



E-ISSN: 2664-603X
P-ISSN: 2664-6021
IJPSG 2023; 5(1): 272-275
www.journalofpoliticalscience.com
Received: 22-02-2022
Accepted: 26-03-2023

Farah Jafari
Research Scholar, CSSEIP,
MANUU, Hyderabad,
Telangana, India

Fatima Zahra
Research Scholar, Department
of Political Science, MANUU,
Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Many aspects of the mid-day meal: An evaluation of its implementation and challenges

Farah Jafari and Fatima Zahra

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2023.v5.i1d.230>

Abstract

Mid-day meal scheme is one of the most comprehensive schemes as it includes measures for catering to dropouts, increasing retention in the school, popularizing education among the disadvantaged, and considering the socio-economic conditions of the large population into focus. The paper aims to overview what the program calls for, discussing its various versions and popular practices of each state, therefore looking for its implementation on the ground, going through the challenges along the way, and finally, it presents some highlights and suggestions which can be considered.

Keywords: Mid-day meal, comprehensive scheme, challenges, suggestions, and way forward

Introduction

One of the most appreciated and talked about schemes was introduced in 1995 as a centrally sponsored program to provide hot meals to children so to increase their retention in school by serving hot and hygienic cooked Nutritional food.

The program 2001 was extending across the country. Nutrition and food contribute to facilitating social development and academic achievement (Abery & Drummond). It forms the largest school meal program in the world. One of the primary objectives of the program is to reduce the dropout rates which are more prevalent among the poor and backward section of our society. It works on the principle of intermingling diverse sections of society and bringing students of diverse backgrounds on one platform, by bridging the gaps on numerous grounds thereby offering powerful incentives for Bringing social equity. Serving quality and hygienic food, maintaining and going by appropriate sanitation standards. It supports the nutrition of the children and upholds overall family interests (Samal & Dehury 2017) ^[12]. Going by attendance, performance, and retention, the program has been successful in malnourished rich tribal areas and in maintaining the economic stability of the poor. (Dreze and Goyal, 2003) ^[11].

Overview

The increasing and growing social consciousness has led to the embarking of such ambitious programs across the world as 293 cities across Europe initiated such programs by late 1890. (Pellissery *et al.*, 2016) ^[13], UK 1945, Switzerland USA 1946, Japan 1947, Thailand 1970 Singapore (1975) (SI & Sharma 2008) ^[14]. Such a program was initiated in India for the first time at Madras way back in 1925. It was introduced on a pilot basis for children of 1 to 5 classes, with time there found a need for its extension so it got scaled up to class 8 in 2007. Kerala introduced it in 1941, following the trend in 1984. It was introduced in Gujarat gradually to further transform and strengthen the program and has brought a novel model such as "tithi bhojan" which is the donation of food to school children on important and larger occasions. By the mid-1980 three states such as Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union territory of Pondicherry had universalized the cooked meal scheme with their resources. With the continuous efforts of International agencies like UNICEF and WHO, FAO, 12 states had gone for its adoption till 1991. Gradually with time, it included all blocks of the country in 1998. It has become a cooked mid-day meal scheme with the provision of serving prepared mid-day meals for 200 days having an energy intake of 300 calories and protein intake of 8 to twelve grams. In 2008 it got further extended to madrasas and mastabas. In 2010 there was a Call for setting up a steering cum monitoring committee to

Corresponding Author:
Farah Jafari
Research Scholar, CSSEIP,
MANUU, Hyderabad,
Telangana, India

oversee the program. In 2006 surrendering responsibility to local women and Children of the country was declared as the supreme human resource as per the 1974 national policy in education reports. The enactment of the National food security Act (NFSA) (2013) legalizes it as a legal entitlement for all school-going children leading to the further reiteration of its significance. It is a centrally sponsored scheme with a center and state share of 60: 40 ratio, 90:10 ratio in the case of northeastern states, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, while the center in having 100% of the cost-sharing in Union Territories without legislature. Provision of cooked meals in primary schools started by most of the states by 2003, which leads to the inclusion of 120 million children within its fold by 2006 (Khera 2006) ^[15]. The program is currently working under the nodal ministry of education with its recent version as PM poshan. Healthy manpower which is developed with this has led to faster social and economic development. It will also foster the goal of universalization of elementary education, quality education, better attendance, higher enrolment, and improved nutrition (Ali, 2019) ^[6].

What were the Targets

Increase enrollment of disadvantaged: It has led to the reduction of hunger by increasing enrollment thereby the development of social equality (Sinha, 2008) ^[5]. It led to a 50% reduction in the girl's dropout rate at schools (Dreze and Kingdon 2001) ^[8]. It has increased socialization and improved the increased attendance of SCs, and STs in the school (Garg & Mandal, 2013; Malik *et al.*, 2018) ^[16, 17]. As per the recently conducted report of NCERT that the children enrolled under the mid-day meal scheme have higher achievement levels as compared to those who are not. Mid-day meal scheme has its full implementation in the state of Andhra Pradesh (Dreze and Goyal, 2003) ^[11]. Advancement in elementary education can take place to a large extent with the implementation of the mid-day meal scheme as evidenced by the experience of Tamilnadu (Taylor and Ogbogu, 2016) ^[18].

Nutritional support to drought-affected areas

It improves nutritional outcomes (Singh, Dercon, and Parker). As child mortality gets impacted by malnutrition. Because of it, 1.3 million children die every year, as per UNICEF, India has the world's highest rate of malnutrition along with Nepal and Bangladesh. As (Jacoby 2002; Afridi 2010) ^[19, 20] earmarked that children's nutritional intake has improved highly with the scheme. The introduction of the scheme has led to the improved nutritional status of children (Minj *et al.*, 2014) ^[21]. It increases the nutritional supplements fostered with the inclusion of pulses, iron, supplements, and other nutrients. Different states are providing different menu under the scheme. In Lakshadweep, chicken is served among other food items. West Bengal on a limited scale has a provision of mushrooms and cheese. Around 13 states currently provide bananas and eggs to non-vegetarians. Some states even have milk on its menu. The millet served in this program is rich in nutritional benefits and a way to boost human health (Babu). It increases the awareness of the importance of a balanced diet and good hygiene (Kales, 2014; Sangai, 2016) ^[22, 23]. The program intends to improve the education and nutritional outcomes of the population by feeding them the required food (Alderman and Bundy, 2012) ^[24].

Social integration

It is one of the instrumental schemes in bringing social integration into society (Agnihotri, 2010) ^[9]. This provides them the platform to sit together and have meals in common, which is the need of the hour as we being a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multilingual country, the diverse pattern of the society requires such a policy to have a prevalence of secular environment guiding by the principles of cooperation, mutual dependence, fellow feeling, and brotherhood. There exists a positive interrelationship between social integration, institutional commitment, and increasing persistence in college (Sullivan & Johnson, 1997) ^[25].

Employment opportunities for rural women

One of the significant developments of this program is that it helps in reducing the burden of working women in feeding the children which played a major role in the inclusion of many children into the four walls of the school as the school shoulder the responsibility of providing food, thereby foster gender equity. As of date, this scheme employs around 26 lakh cooks and helpers across India hence becoming a major source of employment opportunities for many.

Enhance learning achievement

School meals can be utilized as an option for imparting values of discipline, good attitudes, making them aware of food wastage, clean drinking water, balanced diet, and good hygiene (Kremer and Vermeersch 2004) ^[4]. This study highlights that the scheme has enlarged learning outcomes in the schools that have experienced and trained teachers mostly. As (Kristjansson *et al.* 2015; Drake *et al.* 2017) ^[26, 27] hold school feeding has a positive effect on increasing school participation. The success of the program can be illustrated by the increasing participation and enrollment in school (Sengupta, 2012) ^[28]. As said by a study (Dreze & Goyal 2003) ^[11], there exists a significant affirmative interaction between academic achievement and mid-day meal programs, investing in child nutrition has an impact on improving cumulative lifelong capacities and productivity therefore further enforcing the same. We have come up with nutrition welfare schemes such as integrated child development services and a mid-day meal scheme with children as main beneficiaries integral to human development in particular and the overall socioeconomic development of the country. This scheme offers a platform for the physical and cognitive development of the children and in doing so setting the stage for the bright future of the country.

Non-achieved areas

As child mortality gets impacted by malnutrition. Because of it, 1.3 million children die every year. As per UNICEF, India has the world's highest rate of malnutrition along with Nepal and Bangladesh, Problems like stunting child mortality, and undernourishment still prevails. Another major problem is the Caste based discrimination because which disadvantaged suffer caste prejudice still prevails in rural areas as per the report (Pellissery *et al.*, 2016) ^[29]. National Campaign on Dalit Rights to the UN Committee on Economic, social and cultural rights highlights the case that in pandemic situations or any emergency circumstances,

food to the lower caste is denied to assert the dominance of the upper caste. The study on Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu by (Thorat and Lee 2005) ^[30] finds a lack of access to Dalits because meals are served mostly in dominant caste hamlets. In conjunction with the mid-day meal scheme, caste discrimination was occurring as found in the study of (Sukhdeo Thorat and Joel Lee). In a country like India where malnutrition and hunger are chronic issues, long-term exposure to nutritional programs as an educational intervention is of great significance. Therefore the meal providers must have their suppliers respond to the sustainability-oriented objectives of the mid-day meal supply chain.

Reasons and challenges

Non-nutritional food due to over-storage of the food, and lack of timely delivery of food items there are also instances that due to the long supply chain, the supplied food grains got adulterated and pilfered. Poor sanitation in some food-prepared areas there arises many cases of diseases, food poisoning, and even deaths in extreme cases. Tragic incidents of death occur in Indian schools due to contaminated water and unhygienic cooking practices (Singh, 2015) ^[2]. The recent Global Nutrition Report 2021 earmarked that over half of the Indian women in the age group of 15-29 years are anemic. Similarly, Aadhar card linkage has additionally affected accessibility, the government rules of mandatory aadhaar linkage have caused trouble as they have to undergo the cumbersome process of getting Aadhar linked the very thought of a complicated procedure makes them go for it. Moreover there is a paucity of funding for the program as due to large families and economic backwardness they often face the issue of delay in payment and late reimbursement. (Sinha 2008) ^[5]. Over and Lack of cooperation and coordination and duplicity of work leads to low motivation among the beneficiaries (Nambiar & Desai, 2012; Robinson, 2007) ^[31, 32]. From its 94th position in 2020, India slipped to the 101st position as per Global Hunger Index 2821. Researchers have pointed out that adolescents in India consume nutritionally deficient diets (Kotecha *et al.*, 2013; Rathi *et al.*, 2017) ^[33]. Cases of Corrupt practices in some areas in the form of delivering only plain rice, plain chapati with salt or just allocating the raw food items into the houses keeping themselves the larger and quality share. The program doesn't meet daily nutritional guidelines (Mansoor & Rawoof, 2018) ^[34]. Inefficiencies and leakages in the delivery mechanism have limited the efficacy of the scheme. Lack of formal monitoring mechanism, s periodic auditing of the programs. National Family Health Survey-5 reported the worsening condition of child malnutrition. India accounts for 30% of the world's stunted children and 50% of the severely wasted children.

Suggestions

Issues such as disruption in the classroom process because in most cases, students are mobilized to collect needed items, the risk of food poisoning due to the maintenance of poor hygiene at the cooking spot areas, and the delayed salaries of the cooks, which act as poor incentives to encourage them to carry out their responsibilities adequately, have been identified. As (Pushpendra and Sood 2005) ^[35] reports the inadequate availability of Storage facilities is a reason for their poor operation, leakages, and

corruption due to intermediaries causing the delivery of poor stuff. To check these intricacies, community involvement is of paramount importance. There is also an immediate requirement of encouraging local communities in monitoring its efficient delivery. Further improvement in the scheme will take place with the increasing participation of private partnerships. The public-private partnership has been instrumental in strengthening the targets as was evidenced in the practice followed in states like Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu where the role of self-help groups and NGOs is encouraged as it will help in maintaining hygiene and quality standards thus promoting the role of the mother through the self-help groups.

Indian schools need to promote healthy eating practices among children. The major exploring area should be ensuring Quality towards achieving its full potential. For this improving the quality by expanding the school meal menu with the incorporation of more vegetables, and eggs as practiced in Karnataka is necessary for intergenerational pay-offs. Cross-functional integration, re-framing of organizational culture, and external integration were regarded as compulsory areas by considering the holistic view on health there is a need to emphasize improving maternal well-being and health which Nutritionists also regarded as key areas to fight against stunting in children. Policy consideration of a nutrition garden involving the students' faculties is also in the pipeline. Government can also entail the encouragement of the policy whereby competition can be organized among states promoting local cuisines and local cultures.

Conclusion

Hence, the program has played a vital role in fostering a healthy school environment, especially among disadvantaged groups who largely avoided school due to poverty and other relevant factors. It has also increased the student enrollment rate, paving the way for the universalization of elementary education, which in turn serves as a potent source for expanding learning results. As a means of subsistence, it has also increased the prospects for empowerment among girls and marginalized segments of society. Overall, the scheme has achieved the majority of its goals, and its community involvement in the monitoring network, information technology interventions, and institutionalization of an effective monitoring framework will aid in the long-term eradication of the scourge of corruption leakage and poor quality food facilities.

References

1. Paltasingh T, Bhue P. Efficacy of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in India: Challenges and Policy Concerns. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 2022;68(4):610-623.
2. Sharma R. Mid-day meal scheme in India: the road ahead. *Dev Country and housan Stud*. 2015;5:11.
3. Singh A, Park A, Dercon S. School meals as a safety net: an evaluation of the midday meal scheme in India. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 2014;62(2):275-306.
4. Vermeersch Christel, Kremer Michael. School meals, Educational Achievement, and School Competition: Evidence from a Randomised Evaluation, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3523, 2004. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract,=667881>

5. Sinha D. Social audit of the mid-day meal scheme in Andhra Pradesh. *Economic and political weekly*. 2008;43(44):57-61.
6. Ali S. 3 times poverty rates in Indian households with children: Survey. *Business Standard*, 2019 Jul 09. http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/3-times-higher-poverty-rates-in-Indian-households-with-children-survey-119070900133_1.html.
7. Babu A. Govt. push for millets in mid-day meal scheme might come as a breather for farmers. *The week*, 2018 April 17. <http://www.theweek.in/news/biz-tech/2918/04/17/millets- solution - farmers - crises - nutritional - security.html>
8. Dreze J, Kingdon GG. School participation in rural India. *Review of Development Studies*. 2001;5(1):1-24.
9. Agnihotri S. An assessment of the mid-day meal scheme in India: A study. *Indian Journal of public administration*. 2010;56(3):635-641.
10. Roy V, Charan P, Schoenherr T, Sahay BS. Ensuring supplier participation toward addressing sustainability-oriented objectives of the mid-day meal supply chain: Insights from The Akshaya Patra Foundation. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*; c2018.
11. Dreze Jean, Aparajita Goyal. Future of Mid-Day Meal, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2003 Nov.
12. SaMal J, DehuRy RK. Salient features of a proposed adolescent health policy draft for India. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research: JCDR*. 2017 May;11(5):LI01.
13. Pellissery S, Chakradhar A, Kylasam Iyer D, Lahiri M, Ram N, Mallick N, *et al*. Regulation in crony capitalist state: The case of planning laws in Bangalore. *Der öffentliche Sektor (The Public Sector): planning, land, and property: framing spatial politics in another age of austerity*. 2016 Jun 21;42(1):110.
14. Hofmann S, Sharma R, Wirth CT, Cervantes-Sodi F, Ducati C, Kasama T, *et al*. Ledge-flow-controlled catalyst interface dynamics during Si nanowire growth. *Nature materials*. 2008 May;7(5):372-5.
15. Wallace TW, Abdullah SM, Drazner MH, Das SR, Khera A, McGuire DK, *et al*. Prevalence and determinants of troponin T elevation in the general population. *Circulation*. 2006 Apr 25;113(16):1958-65.
16. Dhindsa KS, Mandal BP, Bazzi K, Lin MW, Nazri M, Nazri GA, *et al*. Enhanced electrochemical performance of graphene modified LiFePO₄ cathode material for lithium ion batteries. *Solid State Ionics*. 2013 Dec 15;253:94-100.
17. Malik A, Setiawan A, Suhandi A, Permanasari A, Samsudin A, Safitri D, *et al*. Using hot lab to increase pre-service physics teacher's critical thinking skills related to the topic of RLC circuit. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* 2018 May 1;1013(1):012023. IOP Publishing.
18. Berger I, Ahmad A, Bansal A, Kapoor T, Sipp D, Rasko JE. Global distribution of businesses marketing stem cell-based interventions. *Cell stem cell*. 2016 Aug 4;19(2):158-62.
19. Jacoby J. Stimulus-organism-response reconsidered: an evolutionary step in modeling (consumer) behavior. *Journal of consumer psychology*. 2002;12(1):51-7.
20. Afridi F. Child welfare programs and child nutrition: Evidence from a mandated school meal program in India. *Journal of development Economics*. 2010 Jul 1;92(2):152-65.
21. Singh SS, Kunui K, Minj RA, Singh P. Diversity and distribution pattern analysis of cyanobacteria isolated from paddy fields of Chhattisgarh, India. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity*. 2014 Dec 30;7(4):462-70.
22. Cappello F, Al G, Gropp W, Kale S, Kramer B, Snir M. Toward exascale resilience: Update. *Supercomputing Frontiers and Innovations: an International Journal*. 2014 Apr 6;1(1):5-28.
23. Iwase T, Sangai T, Nagashima T, Sakakibara M, Sakakibara J, Hayama S, *et al*. Impact of body fat distribution on neoadjuvant chemotherapy outcomes in advanced breast cancer patients. *Cancer medicine*. 2016 Jan;5(1):41-8.
24. Alderman H, Bundy D. School feeding programs and development: are we framing the question correctly?. *The World Bank Research Observer*. 2012 Aug 1;27(2):204-21.
25. Chambers CA, Sullivan TJ, Allison JP. Lymph proliferation in CTLA-4-deficient mice is mediated by costimulation-dependent activation of CD4+ T cells. *Immunity*. 1997 Dec 1;7(6):885-95.
26. Sigurgeirsson B, Boznanski A, Todd G, Vertruyen A, Schuttelaar ML, Zhu X, *et al*. Safety and efficacy of pimecrolimus in atopic dermatitis: a 5-year randomized trial. *Pediatrics*. 2015 Apr;135(4):597-606.
27. Beer TM, Kwon ED, Drake CG, Fizazi K, Logothetis C, Gravis G, *et al*. Randomized, double-blind, phase III trial of ipilimumab versus placebo in asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic patients with metastatic chemotherapy-naïve castration-resistant prostate cancer. *J Clin Oncol*. 2017 Jan 1;35(1):40-7.
28. Sánchez SF, Kennicutt RC, De Paz AG, Van de Ven G, Vílchez JM, Wisotzki L, *et al*. CALIFA, the Calar Alto Legacy Integral Field Area survey-I. Survey presentation. *Astronomy & Astrophysics*. 2012 Feb 1;538:A8.
29. Broadbent J, Sonnett J, Botetzagias I, Carson M, Carvalho A, Chien YJ, *et al*. Conflicting climate change frames in a global field of media discourse. *Socius*. 2016 Oct 25;2:2378023116670660.
30. Linder JA, Bates DW, Lee GM, Finkelstein JA. Antibiotic treatment of children with sore throat. *Jama*. 2005 Nov 9;294(18):2315-22.
31. Nambiar VS, Desai R. Positive and negative deviant behaviors affecting the mid-day meal programme (MDMP) in government aided primary schools of an urban Indian city: Causes, consequences and solutions. *International Journal of Biomedical Research and Analysis*. 2012 May;3(3):1-0.
32. Robinson VM, Hohepa M, Lloyd C. School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why. *Winmalee: Australian Council for Educational Leaders*; 2007 Oct.
33. Edwards MO, Kotecha SJ, Kotecha S. Respiratory distress of the term newborn infant. *Paediatric respiratory reviews*. 2013 Mar 1;14(1):29-37.
34. Mansoor M, Rawoof R. A study on nutrient analysis of mid-day meal. *Int J Res Appl Sci Eng Technol*. 2018;6(VI).
35. Sood A, Tellis GJ. Technological evolution and radical innovation. *Journal of marketing*. 2005 Jul;69(3):152-68.