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Constraints faced during implementation of mid-day meal scheme in Bikaner district of Rajasthan

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Abstract

The universalization of elementary education is a tool to improve socio-economic status. One of the main reasons of remaining out of school or dropping out from regular schooling is financial and nutritional crisis. Mid-day meal has been introduced on 15 August, 1995 in all over India to combat the hunger by providing nutritious cooked food and to impart health- hygiene practices among students as they are our future citizens. The present study was conducted in Lunkaransar block of Bikaner district of Rajasthan which was selected by lottery method. The sample of 50 parents and 30 teachers from upper primary schools were selected randomly. Interview schedule and spot observation technique were used to collect the data. The data was analyzed by using suitable statistical parameters such as frequencies, percentages, rank and standard deviation. The major constraints found by most of teachers (66%) were, they perform extra role in absence of cook/ helper which reduces their teaching time as well as mostly teachers (63%) reported that there is improper/no storage place for cooked food/food grains in school. The important suggestions given by parents and teachers are quantity & quality of food should be increased, there is need to be monitor and take feedback regularly from students and committee members as well to strengthen the scheme.

Keywords: Parents, constraints, education. health-hygiene, mid day meal

Introduction

“Many of the things we need can wait but the child cannot. His name is today. To him we cannot answer tomorrow. (Gabriela Mistale)

The Government of India initiated the Mid Day Meal Scheme as a supporting pillar to educational schemes, which was launched on 15 August, 1995. Education and nutrition plays an important role in the overall development of children. The universalization of elementary education is a tool to strengthen them socio-economically. One of the main reasons of remaining out of school or dropping out from regular schooling is financial and nutritional crisis. Implementation of Mid Day Meal scheme at school level is an important way to improve their attendance in schools and their health status and to impart health- hygiene practices among students as they are our future citizens. MDM contributes in breaking the caste barriers and helps in promoting the egalitarian values among children. The universalized mid day meal scheme now covers nearly 12 crore children in the country making it the world largest school feeding program. However, issues pertaining to quality of meal continue to evoke concern, necessitating new approaches to monitoring and supervision. (Dr Sridevi Srinivasan. Evaluation of the ongoing and mid day meal programme in primary schools of Chhattisgarh state. 2008) This program is an intensive effort to find alternative source of nutrition and to achieve high literacy across the country. Thus, the study was taken to reveal the constraints faced by teachers during MDM implementation as well as important suggestions are provided by parents and teachers to improve the functioning and to strengthening the Mid Day Meal programme.

Review of literature

Kantawala *et al.* (2013) [3] revealed that 12.8% teachers reported that they faced problems and suggested that for monitoring and evaluation of the programme, registers and monitoring forms should be made simpler.

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Asiago and Akello (2014) [2] concluded that head teachers face many challenges in implementing SFP (School Feeding Programme) in schools. Parents need sensitization on their role in support of SFP (School Feeding Programme) in order for schools to realize academic excellence. This will free the teachers from preparing and serving SFP (School Feeding Programme) food hence remain focused to teaching only.

Grover and Kaur (2014) [1] observed in their study that all of the sampled schools have constructed their kitchen sheds and were using it for cooking MDM as well as for the storage of food grains and other materials. In 75% rural area schools, head teachers reported problem in gas cylinder procurement. The availability of drinking water has been confirmed in all schools but the quality of ground water is not good as it's too much salty or heavy water is there. Water filters need to be installed in all schools and regular cleaning of the installed tanks is needed.

Singh N. (2016) [4] study showed that most of (60.00%) teachers are performing helper/cooks roles other than teaching such as cooking, cleaning and other arrangements due to lacking, irregularity and absenteeism of helpers/cook followed by more than (54.00%) of the teachers having complaints of improper toilet facility for school children as well as for them also and half (51.50%) of the teachers did not received any training regarding better implementation of mid day meal programme at school level.

Kumar (2014) [5] reported in his study 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.

Methodology: The study was conducted in Bikaner district of

Rajasthan. There are seven panchayat samities in Bikaner district. Out of them one panchayat samiti was selected by lottery method i.e. Lunkaransar. A total of 10 schools from Lunkaransar block were selected through random sampling technique. The sample of the study comprised of 30 teachers (3 teachers from each upper primary school) and 50 parents (5 parents per village) of Lunkaransar block of Bikaner district. Interview schedule was prepared to collect the required information from the respondents. Questions based on constraints during implementation of mid day meal scheme were framed with the help of subject experts and pilot test was conducted in non sample area. The questions were YES or NO type and after the statistical analysis, each question is ranked on the basis of mean score. The objective of suggestions regarding MDM was open-ended which is tabulated and ranked by framing statements.

Result of the study

The findings from the Table (1) shows that majority of (66.7%) teachers complained that they have to perform the role whenever helper/cook is on leave; hence it was ranked at first place. The constraints that "teaching time is reduced/affected" and "they did not receive any training regarding better implementation of programme" were reported by 63.3 percent of teachers. Hence, these were ranked at second place. The data from table depicts that about 53.3 per cent of teachers were facing the problem of additional work to supervise the students/ cooks/helpers followed by cleaning of dining area is a time consuming activity (50.0%) ranked at third and fourth places respectively whereas other constraints such as difficulty in maintaining/ filling of registers and monitoring the forms and there was improper kitchen shed for preparing the meal in school were reported by 43.3 per cent of teachers and ranked at fifth place.

Table 1: Constraints faced by teachers during implementation of Mid Day Meal Scheme (n1=30)

Statement	Yes		No		Mean Score	Rank
	F	%	F	%		
1. Teaching time is reduced/affected	19	63.30	11	36.70	0.63	II
2. Less supply/delayed supply of food grains/cooked food	8	26.70	22	73.30	0.26	VIII
3. Cleaning of dining area after meals is time consuming activity	15	50.00	15	50.00	0.50	IV
4. Sometimes, children are not washing their dishes properly, hence it is added work to supervise them	16	53.30	14	46.70	0.53	III
5. Mid day meal registers and monitoring forms are very difficult to fill/maintain	13	43.30	17	56.70	0.43	V
Improper/no storage place for cooked food/food grains	19	63.30	11	36.70	0.63	II
6. Improper kitchen shed (if meal is prepared into the school by the cook)	13	43.30	17	56.70	0.43	V
Adulteration complaints into the food grains /cooked food	3	10.00	27	90.00	0.10	IX
7. No training received by the teachers for better implementation of mid day meal programme	19	63.30	11	36.70	0.63	II
Improper facility of drinking water	11	36.70	19	63.30	0.36	VI
8. Lack of proper hygiene practices/difficulty in maintaining hygiene in store room, kitchen and in other infrastructure facilities	16	53.30	14	46.70	0.53	III
9. Improper toilet facility	16	53.30	14	46.70	0.53	III
10. Less availability of eating utensils	9	30.00	21	70.00	0.30	VII
11. In absence (leave) of helper/cook, the teacher have to perform their roles	20	66.70	10	33.30	0.66	I
12.						

The least important constraint perceived by the teachers was adulteration complaints into the food grains or cooked food (10.0%) and hence it was ranked at last place.

Thus, from the above description it is inferred that "In absence (leave) of helper/cook, the teacher have to perform their roles", "Improper/no storage place for cooked food/food grains" and "Teaching time is reduced/affected" were the major constraints encountered by the teachers under Mid Day Meal Programme ranked first and second respectively. The

findings of present study are supported by the findings of Kantawala *et al.* (2013) [3] and Singh N. (2016) [4].

Suggestions given by Parents and Teachers to strengthen the Mid Day Meal Scheme

Suggestions given by parents to strengthen the Mid Day Meal Scheme

The findings from table 2 indicated the suggestions given by cent per cent of parents were proper hygiene and checking of

hot cooked meal by teachers should be done followed by installation of water filters, regular feedback from the students

and monthly supervision and monitoring by officials is to be needed. Hence, these were ranked at first place.

Table 2: Suggestions given by parents to strengthen the Mid Day Meal Scheme n2= 50

Sr. No.	Statements	Parents (n=50)		Mean Score	Rank
		f	%		
1	Quantity/ quality of meal should be increased	47	94.00	0.94	III
2	Hygiene should be maintained by cook cum helpers during cooking and serving the meal	50	100.0	1.00	I
3	Cooked meal should be checked by teachers before serving.	50	100.0	1.00	I
4	Hot cooked meal to be served to students.	50	100.0	1.00	I
5	Separate toilet and hand washing facility should be there, to improve hygiene and good practices	47	94.00	0.94	III
6	Water filters should be installed at school and need to be clean regularly	50	100.0	1.0	I
7	Monthly health check up of students should be done at school	37	74.00	0.74	V
8	School should be organize parents meetings on weekly basis	48	96.00	0.96	II
9	The feedback from the students should be taken regularly	50	100.0	1.00	I
10	The menu in the Mid-Day Meals should be changed seasonally and also consider the demand of children.	46	92.00	0.92	IV
11	Supervision and monitoring by officials should be regular on monthly basis	50	100.0	1.0	I

The data further shows that more than ninety per cent of parents (96.0%, 94.0% and 92.0%) had suggested that weekly meetings of parents followed by must be provide separate toilet and hand washing facility and quality/quantity of meal should be increased as well as menu should be changed by considering the demand of children which were assigned the rank as second, third and fourth respectively whereas 74.0 per cent of parents recommended that monthly health check up of students should be done.

Suggestions given by teachers to strengthen the MDM Scheme

The suggestions given by teachers to improve the functioning

and strengthening the Mid Day Meal scheme were presented in figure 1. The findings highlights that hundred per cent of respondents suggested that quantity and quality of meal, regular distribution of cooking cost to, honorarium of cook-cum – helper should be increased, there is need to supervise and monitor the programme by officials as well as by parents, parent-teacher associations should be made active and parents meetings on weekly basis and trainings/seminars/ workshops for teachers at block/district level should be organized. Cent per cent of teachers also reported that menu should be changed seasonally to break the monotony. Hence, these were ranked at first place.

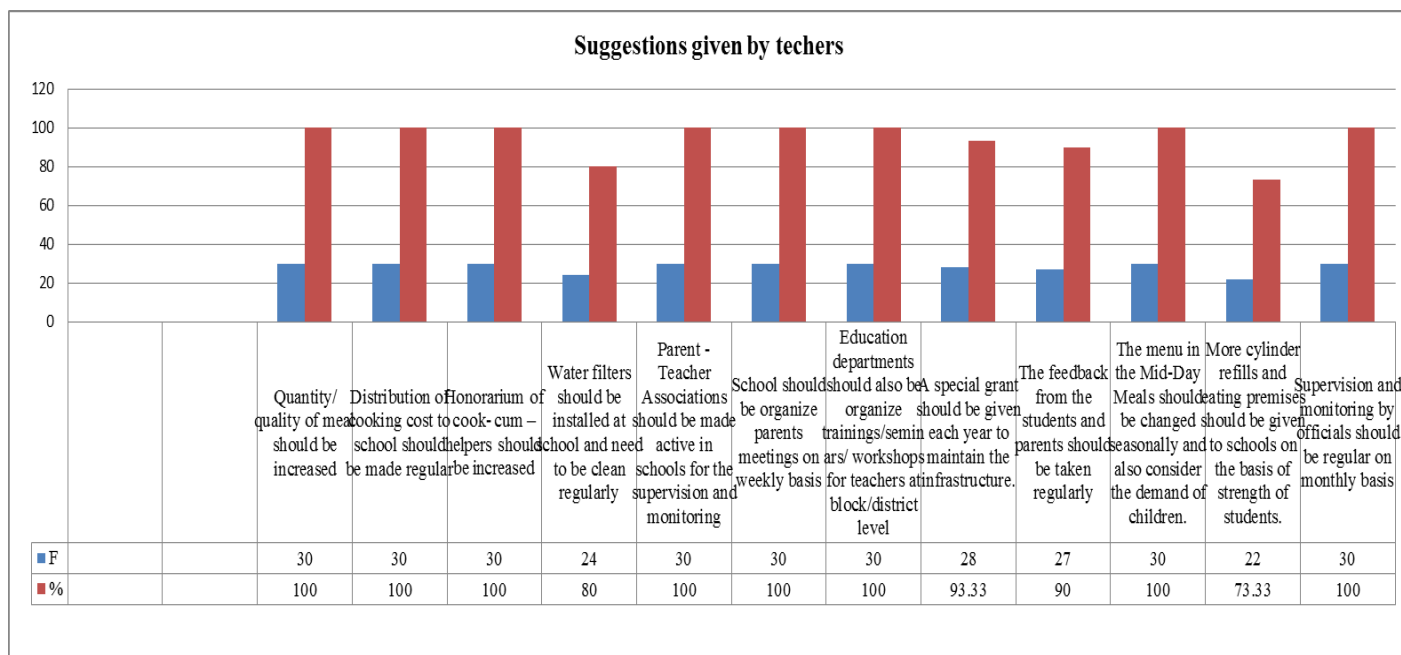


Fig 1: Suggestions given by teachers to strengthen the MDM Scheme n1= 30

The data further depicts that majority of teachers (93.3%, 90.0%, 80.0%) suggested that a special grant should be given for maintenance followed by feedback should be taken to improve the functioning of MDM scheme, water filters should be installed and cleaned whereas about 73.3 per cent of teachers had reported that extra cylinders and eating premises should be provided by the government. Hence, these were assigned the rank second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

The findings of present study were supported by the findings of Grover and Kaur (2014) [1].

Conclusion

Mid day meal scheme which was introduced basically to improve the overall development of the primary school children’s education, needs a close supervision by committee members, parents and government officials as well for its

better functioning. Therefore, the Government of India should consider or tackle the main/major constraints faced by teachers during its implementation. The important suggestions endorsed by majority of teachers and parents were to increase the quality, quantity of meal and honorarium of cook-cum-helper followed by need to be supervise and monitor the scheme by taking feedback from students and organize meetings of parents, trainings/ seminars for teachers.

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