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MID DAY MEALS

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Abstract-

This research paper deals with the mid-day meal scheme in India which was made mandatory in every state after a Supreme Court order. The research paper begins with the introduction of the topic to make the viewer understand that what is the mid-day meal scheme and why has the government taken this initiative. Then the paper goes on to the objectives of the mid-day meal scheme as prescribed by the government. The paper further deals with the laws related to the mid-day meal scheme and the Supreme Court's judgment on it which made it mandatory for every state to implement this scheme. A comparative study of how the mid-day meal scheme works in the United States is also done to find out what is happening in the west. Then, how the Indian states are performing in this scheme is also analyzed. Then, a little bit of discussion is done on what is the average cost per child which the government bears for cooking a meal for the student and how much the central government has allocated from the budget to this scheme. Criticism of this scheme is also discussed and the paper ends with the conclusion of this scheme. Various sources of review of literature, suggestions and my research methodology is also discussed.

Introduction-

The Indian government with an aim of enhancing the enrolment, retention and attendance of the students and simultaneously improving the nutritional intake of the children, started the National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NPSE) as a central scheme on 15th of August, 1995.

“In 2001, MDMS turned into a cooked Mid –Day Meal scheme under which each kid in each government and government supported grade school was to be served a ready-made mid-day meal with a base substance of 300 calories of energy and 8-12 grams protein for each day for at least 200 days. The scheme was reached out in 2002 to cover not just kids concentrating in government, government supported and neighborhood body schools, but also to youngsters concentrating in education guarantee schemes (EGS) and ALTERNATIVE and INNOVATIVE EDUCATION (AIE) focused schools.

In September 2004, the scheme was reconsidered to accommodate central assistance for cooking cost @rs1 for every student for each school day to take care of pulses, vegetable cooking oil, condiments fuel and wages and compensation payable to faculty or sum payable to organization answerable for cooking.

In October 2007, the scheme was reached out to cover students of upper primary classes (from class VI-VIII) concentrating in 3,479 educationally backward blocks (EBBs) and the name of the scheme was changed from “National Support to Primary education” to National Programme of mid-day meal in schools. The nourishing standard for upper primary class was fixed at 700 calories and 20 grams of protein. The scheme was stretched out to all territories all over the nation. The scheme was extended in April 2008 to madrasas supported under SSA¹.

¹ Indian government website by human resource development ministry <https://mhrd.gov.in/mid-day-meal>

Objectives of mid –day scheme-

1. To improve the education of all children by improving the nutritional status of children which reduces the overall malnutrition².
2. Attraction of kids from impeded areas, particularly young girls from Dalits and Adivasi clans to class, along these lines expanding participation, decreasing dropout rates and advancing girlsstrengthening through education.
3. To promote togetherness and secularism among the various students from different backgrounds studying in these schools.

Laws related to mid-day meal scheme under Mid-Day Meal Rules, 2015 Under National Food Security Act, 2013-

The central Government advised 'Mid-day meal Rules, 2015' on September 30th, 2015. The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA, 2013) contains arrangements identified with welfare plans including Mid-Day Meal Plan. As per the arrangements of the Act, the Ministry of HRD has concluded the MDM Rules after discussion with the States and other related government Services. The standards will be known as mid-day meal Rules, 2015 and will be effected from the date of notice in the gazette of India. The Guidelines include temporary usage of different supports accessible with the school for MDM; Food security allowance to be paid to recipients if there should be an occurrence of non-supply of meals for indicated reasons; and month to month testing of meals on an random premise by authorized Labs to check its quality. Further, the Principles additionally give that concerned State Governments will fix obligation on the individual or organization if suppers are not given on 3 sequential school days or 5 days in a month. These principles and their effective compliance by actualizing offices in the States will guarantee better normality in serving mid-day meals in schools and furthermore improve nature of the meals just as in general

² Annamrita NGO website <https://annamrita.org/our-work.php> .

execution of the mid-day meal in the nation. The notable arrangements of the guidelines are as under:

1. Privileges of children³: Each child between the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enlist and go to the school, will be given a hot prepared meal having nutritional principles of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary students for free of charge each day with the exception of on school holidays. The place of serving meals to the children will be school only.
2. Execution of the Plan⁴: Each school will have the facility for preparing the meal in a clean way. Schools in urban zone may utilize the facility of centralized kitchens for preparing the meals in any place required as per the rules given by the Central Government and the meal will be served to youngsters at the individual school as it were.
3. Responsibility of School Management Committee: The School Management Committee mandated under Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 to monitor the working of the Mid-day meal Scheme and monitor the quality of meals provided to the children, cleanliness of the place of cooking and maintenance of hygiene in implementation of mid-day meal scheme.
4. Obligation of School Advisory group: The School management committee under Right to Free and compulsory education Act, 2009 will likewise screen the usage of the mid-day meal Plan and will direct the nature of meals given to the children, neatness of the spot of cooking, and maintenance of cleanliness in usage of mid-day meal scheme.
5. Usage of School Assets: The Superintendent or Headmistress of the school will be allowed to use any fund accessible in school with the end goal of continuation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in the school if there is a temporary unavailability of nourishment grains, cooking cost, and in the school. The used fund will be repaid to the school account following receipt of mid-day meal funds.

³Convention on the Rights of the Child". United Nations. 20 November 1989. Retrieved 28 July 2013.

⁴ The website of the Press Information Bureau Government Of India
<https://pib.gov.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=128354>

6. Testing of the meals by Authorized Labs to guarantee nutritional standards: Hot cooked meal given to kids will be assessed and confirmed by the Government Food Research Laboratory or any lab certified, to guarantee that the meal satisfies the nutritional guidelines and quality. The Food and Drugs Administration Department of the State may gather samples to guarantee the nutritive worth and quality of the meals. The samples will be gathered every once in a month from arbitrarily chosen schools or concentrated kitchens and will be sent for assessment to the authorized labs.
7. Food Security Allowance. - - If the mid-day meal aren't given in the school on any school day due to non-accessibility of food grains, cooking cost, fuel, or absence of cook-cum-assistant or some other explanation, the State Government will pay an allowance by the fifteenth of the succeeding month in the way given below
 - (a) Amount of Nourishment gains according to the qualification of the kid; and
 - (b) Cooking cost in the State.

Mid-day meals in USA ⁵

Schoolmeal program in the United States provide college food free of rate, or at a government-subsidized price, to U.S. Students from low-profits households. These free or subsidized food are equivalent to household meals in terms of safety, and could improve children's fitness and amplify their educational possibilities. A study of a free college meal in the United States, determined that presenting unfastened meals to elementary and center school children in regions characterized via high food lack of confidence brought about increased discipline in the various students.

The largest faculty meal provider in the United States is the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which became came into operation of President Harry S. Truman⁶ in 1946. Its purpose

⁵ School meals in the United States Of America -

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_meal_programs_in_the_United_States

⁶"National School Lunch Program (NSLP) | Food and Nutrition Service". www.fns.usda.gov. Retrieved 2016-02-03.

is to prevent malnutrition and provide a basis for true nutritional fitness⁷. The ~~textual content~~ of the National School Lunch Act, which brought this system, known as “it a "degree of countrywide protection, to protect the health and properly-being of the country's youngsters and to encourage domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities".

The NSLP currently operates in more than one hundred thousand public schools, nonprofit private schools, and residential care establishments. It provides more than 5 billion low-cost or loose lunches for 12 months to eligible students, with the purpose of ensuring nutritious meals for children who might not otherwise get good food regimen. In 2012, it served extra than 31 million youngstersper day.

Indian states performing in mid-day meal scheme⁸

There is sharp contrasts in the quality of food served in different states in mid-day meals in India. At one end, Tamil Nadu, servesnourishing school meals across thestate while there is no sign of it in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh despite the Supreme Court ruling.”

These complexities are not completely reflected in the CES review. To begin with the nature of school-meal program is altogether preferable in Karnataka over in Chhattisgarh or Rajasthan. Karnataka is distinct in many ways in general schooling apart from their counterparts.In contrast, the mid-day meal infrastructure in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan is still highly inadequate. In Bihar, the mid-day meal is being regularly served and this scheme is performing better than many other schemes in the state.Poor food quality is being served in Goa, Maharashtra and Odisha. In Delhi, there are numerous complaints coming up from parents about the nutritional content of the food,further there is no proper complaint mechanism. There have been food

⁷The Stark Contrast Between Midday Meals In India Vs The Rest Of The World Will Shock You in India Times- <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/what-indian-kids-eat-at-school-as-opposed-to-other-nations-will-take-you-by-surprise-231179.html>

⁸ Article in the Times of India dated 27 nov,2013 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Centres-ranking-of-states-on-midday-meal-scheme-sparks-protests/articleshow/26435658.cms>.

poising complaints coming from states like Bihar, Jharkhand etc, but also there are states like Tamil Nadu, which are constantly improving and providing quality food to its students. Tamil Nadu is the best performing state under the mid-day mealscheme.

Cooking cost per child per meal⁹

According to MHRD's notice, dated June 24, 2019, the current cooking cost per child per day is Rs. 4.48 for primary and Rs. 6.71 for upper primary children.

Budget allocation for the Mid-Day Meal Program¹⁰

Currently, in the year 2019-20, MDM program is Rs. 11,000 crore scheme which is Rs. 500 crore extra than the price range allocated in the 2018-19. In the past year, to this point about Rs. 2,322.32 crore has been released by centre. The budget allocation for MDM saw a steep decline from Rs. 13,215 crore in 2014-15 to Rs. 9,236.40 crore in 2015-16

Criticism¹¹

Despite the "success of the program, child malnutrition as a problem persists in India. According to data, 42.5% of the children below 5 years of age are underweight. Some simple health measures which include the usage of iodised salt and getting vaccinations are unusual in India". "India is domestic to the sector's biggest meals insecure population, with greater than 500 million folks that are hungry", "according to the India State Hunger Index (ISHI) said. It has been observed that many children in India don't get enough food to eat and when compared to US, it does not look good. The rate of India's malnutrition is higher than the whole sub-Saharan region. India is ranked very lower in global hunger index than many countries. The neighbor's are better performers than India. Improving the vitamin content of all the foods provided to the children is of the utmost urgency in the Indian state.

⁹ News article in NDTV.COM dated Nov 13, 2019 <https://swachhindia.ndtv.com/national-nutrition-month-things-to-know-about-india-mid-day-meal-scheme-world-largest-school-feeding-program-38040/>

¹⁰ News article in The WIRE dated- 1 Feb, 2019 <https://swachhindia.ndtv.com/national-nutrition-month-things-to-know-about-india-mid-day-meal-scheme-world-largest-school-feeding-program-38040/>

¹¹ News article in Livemint dated- 20 January, 2020 <https://www.livemint.com/politics/policy/govt-set-to-review-mid-day-meal-scheme-amid-row-over-food-quality-1568055948575.html>

Conclusion

With the above topics covered in the paper, we can conclude that mid-day meal in India is not in a very good state today. Though there is some progress happening but the overall condition and result is poor. On one hand, the state of Tamil Nadu is performing very well in aspects of food quality, supplies, and equipment and cooking, there are some states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where there is no sign of mid-day meal being served in specific areas. Tamil Nadu is also performing well in aspects of education and infrastructure while its counterparts aren't doing that great. In one incident, UP NGO found dead rat in a dal utensil and in another incident, 1 liter of milk was diluted and served to many children¹². These incidents cannot be taken lightly and the government has to take some action as soon as possible or else there will be many problems arising.

From the research, it has also been found out that the mid – day meal being served in other countries such as Europe and North America, are in a better state than India. The meals served there are more nutritious and prepared in a very hygienic manner. Thus, the government should take necessary action and try to improve the mid-day meal scheme in India.

Suggestions

After conducting the research I would like to suggest that, I feel that this whole project should go to the private sector and the government should appoint private players to take care of them. The budget which they keep for the project be given to a private company who would be more capable of taking care of the meals.

If not possible, the government should rather make more strict policies and try to implement the scheme in a more severe manner. The cleanliness of the kitchens should be increased and the government should give more nutritional food content and should make it an overall balanced meal. Also the states which are poorly performing should be given a special preference and should be kept under more supervision.

¹² News article in Hindustan times dated Dec 4, 2019 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/topic/mid-day-meal>

Research methodology

The research methodology used is very simple. The whole research paper relies on article sources and other government findings solely based on internet sources. All of the data and research present in the paper is taken and interpreted from online articles and other online websites. The reason for choosing this type of method is because my topic's data is mostly available on internet and most of the sources of my paper are government website so this is the sole reason for taking such a methodology for my research paper.

Review of literature

1. Kumar Raviranjana in his book titled "Mid-Day Meal Programme in India" has discussed about the problems being faced by the scheme in the country particularly in the lower sections and then he has suggested ways of how the government can implement ways to improve the scheme in India and make it more effective.
2. Jean Drèze and Aparajita Goyal in their research paper titled "Future of Mid-Day Meals" published in Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 38 in the year 2003 conducted a research and found out about the supreme courts judgment and how the impact of mid-day meals was happening on school children and discussed about the right to food.
3. Reetika Khera in her article titled "Mid-Day Meals: Looking Ahead" published in Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 48, in the year 2013 has discussed about the positive sides of the mid-meal with regard to enrolment, attendance, retention and nutrition. It also discusses about the Bihar food poisoning tragedy and what has to be learnt from it.
4. Sony Pellissery, Sattwick Dey Biswas and Biju Abraham in their journal article titled "A Dignified Meal: Negotiated Spaces in India's School Meal Program" published in The International Journal of Social Quality Vol. 6, in the year 2016 examine India's right to food legislation and its implementation in school meal programs and discuss about the relationship between the students and the teachers and they conducted research in the states of Kerala and West Bengal.
5. Purna Katiyar in her article titled "What's ailing India's midday meal scheme" in the economic times dated 21 Dec, 2019 has discussed about the problems being faced by the

government in implementing the scheme and hats steps the government is taking to overcome them.

6. Siddeshwar Shukla in his article titled”Mid-Day Meal: Nutrition on Paper, Poor Food on the Plate” published in Economic and Political WeeklyVol. 49 in the year 2014 has discussed about the main problems which it is facing which is nutrition and hygiene and has discussed about the reports in Delhi which fail the basic standard nutritional requirements.