Research Paper Home Science

Evaluation of Quality of Food Given in Mid Day Meal Scheme in Government Schools of Agra City

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to evaluate the quality of Mid Day Meal in 35 Government schools of Agra city. It was found that quality of food served is of fair quality in all most all MDM Centers. In all the schools the prescribed amount of food was distributed among children and the amount of food given to every student in MDM was according to recommendation.

KEYWORDS Mid Day Meal, supplementary nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

The Mid Day Meal scheme is the popular name for school meal programme in India. It involves provision of lunch free of cost to school-children on all working days. The key objectives of the programme are: protecting children from classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment and attendance, retention and simultaneously, take care of the nutritional health of school going children, improved socialization among children belonging to all castes, addressing malnutrition and social empowerment through provision of employment to women. The contribution of MDM has been of great significance to schools located in deprived and disadvantaged areas. Today no child in the schools remains hungry and undernourished. The scheme has a long history and has been expanded to all parts of India after a landmark direction by the Supreme Court of India on November28, 2001.

This Scheme was launched in Uttar Pradesh in September, 2004. Mid Day Meal programme has lowered the widespread incidence of malnutrition primarily among children of poor families and to increase their access to education. Mid Day Meal helps the malnourished and well nourished children to overcome short term hunger and thereby increase their concentration and learning inside the classroom. It not only takes care of the dietary gap but can also be effective in ensuring that short-term hunger does not inhibit their capacity to learn. This programme has created a very congenial atmosphere for education; health growth and overall well-being of the poor and needy children (Dhananjayan, 2003; Kanam 2003).

METHODOLOGY

For the present study, the population constitutes students, teacher/ Incharges of Mid Day Meal from Primary and Elementary Government schools of Agra city, Uttar Pradesh. For the selection of sample, random sampling technique was adopted. A list of Primary and Elementary Government schools of Agra city was collected from the District Education Officer. Out of which 35 schools were randomly selected from Agra city. A sample of 140 students of V^{th} and $VIII^{th}$ standard from 35 Government schools were drawn and 70 teachers/Incharges of MDM were randomly selected from primary and Elementary schools for data collection. The tool used in this study was self constructed having 19 observation questions.

Collection of data

The primary data was collected from the Government school students, Government teachers/Incharges of Mid Day Meal scheme. Discussion were also held with the officers implementing this scheme. Personal observation and interview schedule with the school teachers/ Incharges of Mid Day Meal scheme and students were used to collect data regarding Mid Day Meal scheme. The information drawn was also verified through personal observation employing observation technique.

RESULTS

Table -1: Quality of food given in MDM Scheme

Sr. No.	Different Components of Quality of meals
1.	Quality of food given is satisfactory
2.	Amount of food material provided according to recommendation
3.	Quantity of food served to the students is same for Class V to class VIII
4.	Water used for cooking food is clean and easily available.
5.	Sensory evaluation of food: i. Appearance ii. Taste iii. Smell iv. Texture of food
6.	Fruits are provided to the school children.
7.	Nutritious food is provided to school children
8.	Food given is free from adulteration
9.	Containers/bags containing raw ingredients are placed on floor/shelf/any where
10.	Facility for refrigeration
11.	Prepared food items are kept covered
12.	Wearing headgears by the cook
13.	Cook and helpers carry gloves while handling food
14.	Personal hygiene of food handlers
15.	Cleanliness of utensils
16.	Grain delivery is regular and timely
17.	Whether the food is being tasted by any teacher or MDM Incharge before supply to children
18.	Area for preparation for cooking food, assembly and washing areas of the service units supplying the meals
19.	During the last four weeks, has any child fallen ill after consuming the Mid-Day Meal.

As for as quality of meal was concerned, all most all of the teachers/ Incharges responded that they are satisfied with it, but only few of them were not satisfied due to its average/ poor quality of food grain which is supplied by the Government. The quantity of food is a matter of great concern be-

cause Government has fixed the norms of food to be served per child in the state. It was observed that in all the 35 schools the prescribed amount of food was distributed among children in schools provided according to the recommendation of Government. Grain delivery was also regular and timely.

It was a joy to observe the mid-day meal in the schools of Agra where quality of food was found to be of "fair" quality in most of the MDM Centers. Quality of food was assessed in terms of appearance, taste, smell and texture in the present evaluation study. Researcher has observed that in schools, the pooris being served was soft, rice were made with vegetables, daal and vegetables were nicely cooked, kheer was tasty. In majority of schools, the meals served were well cooked, adequate and palatable. There were rare incidents of dirt and worms. In most of the schools, prepared food items were kept covered. It was also observed that all the 35 schools covered under study were having drinking water facility in their schools. Personal hygiene of food handlers was also found to be satisfactory. No incident of any child has fallen ill after consuming the mid-day meal during the last four weeks.

Whereas in the weekly menu, there was no provision for fruits to be given to the school children. Nutritious value of food was found to be lacking. It has been observed that a storage area was there in most of the schools, but there were no shelves or platforms. The dry ingredients were stored in containers/bags and were placed on floor. There was no storage space for the proper storage of raw material. There was no facility for refrigeration in any school. No cook/helper was wearing headgears and gloves during cooking and serving the food. It has also observed that many times utensils were cleaned with the mud.

DISCUSSION

Regarding the quality of food given in Mid Day Meal scheme, observation was sought on the quality of meal. The interview taken from the teachers/ Incharges of MDM and students along with the observation has been noted down. Quality of food was assessed in terms of appearance, taste, smell and texture. Result revealed that overall quality of food was good. Incharges of MDM were also satisfied with it except very few. Amount of food material provided was also according to recommendation. The delivery of grain and rashan was also regular and timely. In majority of schools, the meals served were well cooked, and palatable. Prepared food items were kept covered. Water used for cooking food was also clean and easily available because every school had hand pump. No incidence of any child has fallen ill after consuming the mid-day meal during the last four weeks. Mid day meal has act as a regular source of "supplementary nutrition" for children and have facilitated their health growth. Further significant number of teachers reported that the health of school children has also improved due to Mid Day Meal scheme. The results are supported with the findings of Singh, Park and Dercon (2012) find that the programme had positive effect on health of school children in Andhra Pradesh. Similar results were found by Meena S. (2010) who conducted a study on children enrolled in Government run rural primary schools in Mathura district in Uttar Pradesh. Nutritionally balanced Mid Day Meal scheme for the students in the 6 primary schools was selected as intervention group. Height, weight, prevalence of protein-energy malnutrition and prevalence of signs of vitamin deficiencies, were measured. Food was provided for 221 days in one year. Within group and between groups repetitive measures were compared. Within both intervention and control groups height and weight had significantly increased.

As for as weekly menu was concerned, it was noticed that no fruit was being served on any day. The schools were having fixed menu for the whole week. Many times the beneficiaries get bored with the repetition of same menu. For this; cake, biscuits etc in the packed form can also be distributed. This is similar to the findings reported by Deaodhar (2010) who reported that the delivery of MDM scheme may be improved by partnering with private entities and NGOs and by including chikki, sukhdi, fortified nutrition bar, and fruit in the weekly menu. This will not only complement nutritional intake, but offer safety and variety, and, by reducing the distribution time, may offer more contact time between students and teachers for study purpose. This can become an attraction for school children. Pratichi Trust (2005) also found that some children highlighted the need for a change in the monotonous menu of khichari every day.

On the other hand, some strange things were observed regarding the storage facilities for the ration which causes inconvenience. In the store rooms, there were no shelves or platforms. Raw ingredients, grains etc were stored and placed on floor. There was no facility for refrigeration in any school. This could be because of the reason that Government might be facing the financial problem. Lack of proper storage facilities for storage of rashion, late supply of rashion causes inconvenience at school levels. Neither any cook/helper was wearing headgears during cooking the food nore they were carrying gloves while handling food. It has also observed that many times utensils were cleaned with the mud which is not considered as hygienic. The reason for this could be the monitoring and evaluation team of MDM might not be giving more emphasis in this regard. To check the quality of food, more frequent visits should be made by the inspectors. If teachers get sensitized regarding importance of whole hearted participation by all, then optimum benefit could be drawn for maintaining the quality of food.

CONCLUSION

All most all of the teachers/ Incharges and students responded that they are satisfied with the quality of food. In all the schools the prescribed amount of food was distributed among children in schools and the amount of food given to every student in MDM was according to recommendation. All the schools were having drinking water facility which was clean and easily available. Quality of food was found to be of "fair" quality in most of the MDM Centers. In weekly menu, there was no provision for fruits to be given to the school children. Nutritious value of food was found to be lacking.

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