

SUMMARY

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Introduction

A number of schemes were launched in the primary education sector by authorities to reach the deprived section. Access to Primary Education was universalized through flagship program of government in the name of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), despite its successful implementation; a few children were still seen underprivileged of primary education due to their poor economic background (kainth, 2006).

In the above context authorities among the developed countries instituted an array of policies which focused on enhancing of school enrollment. Provision of school meal is one among those that is believed to increase the enrolment through two major channels (PROBE, 1999; Dreze and Goyal, 2003; Kremer and Vermeersch, 2004). First was to reduce the cost of education by giving implicit subsidy to parents/guardians and second by making child nutrition far better through school lunch programs which fostered learning, hence maximized the returns on education, with this School Meal schemes became very popular in developing countries (Jayaram and simroth, 2011).

As a similar case with maximum number of developing countries, one of the major causes for a child not to be enrolled in a school or dropped out of the school in India is the expenditure supposed to bear by the parents on education and their financial requirements of families (NFHS, 2000). Although teaching in government primary schools is trifling and completely sponsored, the overhead prices of books and uniforms might be quite high which is discouraging poor families from admitting their children to educational institutions (Public Report on Basic Education for India (PROBE), 1999).

Usually children skip schooling to take a part in earning livelihood for their families and act as a support by involving themselves in either household works like family farms, fields, business etc or directly working for a salary. Involvement in household works is a major reason found for dropping out of school in case of girls as compared to boys (NFHS, 2000). Thus, besides chaste sex affinity, poverty can further intensify gender gaps if the costs of admitting girls to school would remain continuously high with respect to the expected profits to their education in the labor marketplace (Kingdon, 1998).

The programs, which minimize the expenses of education, can be a successful way of improving participation at school level in developing countries. Estimation of provisional cash shifting programs in Latin America, which try to address education as a correlate of poverty, has proven successful (Morley and Coady, 2003). Progress in Mexico indicates a positive effect of such programs on increasing primary school enrollment and more effective in enhancing female enrollment. Assessment of in-kind school shifting programs in developing countries shows identical effects (Schultz's, 2004).

'India is residence to the world's biggest food insecure population, with more than 200 million people who are hungry,' India State Hunger Index (ISHI) said, adding that the country's poor performance is driven by its high levels of child under-nutrition and poor calorie count. It is further noted that "The child malnutrition of India" is higher than most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa' (World Bank, 2003). As per the global hunger index, report which was released in 2009 India ranks at 65 out of 84 countries.

In India more than 200 million people suffer from hunger which is more than any other country in the world, as according to 2008 report. Report also brings attention to some specific states of India where child nutrition should be addressed urgently. As per the above statements, School Meal Program is the proper solution to the problem. The key features of scheme are defense of children from classroom hunger, enhancement in school enrollment, maintenance of regular attendance by every child, improving social inclusion, minimizing caste discrimination, dealing with malnutrition and social empowerment of women (Sengupta, 2012).

The occurrence of child labor is another main problem that developing countries are facing in the liberalized economic system. Various suitable policies are sought today by the dealing authorities of the concerned fields (such as economists and policy makers) to overcome of these problems. In theoretical perspectives, the child labor has largely been attributed to high poverty and faults in Capital Market (Chaudhuri, 2007).

Children in other developing countries are getting stipend, free educational material and Mid Day Meals. These policies are implemented to overcome the problem of child labor by retaining the children in schools. It is not only economic incentive, which helped in increasing the enrollment. However, these programs are also significant for Educational outcomes related with children who are involved in Child Labor, but the programs act as a source to equalize the income loss to the parents by sending their children to school. Incentives may be of different forms like free cooked meals to schoolchildren, food to the family of school children, cash stipend for students and free learning material. These schemes are estimated to minimize the incidence of child labor by decreasing the relinquished valuable child wage income and by increasing the earning

potential of the students attending schools in future through human capital formation (Chaudhuri,2007).

Statement of the Problem

“Effect of mid-day meal scheme on access to Education at elementary level”

Operation Definitions

(i) *“Access to Education”* is the ability of all people to have equal opportunity in education, regardless of their social class, gender, ethnicity background or physical and mental disabilities.

(ii) *“Mid-Day Meal Scheme”* means the scheme of providing hot cooked meal at the mid day time during the working days in ‘Elementary Schools’ of India.

(iii) *“Elementary Level”* means classes or grades from I to VIII.

Research Questions

- I. What is the effect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on total retention of students at Elementary level in District Srinagar?
- II. What is the effect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on gender-wise retention of students at Elementary level in District Srinagar?
- III. What is the effect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on social class-wise retention of students at Elementary level in District Srinagar?
- IV. What is the effect of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on Educational outcome of schools at Elementary level in District Srinagar?

Delimitation of the study

- I. Present study is delimited to District Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir state.
- II. Present study is delimited to the government run Elementary schools of District Srinagar.
- III. Present study is delimited to the 80 schools at Elementary Level of District Srinagar.
- IV. Present study is delimited to those schools at Elementary Level that are having Co-Education.

Review of Literature

Kaur (2016), revealed that before the scheme, average enrollment was more and after the scheme the average enrollment is less. There is a fall observed in dropout rates before and after the scheme. But the change is not much significant. All these issues points out that the mid-day meal scheme is not the single reason which attracts children towards school or minimizes their drop-out rates. There are certainly many other factors responsible for enrollment and dropout of children from schools. Mid Day Meal Scheme is without any doubt a very good effort by the government but there is a need of introducing some more measures, and simultaneously government should also work for the removal of loopholes from existing schemes to ensure success in the mission of UEE.

Nath & Nath (2015), revealed on the basis of the present study that parents were found more attracted to send their wards to the school. After the introduction of Mid-Day Meal Scheme, there is an increment in the percentage of retention in schools. The headman opined that they are supporting the continuation of scheme. The Mid-Day Meal Program helped in increasing the attendance and enrolment of the students particularly coming from economically weaker families. The rural Headman and Teachers are having unanimously positive attitude towards the scheme. It was found that rural head teachers have shown encouraging attitude towards implementation of Mid-Day Meals Program.

Jan (2014), carried out a study regarding Mid Day Meal Scheme in district Pulwama, of Jammu and Kashmir, and revealed that scheme has a significant positive effect on enrollment of students, their retention in schools and relatively high growth of female enrollment at elementary level. The study found that Mid Day Meal Scheme has created a positive effect with respect to enrollment, attendance and retention. Maximum students in the schools stated during the qualitative evaluation that Mid Day Meal has proven as a main incentive for attracting them towards schools on regular basis. Collected information also indicated that the Mid Day Meal scheme has made the parents relaxed from the worries of providing one time meal to their children at homes. Scheme is also proved to be a great support, especially to the families of lower socio-economic background. While conducting the study it was also experienced that Mid Day Meals Scheme is believed to be a support for active learning of children that directly influences their academic performance. From the access point of view, scheme has played a vital role in bringing up social equity among students.

Hamid & Hamid (2012), conducted a study on effect of school meal scheme in district Anantnag of Jammu and Kashmir state, and reported that attendance rate has risen from 64.71% to 82.42%, which clearly shows an optimistic effect on average attendance over a period. After taking the opinions from teachers, parents and students to know the cause of enhancement of attendance rate, it was concluded that Mid Meal was the key factor. Study further revealed that mean drop-out rate has decreased after the introduction of scheme. The mean dropout rate has reduced from 25.15% to 14.22% which means a decline of 10.93% as a sharp indicator of success of scheme. During the study researchers encountered a number of socio-economic, ethnographic, monetary and administrative hurdles that were strongly affecting the scheme. Caste and gender discrimination were the concerned issues, related with scheme.

Paul & Mondal (2012), revealed the impact of Mid Day Meal Scheme on academic achievement of those students who are consuming the meals regularly. The study is exclusively conducted in district Burdwan of W.B, among the elementary schools. It was found that scheme has a definite positive effect on increasing enrollment, strength of attendance, low retention rate and minimizing dropouts which seems to be an important aspect for high academic achievement particularly students belonging to the lower economic backgrounds. The chi-square test results indicate a significant positive impact on academic performance by the virtue of Mid Day Meal Scheme. The fallouts of multiple regression models point out that there is a significant positive effect of scheme on educational outcomes of students by taking into deliberation the factors like enrolment, daily attendance, and retention level even, dropout rate of students. To make it more affective it should be associated and collaborated with awareness programs.

Design of the study

In the execution of the present study descriptive survey method of research was employed. In addition to the figural data collected from the Schools for the current study the research further more gave a qualitative touch to the study when some interviews of students and Head teachers were added to the study for unveiling of some important factors which a researcher was unable to do just with the quantitative data.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was all the government and government aided elementary schools as well as EGS/AIE Centers of District Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir, offering Mid Day Meal Scheme.

In the present study simple random sampling procedure was followed. The total population of study is 209 Elementary schools in district Srinagar (DSEK, 2016). For having a representative and easy sampling procedure district Srinagar could be divided into eight educational zones, researcher then selected 10 schools from each educational zone using a simple random sampling method that comprises of total 80 schools.

Sources of data

The source for the data used for the study was primary as well as secondary.

Data Collection Procedure

Researcher was subjected to collect the data from the District Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir a northern state of India. Researcher first received the consent from the Department of Education, Central University of Haryana where researcher is officially registered as a scholar with above mentioned research topic that authenticates the

originality of research and avoids any hassle during the execution of data collection process.

After reaching Srinagar the place from where data was supposed to collect, the researcher went to the office of “Chief Education officer”, Srinagar who after verification of documents permitted researcher to go further and provided a permission letter addressing all the eight educational zones of district Srinagar. After that required data was collected from 80 elementary schools of Srinagar through the tool Information Blank. Every person during the whole data collection provided me an adequate support and proper information as required.

Research tool used for the study

The researcher has used the Information Blank in the modified form, which was earlier used by ‘Kousar Jan’ in her study “*Impact of Mid Day Meal Scheme on Enrollment of students at Upper Primary Level in Education*” administered on Headmasters/Principals and Teachers of the Elementary schools. The data collected would indicate an effect of the Scheme in terms of access at elementary level in district Srinagar. The qualitative data was collected through the face-to-face interview with the students and Head teachers.

Statistical techniques used for analysis data

The data was analyzed using simple Mean and Percentage Analysis technique.

Findings

The quantitative data shows a regular increase in retention and from the year 2011 to 2015 except 2016, but the educational outcomes of the schools remained in a state of constant increase. The reason for the abrupt depression in retention during the year 2016 was the violence and the largest shutdown in the history of Kashmir. The valley remained disturbed for the period of six months; the curfew was imposed in the valley especially district Srinagar observed a complete shutdown for the rest of above-mentioned period. When looking into the qualitative data it was revealed that, the reason for enhancing the retention is Mid Day Meal Scheme when considering it totally, gender-wise and social class-wise. The scheme has helped in reducing the gender gaps and allocated a healthy retention of students from different social classes. However, the scheme is not showing much positive effect regarding the retention of Scheduled Tribes. The reason for which came into emergence that STs living in Srinagar are not the permanent residents but the nomads from the other parts of valley and remain on continuous move from one place to another. The learning outcomes of the school is positively affected by the scheme as there is no such decrease in total cumulative percentage even during the period of disturbance. Therefore, results can be summarized as:

1. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on total retention of students at Elementary Level.
2. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on retention of boys at Elementary Level.
3. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on retention of girls at Elementary Level.

4. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on retention of General Category students at Elementary Level.
5. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on retention of Scheduled Caste students at Elementary Level.
6. There is a no significant effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on retention of Scheduled Tribe students at Elementary Level.
7. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on retention of OBC students at Elementary Level.
8. There is a positive effect of Mid Day Meal Scheme on Educational outcome of schools at Elementary Level.

