
Effectiveness of Mid Day Meal Scheme in Increasing the Attendance and Decreasing Students' dropouts in Karnataka

* Prof. Ramesh Agadi

** Moona Jaffer

Introduction

Education is the tool for the development of any society and it is a social investment for the future. The quality of education system in India and the process, by which it is delivered, especially at the elementary level, are not what is expected of it. This is precisely the reason for dropout rates being increased year by year in government schools. The introduction of mid-day meal scheme in school have played a vital role in retention of students to a large extend. This paper will highlight the services provided by the government in schools and how effective (role played) mid day meal scheme in the enrolment and retention of students.

Jayaraman et al (2005) suggested that midday meals might be a cost-effective means of increasing enrolment. Paul and Mondal (2012) concluded that mid-day meal programme (MDM) has had a positive impact in areas like enhancing enrolment, attendance and lowering retention and drop out of students particularly of BPL and rural. Furthermore, mid-day meal program has some other benefits like removal of classroom hunger, social and gender equality and formation of good habits of students (like washing hands and utensils before meal) other than academic achievement in school. Dreze (2004) argues that the mid day meals scheme is helpful in imparting education in hygiene like washing hands before meals and makes the school more inviting towards children.

Service delivery in mid day meals and the mechanism for the delivery of the scheme is very critical. Services are deeds, processes and performances provided or co produced by one entity or person for another entity or person (Zeithaml, 2006). Service delivery is concerned with where, when and how the service is delivered to the customers (Lovelock, 1996). The concept of the service delivery of the public services is different from that of the industrial entities. Various efforts are made to understand the quality of public service delivery.

There are many complaints that the execution of the scheme burdens the teachers and eat into their teaching time. Bhargav and Bhargav (2011) after the studying the perception of teachers in Haryana suggested that the mid-day meals should not add to the workload of the teachers. The MDM programme in certain places can, according to Rajan (2007), displace the primary function of the schools (i.e. education), reducing them to benefit distribution centres. In order to address the issue of service delivery, the separate personnel are put in place to run the programme so that the teaching time of the teachers are not disturbed.

MDM History

The history of providing free meal to the students in the public schools of the country by the administration through public funding could be traced to pre-independent years. It is believed that the mid day meal scheme was first introduced by the British administration in the municipal schools of Madras in 1925 and the schools of Pondicherry by the French administration in 1930. In the independent India, it became a universal programme when the mid day meals programme was introduced by the Tamil Nadu government in 1962-63. During the year 1963 as a part of Applied Nutrition Program was introduced in Karnataka for school children 6- 11 of age with the assistance of the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE). Mid day meals was introduced in Karnataka as part of this scheme. Gujarat and Kerala introduced such schemes in 1984. The number of states providing noon meal rose to 12 by 1990-91. All these were initiatives by the state governments and were not coordinated at the central level.

A centrally sponsored scheme, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched on 15th August 1995. The objectives of the programme were to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance of the children along with improvement in nutritional levels of children. In the first phase, the programme was implemented in 2408 blocks in the country. By the year 1997-98 the NP-NSPE was introduced in all blocks of the country.

The Supreme Court of India in the well known "Right to Food case" examined the issue of the Right to food and ordered that the mid day meal scheme should be implemented with sufficient safeguards. The

* Professor of Management Gulbarga University Kalaburagi Karnataka

** Research Scholar, Department of Studies and research in Management Gulbarga University Kalaburagi

following are the major directions from the order passed on 20 April 2004.

- Every child in every Government and Government assisted Primary Schools with a prepared mid day meal with a minimum content of 300 calories and 8–12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days
- The conversion costs for a cooked meal, under no circumstances, shall be recovered from the children or their parents
- The Central Government shall make provisions for construction of kitchen sheds
- Attempts shall be made for better infrastructure, improved facilities (safe drinking water etc.), closer monitoring (regular inspection etc.) and other quality safeguards as also the improvement of the contents of the meal so as to provide nutritious meal to the children of the primary schools
- In drought-affected areas, midday meals shall be supplied even during summer vacations

The objectives of the Mid Day Meal Scheme are:

- Improve the effectiveness of primary education by improving the nutritional status of children thereby reducing malnutrition.
- Attract children from disadvantaged sections, especially girls from Dalits and Adivasi tribes to school, thereby increasing attendance, reducing dropout rates & promoting women empowerment through literacy.
- Promote a feeling of oneness and secularism amongst various different religions and cultures.

It was decided to extend the scheme to the drought-affected areas in the country from September 2004. The scheme was extended to the Higher Primary Schools from October 2007. According to the information available at the website of the MHRD, the total number students being benefitted from the scheme at the national level stood at 11.77 crores in 2009-10 for the elementary schools. The number was 11.36 crores in 2010-11, 10.52 in 2011-12, 10.68 in 2012-13 and 11.58 in 2013-14.

Mid Day Meal Scheme in Karnataka

The progressive rulers of the erstwhile Mysore State promoted education in the state through various means including establishing schools. There are examples of community sponsored feeding schemes for people were prevalent in the state with the name Dasoha (means feeding in local language). The noon feeding programme in public schools of the state was introduced as part of the Applied Nutrition Program was for school children 6- 11 of age with the assistance of the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) in 1963. The Centrally Sponsored scheme of NPNSPE was implemented in all the blocks of the state. The scheme was later reformed and launched as Akshara Dasoha (Dasoha means feeding and Akshara means letters) was launched in the districts of Hyderabad Karnataka region, which lies in the North East part of the state in 2002-03. This was extended to the remaining parts of the state in 2003-04 covering students studying in classes I to V. The scheme was extended to all the Higher Primary Schools from October 2004. The state government took a very progressive step of handing over the implementation of the scheme to the Zilla Panchayat, the elected Local government at the district level from the year 2005-06. The students studying in the high schools were brought under the scheme since 2007.

Infrastructure facilities have been provided to the schools as per the requirements. The kitchen sheds are provided to most of the schools (87%) in the state. The only district with a lesser coverage of the kitchen sheds in Bangalore Urban (39%) where most of the schools are covered under the centralized kitchen scheme. Schools are provided with cooks/helpers as per the number of students studying there. The provisions mandate providing one cook to all school. This number can go up four for the schools with more than 300 students. Kitchen centers have been categorized on the basis of number of children covered by the Centre.

- i. One cook- cum-helper for schools up to 25 students.
- ii. Two cooks-cum-helpers for schools with 26 to 100 students.
- iii. One additional cook-cum-helper for every addition of upto 100 students.

Beneficiaries of the scheme 2015-16.

The scheme in the state covers 61.72 lakhs students who are enrolled in the 55464 schools of the state. The attendance as per the official figures of the department is pegged at 93.66%. The beneficiaries under Midday meals scheme of the GoI is 48.01 lakhs which includes 30.4 lakhs in lower primary and 17.87 lakhs in Higher Primary schools of the state. About 97% of the schools adopt safe cooking practices by using LPG connection for cooking.

This paper is an attempt to analyse the trends in attendance of the students in midday meals programme in the state. Further efforts are made to see the whether any correlation exists between the attendances and the facilities in the schools, average size of the schools in terms on the number of students. To study the infrastructure and operational mechanism of the scheme, researcher has gathered needed data/information from a survey of selected cooks and teachers related to the mid day meals in Bidar district of Karnataka. The data related to attendance are collected from the database with the department for the years 2012-13 to 2015-16. The monthly attendance trend shows a reduced attendance in the months of April, May and October due to the school vacation.

The following are the objectives of the present study:

1. To Know the historical background behind the introduction of MDM in India.
2. To study the significance of MDM scheme.
3. To study the mechanism for monitoring and supervision of the Mid Day Meal Scheme.
4. To critically examine service delivery mechanism for implementing the scheme.
5. To study the effectiveness of MDM scheme in increasing the attendance and decreasing students' dropouts in Karnataka

The trends in enrolment during the last four years are shown in the table below. The table shows a decreasing trend of enrolment in the primary especially in the lower primary schools. This corresponds with the general trend of decreasing enrolment in the government and aided primary schools. Figure 2, below shows the trends over the four years across the months. The trend line dips at the months of April and May, which correspond to the summer vacation, and the month of October, which corresponds to the Dasara vacation.

Table: 1 - Trend in enrolment over the years.

	Primary	HPS	Total
2012-13	2717828	2431062	5148890
2013-14	3374703	2328061	5702764
2014-15	3312208	2249802	5562010
2015-16	2249802	2144405	4394207

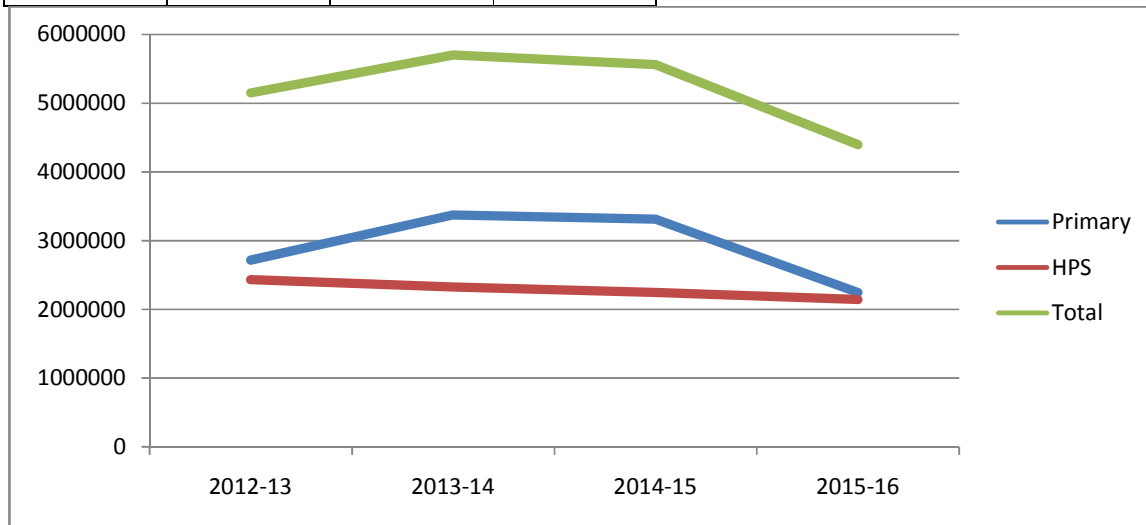


Fig 1. Trends in enrolment over the years

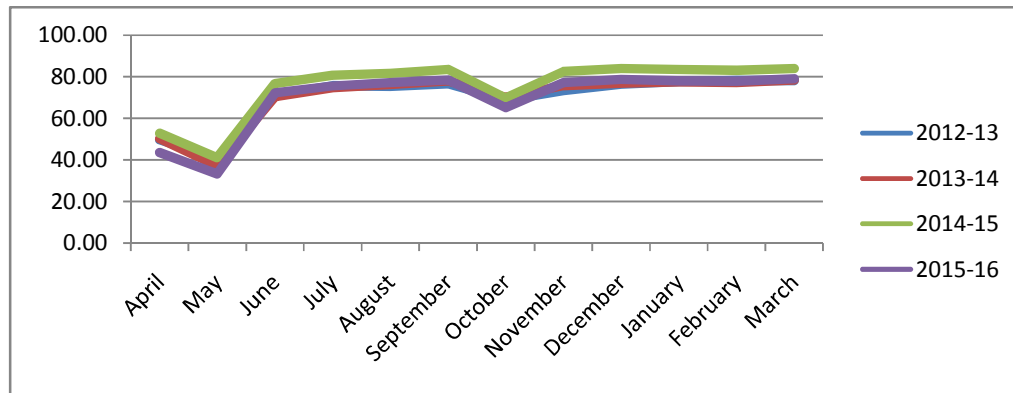


Fig 2: Attendance of students in MDM over the years across months.

Analysis was made to see whether there is any correlation between the average attendance in mid day meals scheme with a few variables such as average student size in a school, availability of kitchen staff per school, availability of kitchen sheds and availability of gas connections in the schools.

Impact of facilities on Attendance

Analysis of the available data has been made to find whether any correlation exists between the average attendances of the mid day meals at the district level with the four variables namely, availability of kitchen shed, number of mid day meals staff per school, availability of gas connection for cooking and the average number of students in the school. All the figures used are made at the district level.

Firstly, the correlation of the school size was correlated with the average attendance for both the primary and higher primary schools across the years. The analysis revealed a very strong negative correlation, the lowest value being 0.54. This leads to the conclusion that the average attendance increases corresponding to the decrease in the size of the schools or with the decrease in the average number of students per school. Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient.

Table 2 – Coefficient of correlation between the attendance and the school size across the years.

Year	Category of school	Coefficient of correlation
2012-13	Primary	-0.64
2012-13	HPS	-0.54
2013-14	Primary	-0.76
2013-14	HPS	-0.67
2014-15	Primary	-0.73
2014-15	HPS	-0.73
2015-16	Primary	-0.73
2015-16	HPS	-0.70

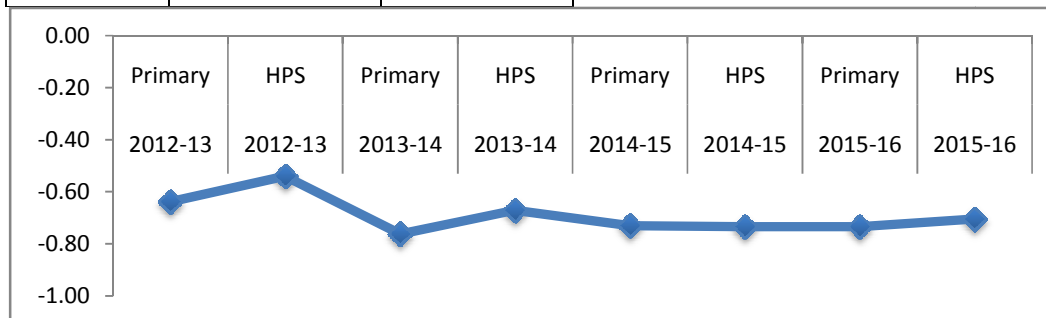


Figure 4, Correlation between school size and attendance in MDM across the years.

Relationship between the attendance and other variables were also analysed. The results are tabulated and given in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Relationship between attendance and facilities

Sl No	Variable	Coefficient of correlation
1	Gas connection	-0.07
2	Kitchen shed	0.38
3	Staff Primary	-0.13
4	Staff HPS	0.003
5	Cooking staff Elementary	-0.01

A reading of the data at the table establishes that the variables related to facilities existing in the schools do not have any significant impact on the attendance of students in mid day meals in Karnataka. The attendance shows a weak positive correlation with availability of kitchen sheds while it has a very weak (near zero) negative correlation with the availability of gas connection. The availability of the mid day meal staff does not have any impact on the attendance at the elementary level as a whole or at the lower and upper primary level viewed separately. Though it looks surprising to see absence of correlation between the infrastructure facilities in the schools and attendance of students in mid day meals in the preliminary analysis, this does not come as a surprise. The availability of better quality schools, English medium schools perceived to be good by the parents, increasing disposable income within the hands of people, increased awareness and aspiration levels of parents and the admission on students from weaker section of students under Sec 12(1)(c) of RTE Act to private unaided schools contribute to a shift from the government to the private schools. Thus, it can be safely concluded that the mid day meals alone is not sufficient to attract children to the government schools. The time is ripe for the government schools to concentrate on quality of education. Otherwise, all those who could afford the private education would leave the government system, though the entire education is imparted free of cost and the children are provided with many incentives including the mid day meals.

Bibliography

1. Bhargav, Smriti and Bhargav, Ashta (2011) “An Evaluative Study Of Opinion And Awareness Of Primary School Teachers Towards Implementation Of Mid-Day Meal Program”, EXCEL International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies, Vol.1 Issue 1, Oct 2011, ISSN 2249 8834
2. Dreze, Jean (2004) “Mid day Meals and Children’s Rights” EPW, 8 May pp. 1937-1938.
3. Lovelock, Christopher and Wirtz, Jochen (2010),”Service Marketing, People, Technology, Strategy” Prentice Hall; 7 edition.
4. Sarwade, W. K. (2015). Evolution and Growth of Indian auto Industry. Journal of Management Research and Analysis, 2(2), 136-141.
5. Sarwade, W. K. (2017). Public Distribution Schemes Organisation And Working of Fair Price Shops in Aurangabad District. Small Enterprises Development, Management & Extension (Sedme) Journal, 36(3)
6. Sarwade, W. K., & JagannathTandale, M. B. (2017). A Study of Economic Reforms and Performance of Private Insurance Sector in Marathwada Region. Referred Journal of CMR College of Engineering & Technology, 117.
7. M.A.Raffey (2009) “Mutual Fund a safer investment avenue in volatile stock market condition” Innovation Management Practices in uncertain times: 7-9
- 8.
9. M.A.Raffey (2010) “A Study of Real Estate Mutual Funds in India” ” “Management Insights: The GBS Journal” Vol.1, No.1, January 2010:90-57.
10. M.A.Raffey (2010)“Interest free banking windows in India in global economic downturn” “Interest Free banking as a means of inclusive finance in India”.
11. M.A.Raffey (2010) “Positive Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on the Indian Economy” “Global Economic Crisis and India’s Economic Stability”:346-349

#####