

Problems on Implementation of Mid-Day Meal in Nagaland with Special Reference to Kiphire District

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Abstract

Education has become a necessity in present context which enables a person to live a respectable and secured living. Without education there is a high chance of one being ending in poverty and hunger with no proper place and position to fit in. In today's ever fast changing society education provides more opportunities in terms of job hunt. Though the Government of India provides free and compulsory education to children in the age group of 6-14 years, the country still has countless illiterate children. There are numerous reasons and one prominent reason among them is poverty and the inability of the parents to send their children to schools. The government in order to curtail has implemented the Mid-Day Meal Scheme for the benefit of the underprivileged children. However, as far as Nagaland and the area chosen Kiphire is concerned, even though the schools have implemented Mid-Day Meal Scheme, to carry out this task is a difficulty because of many reasons like, deteriorating road conditions, insufficient funds, insufficient workers, insufficient facilities, ignorance of the authorities concerned, poor quality and less quantity meals etc., which the study discusses. For the proposed study 40 schools under Kiphire district of Nagaland was surveyed to find out the problems of the schools related to the implementation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Keywords: School Mid-Day Meal, Communitisation, SSA, Cooking Cost, Quality and Quantity, Food Grain, Potable Water, Supplementary.

Introduction

Mid-day Meal Scheme started on 15th August 1995 under the name National Support to Primary Education across. Mid-Day Meal is designed to give the students better nutrition especially to school-going children all over the nation. It provides lunches in government primary, upper primary, local body schools, Special Training Centers (STC), madrasas and makhtabs supported under Serva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The Scheme has been renamed on September 2021 as PM-POSHAN Scheme.

One of the aims of education is the educated and enlightened citizenry, an essential condition for the success of democracy. The education should be according to the national feelings and aspirations which result in due respect for national life. The existing gap between the urban and rural areas, men and women, scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and non-scheduled tribes, advanced and backward states, between various regions in the same state need to be bridged. Hence the school became a formal agency wherein children will be properly trained in the school to assume rightful places in the

society in future life. Thus, Hunger should never be a reason a child doesn't get formal education. Children should have access to both food and education. Therefore, to meet this pressing problem all over the nation, this scheme has been initiated to support children's access to nutritious food and proper education.

Literature Review

Devi (1986) Sociological and Educational aspects of Food and Nutrition among the Onges and the Andamans studies the educational aspects attached to the food habits of the Onges. **Akshaya Patra Foundation, Mid-Day Meal in India (MDM)** discusses the implementation of mid-day meal with the objective that children should get access to both nutrition and education and that hunger should never impede their education. **Mid-Day Meals/ Gadag District, Government of Karnataka/ India** outlines the role of teachers and headmasters in the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, including an assurance that all the students are served meals, educating students on cleanliness and ensuring the quality of food. **Dr. Manjunath Avinash (2013)**, A Study of Mid-Day Meal Scheme under Food security with special reference to Upper School of Bhadravathi Taluk, advocates that mid-day meals have big effects on school participation, not just in terms of getting more children enrolled but also in terms of regular attendance on a daily basis. **Dr. Gursharan Singh Kainth (2013)**, Diagnostic Analysis of Mid-Day Meal in Rural Punjab, discusses how even if the Government has made education free for children of some certain age, poverty prevents and hunger obstructs education to those underprivileged children. To many children, mid-day meal is the only complete meal that they have access to during the entire day which has brought dramatic results in terms of enrollment, attendance and attention as well. **P. Sahoo (2011)**, A Descriptive Study on the Effectiveness of Mid-Day Meal Programme in Selected Government Primary School of Bhubaneswar, Odisha, discusses the objectives of mid-day meal scheme which is protecting children from classroom hunger, addressing malnutrition and social empowerment through provision of employment to women. It seeks to find out the impact of the scheme on enrollment, attendance and nutritional status of children.

All these reviews show significant importance of mid-day meal scheme in bringing about a positive change in the holistic education for both privileged and underprivileged children as both gets access to education without making hunger a hindrance to stop them from receiving education.

Constitutional, Legal and National Statements for UEE

The constitutional, legal and national policies and statements have time and again upheld the cause of elementary education.

Constitutional Mandate 1950- "The state shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education to all the children until they attain the age of 14 years."

National policy of education, 1986- "It shall be ensured that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all the children up to 14 years of age before we enter the twenty first century."

Unnikrishnan judgement, 1993- "Every child/citizen of this country has the right to free education until he completes the age of fourteen years."

Education ministers' resolve, 1998- "Universal elementary education should be pursued in the mission mode. It emphasized the need to pursue a holistic and convergent approach towards UEE."

National Committee's Reports on UEE in the mission mode, 1999- "UEE should be pursued in a mission mode with a holistic and convergent approaches with emphasis on preparation of district elementary education plans for UEE. It supported the fundamental right to education and desired quick action towards operationalization of the mission mode towards UEE."

Article 21A says that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children from six to fourteen years in such manner as the state may be by its law determine. In spite of the constitutional provisions of fundamental rights, we have not been able to provide education to all children up to the age of 14. According to 2021 census, the literacy rate of India is 76.32%, it is appreciable but this high rate of literacy percentage does not achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education up to the mark thus far.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan a Programme for Universal Elementary Education

In accordance with the constitutional commitment to ensure free and compulsory education for all children up to the 14 years, provision of universal elementary education has been a salient feature of national policy since independence. This result has been spelt out emphatically in the National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA), 1992. A number of Schemes and the programmes were launched in pursuance of the emphasis embodied in the NPE and the POA. These include the scheme of national programme of nutritional support to primary education (MDM) for improving nutritional status of children and to ensure enrolment as well as retention at school.

Communitisation of Elementary Schools in Nagaland

Communitisation of educational institutions for quality improvement in education, state government of Nagaland made Nagaland communitisation of elementary education institutions and service rules 2002, these rules cover all primary and middle schools which government may, by notification declare to be communitised. The government of Nagaland coined the words communitisation to disseminate the concept of the government sharing the management and operational control of the government institutions and services in various social sectors with the community in order to improve their functioning. Communitisation of an institution of the government means the ownership to and sharing responsibility of its management with community. It thus includes decentralization of authority, delegation of responsibility, empowerment of the community and building up of a synergistic relationship between the government and the community to spur growth and development of institutions. Ever since the launching of Communitisation in the State of Nagaland and particularly in Kiphire District much has been achieved in the universalization of primary education to ease the illiteracy. The literacy rate is high in Nagaland (79.55%) except Kiphire (69.54%) and Mon (56.99%) districts.

The guidelines for implementation of mid-day meal scheme in government schools in the State of Nagaland was revised in the year 2004, with an objective to give a boost to universalization of primary education by increasing enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously providing nutrition to the students in primary classes by providing cooked meal to each student every school day. The survey was conducted in the district of Kiphire. The total enrolment of the 40 schools administered were 4704 and the number of children availing MDM was also same as the number enrolled.

Problems of Mid-Day Meal Implementation in Nagaland with Special Reference to Kiphire District

In the District of Kiphire it was found that there are natural barriers like hilly road, terrains, and distinct

hill ranges that are more or less parallel to each other which poses problems in accessing the school.

1. **Regularity in serving meal:** Out of 40 schools, visited 14 schools (35%) were found serving meal twice or thrice a month and 6 schools (15%) served once in a week and the remaining 20 schools (50%) responded that the mid-day meal was not served regularly. The irregularity in serving the meal was found due to delayed supplies and insufficient supplies of Mid-day meal items.
2. **Trends:** The total enrollment of the students from the 40 schools was 4704 and the number of children availing mid-day meal was also same as the number enrolled. On the day of visit, the number of children present was 4391.
3. **Regularity in Delivering Food Grain to School Level:** None of the school responded that the supply of the food grains was regular and the reason was found due to the delay of release of materials from the stockist. There was no school that mentioned that they maintained the buffer-stock of one month's requirements. And it was delivered from the stock supplier.
4. **Regularity in Delivering Cooking Cost to School Level:** All the 40 schools responded negatively by saying that the cooking cost was not received in advance and the reason is due to the delay caused from the office of the dispersal. The school funds were used for making alternative arrangement to manage the delay caused and, in some case, the schools stopped feeding the students till the materials are supplied.
5. **Social equity:** There was no discrimination shown in cooking and serving or seating arrangements.
6. **Variety of Menu:** No school was found displaying the weekly mid-day meal menu. 33 schools (82.5%) responded that they were served variety food including rice, dal and vegetables. Whereas, the remaining 7 schools (17.5%) observed a monotonous routine in serving food.
7. **Quality and Quantity of Meal:** 35 schools (87.5%) expressed that the food served was of average quality and for the remaining 5 schools (12.5%) it was good. Regarding the quantity, for 2 schools (5%) it was sufficient, whereas, for 38 schools (95%) it was less.
8. **Supplementary:** 11 schools (27.5%) responded that their school children were distributed with micro nutrients once in a year whereas, 29 schools (72.5%) did not receive any as such. The authority who is taking care of this area is the primary Health Centers. It was found that no school was maintaining any health care cards.
9. **Status of Cooks:** All the 40 schools (100%) employed cook for the mid-day meal and all of them responded that the number of cooks is not adequate for the requirement of the works assigned regarding mid-day meal. 5 schools (12.5%) paid Rs.700/- per month, 4 schools (10%) paid Rs.800/- per month, 17 schools (42.5%) paid Rs.1000/- per month and 14 schools (35%) paid Rs.10,000/- annually. All the cooks from the schools surveyed are from the scheduled tribes.
10. **Infrastructure:** 24 schools (60%) have constructed kitchen and made use of them for cooking. Most of the kitchens are of temporary structure without any proper facility. 1 school (2.5%) had constructed the kitchen but not yet used. 1 school (2.5%) has been sanctioned for the construction of the kitchen but the construction work is yet to start. For 14 schools (35%), there was no grant sanctioned for the construction of kitchen available for those schools.
11. **Potable water:** 11 schools (27.5%) have been facilitated with potable water whereas, 29 schools (72.5%) had not been facilitated the same.
12. **Utensils:** For 38 schools (95%) the cooking utensils were found inadequate and the remaining 2 schools (5%) had adequate cooking utensils.

- 13. Safety and Hygiene:** 39 schools (97%) were satisfied with the environment safety and hygiene. All the schools responded that they encouraged the children to wash their hands before and after eating. Every school partook meals in an orderly manner. 11 schools (27.5%) were conscious of conserving water. 29 schools (72.5%) were not aware of conservation of water. All the schools responded that the cooking process and storage of the food safe, not posing any fire hazard.
- 14. Kind of Fuel used:** All schools (100%) had been using firewood as the fuel for cooking mid-day meal.
- 15. Community Participation:** It was found that in 34 schools (85%) mid-day meal programmes the VEC participated actively and the remaining 6 schools (15%) expressed there was less participation by the parents/VEC.
- 16. Inspection and Supervision:** 8 schools (20%) were found inspected by the block level officers whereas, 32 schools (80%) were not inspected.
- 17. Impact:** Every school responded that the mid-day meal programmes improved the enrolment, attendance of children in school, general well being (nutritional status) of children.
- 18.** In 50% Schools, there were mid-day meal programme logos placed before the school.

Prospects for the Achievement of the Goal of SSA

The schools do not serve hot cooked meal daily and mid-day meal facilities were inadequate in terms of food grains, cooking cost, variety of menu, quality of food and utensils in the school level. The WECs, VECs and teachers need to raise funds through social work, collecting of food products etc. The amount received from the sources should be utilized judiciously for the school purposes.

The schools are functioning with shortage of cooks. This has been a weak area in the feeding programme. Hence, cooks need to be appointed for the smooth functioning of the school and its mid-day meal scheme. The schools do not have clean water for drinking purpose as well as micronutrients. The linkage of schools with state government departments like public health engineering department and medical department need to be further strengthened through frequent meetings and personal visits of the concerned officers to EBRCs, WECs, VECs and the concerned schools under their jurisdiction.

In conclusion, the present challenges that require urgent and committed response and solution through concerted efforts of SMA, DMA, EBRCs, VECs, WECs and teachers needs to be sufficiently strengthened through frequent meetings.

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