



Initiatives for Increasing Enrollment At Primary Level in India

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ABSTRACT

Now a days human being are considered as the most important resource because optimum utilization of natural resources depends upon the human being. Without developed human resource, we cannot imagine the development of the nation. This is why, being rich in natural resources, most of the Asian and African countries are under developed. We all know that development of human resource totally depends on education. This is the reason, after independence our government is focusing on the universalization of education. In the education system the primary education is considered as the foundation. The success of development of children and higher education depends upon the success of primary education. So it was felt that primary education should be universalize irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender, economic status, color and region. To universalize and make the the primary education successful the government has taken many initiatives like, District Primary Education Programme (1994), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000-01), scholarship schemes, free uniform, supply of free text books, MDMS (Midday Meal Scheme). The midday meal scheme is the most important scheme in these programmes. This scheme was launched on August 15, 1995 as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) covering the students of primary schools of classes I-V. Its aims are improving nutritional status of children, minimize dropout rates, encourage children to come to classes regularly, promote national integration, multiculturalism. This programme has resulted in the increase of gross enrollment in the schools especially in the schools of rural areas and in the schools where under privileged population is high. The weaker section of the society is being more benefitted by this scheme.

KEYWORDS

Introduction: Education is the most important tool for the progress and development of the human being in modern times. This is why, in the present age every government is focusing on education for the development of the nation and of its citizens also. TO achieve this goal universalization of education especially Primary education is vital. The government of India has taken many initiatives for this purpose. Some of them are District Primary Education Programme (1994), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000-01), scholarship schemes, free uniform, supply of free text books, MDMS (Midday Meal Scheme). Some of them are following:

(1) MDMS: MDMS (Midday Meal Scheme) is the most ambitious and largest programme. Actually The Mid-day Meal Scheme is a school meal programme of the Government of India designed to improve the nutritional status of school-age children nationwide. It was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995.

History of the MDMS (Midday Meal Scheme):

From a long time it has been being felt that there should be some provisions to attract the children of weaker sections i.e. minorities, dalits, tribes, SC, ST, OBC's to make them better citizen. For this purpose several provisions were made in earlier days also These provisions were in the form of land grants, donations, financial aid, feeding poor children, free education, provision of free food, scholarships etc. In India this system has been running from the ancient times and it has historical evidences. But as a government scheme it was started in 1925 by Madras Municipal Corporation for disadvantaged children. In 80's Gujrat, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Pondicherry started Mid Day Meal Programme in the whole territory from their own resources for the children studying in primary schools. By 1990 91 the number of states implementing mid day meal programme from their own resources increased to twelve. Seeing the result of these programmes and with a view to enhance enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995, initially in 2408 blocks in the country by

government of India. By the year 1997-98 the NP-NSPE was introduced in all blocks of the country.

In the year 2001 the honourable Supreme Court of India ordered that "A basic entitlement of 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."

It was further extended in 2002 to cover not only children in classes I -V of Government, Government aided and local body schools, but also children studying in EGS and AIE centres. In September 2004 the scheme was revised to provide cooked mid day meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to all children studying in classes I – V in Government and aided schools and EGS/ AIE centres according to the order of the honourable Supreme Court of India passed in 2001. In **October 2007**, the scheme has been further revised to cover children in upper primary (classes VI to VIII) initially in 3479 Educationally Backwards Blocks (EBBs). Around 1.7 crore upper primary children were included by this expansion of the scheme. From 2008-09 i.e w.e.f 1st April, 2008, the programme covers all children studying in Government, Local Body and Government-aided primary and upper primary schools and the EGS/AIE centres including Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under SSA of all areas across the country. The calorific value of a mid-day meal at upper primary stage has been fixed at a minimum of 700 calories and 20 grams of protein. After wards changes in the provisions of Mid Day Meal Scheme are being made according to the needs.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the MDMS (Midday Meal Scheme) are mentioned following:

- Improvement of the nutritional status of children studying in classes I-V in the Government schools, Local Bodies' schools and Government aided schools, and EGS and AIE centres.
- To reduce nutritional deficiency diseases.

- Encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities.
- Providing nutritional support to children of primary stage in drought affected areas during summer vacation.
- Improvement in the status of nutrition of children by reducing malnutrition to make the primary education effective.
- To attract children of weaker sections i.e. minorities, dalits, tribes, SC, ST, OBC's towards school for the increase in attendance, reducing dropouts.
- To attract girls, especially from minorities, dalits, tribes, SC, ST, OBC's towards school for the increase in attendance, reducing dropouts.
- Promotion of national integration.
- Promotion of communal harmony.
- Eradication of untouchability.
- Eradication of caste based discrimination and promotion of equality.
- Promotion of secularism among the children in the schools at primary level.

(2) Scholarship schemes: Many scholarship programmes are being run in the government schools. Especially for the children belonging to the weaker sections of the society i.e. minorities, dalits, tribes, SC, ST, OBC's. They are getting monthly scholarships from the government.

(3) Free uniform : Free uniform is also being provided in the schools to all the children enrolled annually.

(4) Supply of free text books: Now state governments are providing free text books to all the children of the school under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000-01) up to class eighth.

(5) Supply of free cycles: Some state governments like Bihar government are supplying cycles to the students of secondary schools. This has also worked as Panacea for the increase in the enrollment of students at secondary level.

Effects of the programme:

Many researches and have been conducted by the governments, Foreign agencies, Researchers and NGO's (Non Government Organizations) have to know the effectiveness of the MDMS (Mid Day Meal Scheme). These researches have shown that MDMS (Mid Day Meal Scheme) have positive effects on primary education. Some of them are following:

- (i) Increase in the gross enrolment ratio.
- (ii) Increase in the enrollment of the children belonging to the weaker sections of the society i.e. minorities, dalits, tribes, SC, ST, OBC's.
- (iii) Increase in the attendance rates for children whose parents may place a lower value on schooling for financial reasons.
- (iv) Increase in the education of girl children
- (v) Decrease in the drop-out rates.
- (vi) Improvement in the nutritional status of the school going children belonging to the weaker sections of the society i.e. minorities, dalits, tribes, SC, ST, OBC's.

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