem, which is associated with mid day meal programme's level of satisfaction which is hypothetically uniform throughout Haryana? This hypothesis has tested through t-test technique.

Suppose Sample	Null Hypothesis Highly Developed	Ho = $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ Lesser Developed	Calculated Value	Tabulated Value
Mean	73.74	64.77	3.67	2.48
S.D	4.99	2.94		

$$V = 4 + 8 - 2 = 10$$

On the basis of observed and tabulated data, we found that the calculated value is more than the tabulated value. Hence, it is indicate that the level of satisfaction of the respondents, indicate a considerable variability of the personnel, belong to administrative machinery' engaged for accomplish this programme.

DISCUSSION & RESULTS

On the basis of empirical study, based on six schools, selected from different districts of Haryana, indicate a considerable variability in their implementation. However, variability has been tested by t-test. The hypothesis has developed on preliminary investigation on the students, studying in different schools of Haryana.

Table 2

Public Opinion on Mid-day-Meal Programme

Table 2

Public Opinion on Mid-day-Meal Programme

1.	Gjarod (Jhajjar)	36 (72.00)	1 (2.00)	5 (10.00)	8 (16.00)	50 (100)
2.	Sanjarwas (Bhiwani)	35 (70.00)	0 (0)	7 (14.00)	8 (16.00)	50 (100)
3.	Kawi (Panipat)	41 (82.00)	0 (0)	5 (10.00)	4 (8.00)	50 (100)
4.	Marora (Mewat)	36 (72.00)	0 (0)	5 (10.00)	9 (18.00)	50 (100)
5.	Mandana (Punchkula)	38 (76.00)	0 (0)	5 (10.00)	7 (14.00)	50 (100)
6.	Nathusari Chopta (Sirsa)	34 (68)	5 (10.00)	3 (6.00)	8 (16.00)	50 (100)
Total Respondents		220 (73.33)	6 (2.00)	30 (10.00)	44 (14.66)	300 (100)

Source: Primary data

(Percentages are given in brackets)

On the basis of the study, we found that the parents of 73.33 per cent of the students, studying in different schools are in a favour of the 'mid day meal' programme with some of modifications. However, there are only 2 per cent of the parents who have shown a 'indifferent attitude' towards this programme. On the basis of multiple responses, given by the 40 per cent of the students and their parents, who have pointed out that the 'poor quality' of meal, served to the students. On the basis of

responses, given by the 68 per cent of the parents, we found that the programme has failed to provide required 'vitamins and proteins' to the students. However, the majority of parents have observed that there is no Considerable improvement in the health indicated in their children. On the basis of testing of hypothesis, we observed that the 'level of satisfaction' given by 200 respondents which includes the parents of the students, member of the panchayats have been given their views in a subjective way. Hence, it is obvious that a 'considerable subjectivity' has been found on this issue. **CONCLUSION:**

The national 'mid-day-meal' programme which was launched for aimed at multiple objectives for compensating the deficiency of vitamins and minerals for the children living in poverty conditions. Secondly, in order to increase the presence of the students, particularly in the rural areas. As we have observed that the programme has experienced some of pitfalls in its implementation front. These 'pit falls' have affected the programme in some of the states like Bihar, some of pockets of eastern U.P. and other parts of India. In order to examine the programme on the respondents of Haryana schools, a survey was carried out by an NGO. On the basis of year-wise successive execution of the mid-day-meal programme, it may conclude that the strength and weakness of the programme may be periodically evaluated. In order to attaining the TQM (Total Quality Management) of this national programme, it is very essential to take an active participation of the people, belong to different strata of society. It is also essential to take regular feedback from the personnel, belong to 'administrative machinery'. The executing officials should be 'transparent' and highly responsive for rendering their services in accordance with the prescribed norms.. Only then, this programme will attain the 'total quality management' position and effectively achieve the desired objectives of this programme uniformly throughout India in general and particularly in Haryana.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

- The parents are not suppose to hesitate to check the mid day meal from time to time.
- A periodic feedback by the parents, students, teachers and the members of public representatives e.g. Gram Panchayat/Block Samiti/ Zila Parishad are very essential.
- The action plan should be formulated in a way, so that the students may not be disturbed from their general routine.

- As far as it is possible, the female cook should be managed for cooking the meal. They should be imparted a formal training too.
- A demand driven approach should be adopted for managing the cooking material
e.g. Grain, rice, wheat, fuel etc.
- A proper record should be maintained, so that the programme may be up-dated with its well maintained record.
- The personnel, who are directly or indirectly engaged in execution process of mid day meal programme, should be highly responsive, transparent and accountable to the public and their officials.
- The wages should be revised periodically, so that the 'skilled workers' may retain for long time.
- A periodic SWOT analysis should be worked out, so that TQM (Total Quality Management), position may be attained for whole programme.

Hence, it is obvious that the programme will attain the TQM (Total Quality Management) position, when there is periodic vigilance and fully transparency at multi-level front. The community and the civil society can play a vital role for 'constant vigil' on the working on the personnel, engaged in implementing the 'Mid-meal-Programme' in rural and semi-rural areas. Only then, the programme will be uniformly successful in all regions of Haryana.

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