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# Advantages and Disadvantages of Mid Day Meal Programme of District West Siang (Arunachal Pradesh): A Critical Analysis

Miss Rigam Kaye[1,] Prof. Thensei Lhungdim[2]
[1,2]*Research Scholar Department of Education Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills Doimukh, Itanagar, 791112, Arunachal Pradesh, India*

*Abstract*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Food is any substance consumed to provide nutrition support for the body and produced energy, maintain life or stimulate growth. Food makes your body work, grow and repair it. The kind of food you eat can affect the efficiency of these processes. Food plays very vital role in maintaining proper health and also helps in prevention and cure of diseases. Our cells, tissues and all organs work properly only with nutrition food which we eat. October 24 is the food day in the Unite-d states, everyday is a food day since finding your next meal is a daily problem that every person on the planet faces every day. In this modern world, most of the country's or region's people experience improved nutrition, health care, Standard of living and quality of life but there are millions of people in India who are so poor that they are unable to meet both ends meet. The poor people, who do not have money to buy food, have nothing to do with such facilities provided by the government. They have to work day and night to feed themselves and their children. In such situation in spite of sending their children to school they used them their helping hand. So to avoid all this, the mid meal scheme was introduced. The Mid day meal scheme is the popular name for school meal programme in India which started in the 1960s; it involves provision of lunch free of working days. The key objectives of the programme are: protecting children from class room hunger, increasing school enrollment and attendance, improved socialization among children belonging to all castes, addressing mal nutrition and social empowerment through provision of employment to women. Mid day meal (MDM) scheme is centrally sponsored scheme in which student of elementary school of standard 1 to 8 are provided hot cooked meal every day. The expenditure is shared in the ratio of 75.25 between the central government and state government The MDM programme was first launched in Arunachal Pradesh on 15$^{th}$ August 1995. In the initial stage of the scheme raw rice was provided to the school children of primary stage (class 1 to 5), provision of cooked Mid Day Meal (MDM) scheme to school children up to primary level in Government, local body, aided schools and education guarantee scheme centers was started from 2003-2004 and it was extended to the upper primary level (class 6 to 7) from academic session 2007-08. Pertaining to MDM scheme as the various studies have been conducted in various states, but no any such study has been conducted in Arunachal Pradesh, therefore the investigator became interested to take up the following study in hand.

### A. *Statement Of The Probleme*

Advantages and Disadvantages of Mid Day Meal Programme of district West Siang (Arunachal Pradesh): A Critical Study

### B. *Objectives Of The Study*

*1)* To find out the advantages and disadvantages of MDM in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh.
*2)* To determine the problems of MDM in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh.
*3)* To study the attitude of teachers, community members and students towards MDM Scheme.

### C. *Hyphotheses*

*1)* There is no significant difference in the advantages of MDM in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh.
*2)* There is no significant difference in the problems of MDM in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh.
*3)* There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers, community members and students towards MDM Scheme.

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*D. Sample*

A total of 50 schools and a number of 200 teachers, 200 community members and 200 students formed the sample of this study. The sample was selected using the stratified random sampling technique.

*E. Tools used*

Observation, interview schedule and questionnaire were used to collect the data. The above tools were self prepared by the investigator.

## II. METHODOLOGY

As per the nature of the study the researcher will adopt descriptive cum normative survey method of educational research

*A. Statistical Analysis*

For the analysis of the data, the statistical measures of mean, standard deviation and t- test were used

*B. Delimitation of the study*

The present study was delimited to

*1)* One district of Arunachal Pradesh i.e. West Siang
*2)* Primary and Upper primary schools of selected districts
*3)* Teachers, community members and students of selected district.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

*A. Advantages Of Mdm At West Siang District Of Arunachal Pradesh*

*1)* *Inculcating positive habits among the students:* Student spend most of their hour in school and it is the sole responsibility of the schools to inculcates good habits among the students and introduction of MDM paved wider scope for it. MDM is perceived as a major means to impart positive habits among the children and also in educating them on the importance of health, Safety, sanitation, Cleanliness, Discipline and socialization. All the learners are now habitual of washing their hands before and after eating the food. They maintain proper discipline by standing in line to take their meal on first come basis and after taking food students sit together to have their food without any discrimination. They also maintain proper cleanliness by not throwing their leftover food here and there and keeping their plates at their respective places. After having meal, all the students go to the classes again.

*2)* *Nutritional support to malnutrition children*

| Age | Under-nutrition /under-weight Children | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Mild | Moderate | Severe |
| 6-9 years | 31.9 | 54.0 | 8.6 |
| 10-13 years | 18.2 | 47.8 | 30.1 |

*Source: NNMB, NIN & ICMR, 2002*

Even mild deficiencies of micronutrients (vitamin A, iron, folic acid, zinc etc.) affect their growth, development and immunity. Malnourished children tend to have lower I.Q. and impaired cognitive ability which affects their school performance and productivity in later life. MDM is providing each child one third of the daily nutrient requirement in the form of cooked meal to combat his/her food and nutritional deficiencies. The health card of the student has been improved and there is less detection of health issues among the students after the introduction of MDM. It is perhaps turning out to be the best food security programme for the under deprived children of rural areas.

*3)* *Universal enrollment and increased in attendance:* The dream of universal enrolment has been possible only after the introduction of MDM. Parents who used to take their children to the agricultural field for their helping hand, now they are sending them to the school as regular and satisfying food is served in the school on all working days. Sample collected shows that there is 50 percent increased in the enrolment of the new school going students. It is also noticed that cooked MDM has contributed enormous increase in the attendance of the student as well, earlier during break time many children go home to eat food but they didn't return. Students are now enjoying the variety of menu and of the hope of getting it daily they are turning up in the school every day.

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4) *Active Learning and Active Teaching:* A hungry child is less likely to attend school regularly. Hunger and active learning cannot go together. Hunger drains them of their ability to learn and concentrate on the class activities. Mid day meal is a blessing for those mal nutrients children of rural areas. Introduction of MDM is like gain health and gain education. MDM is also reducing the social distance and curbing teacher absentee as they are also eating mdm with the children and saving enough energy to take the classes afterwards.
5) *Achieving The Objective Of Social Equity:* This programme is showing a great influence in the enrolment, attendance, retention, nutritional support, inculcating positive habits etc at the same time it is also playing a significant role in bringing social equity among all the section of the society by common sharing of food without discrimination in any aspects. There is full involvement of teacher, parents and community members which paves a ways in socialization, developing social values and fostering equality among the children as they learn to sit together and share common food.
6) *Employments:* Above many advantages midday meal scheme has one more advantage is that the programme also generates employment for those poor families as cook-cum helpers, who are in the process of procuring and preparing meal, since these are generally women folk of the village, who are also the mothers of the students, the quality of the meal is ensured. Some of the other employments are like Rice suppliers, distributers, Organizers etc. Employment opportunities are given to backwards class like dalits, SCs, STs and women.

*B. Disadvantages of Mdm at west siang District of Arunachal Pradesh*

*1) No regularity in serving Meal*

Table – 1: Status of serving at school level in west Siang district.

| Everyday | | Alternative day | | ¾ days | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| 04 | 36 | 08 | 32 | 28 | 12 |
| 10% | 90% | 20% | 80% | 25% | 30% |

From the table it is clear that no regularity in serving meal is the greatest shortcoming of this programme. It is also noticed that, all the visited schools of west siang district, the MDM is served in all the schools but it is not served in all the working days of the week. It is seen that it is only provided ¾ days in a week. The MDM in charge has strong reasonable points for not serving it regularly and it is quite considerable also.

*2) No variety of Menu:* The cyclic menu for a week is already provided by the government of India, but it is seen that there is no uniformity in adopting the menu chart. In most of the schools, MDM teacher in charge decides the menu by consulting and with the instruction given by the higher authorities not with the needs and nutritional demands of the students, The menu is decided as per the availability of a particular region and most of the primary schools are located in rural and remote areas so, there is absence of variety in the menu. Khecheri ( rice mixed with dal and seasonal vegetables) is served in most of the rural schools. \in all the visited schools, all the menu is strictly vegetarian not a single menu was non vegetarian.

*3) Lack of Hygiene :* Maintaining cleanliness while storing, preparing, serving and consuming midday meal is the cry of all the schools who serve MDM and is a very burning problem. Interview result shows that all the students are quite satisfactory with the serving of MDM in school but teachers, cooks and VEC/SMC shows their dissatisfaction, according to them serving of MDM makes the school compound dirty as many leftover are thrown here and there, no proper cleaning creates an scrappy environment which ends with stinky odors. Using of fossil fuel and seasonal vegetables makes garbage full kitchen and no regular cleaning make the situation worse. So all the member involved in this programme has the sole responsibility to keep the environment clean.

*4) Corruption Practice:* No doubt MDM is serving in all the government schools of Arunachal Pradesh but displeasure over the functioning of MDM exist everywhere. MDM in Arunachal Pradesh has failed to benefit even the 50% of the total enrolment because of corruption practice in the structure of MDM programme. Still many schools failed to provide MDM regularly. It is provided alternatively or twice in a week but the record shows it served regularly and the fund is provided accordingly. Fake enrolment, renovation, shortage of utensils and cooks are showed to embezzle money. Lack of regular monitoring could be the main reason of corruption and misuse of funds which has been destroying the MDM scheme. We could see and read many tragedy of MDM in all the corners of India which killed many innocent children.

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*5) Delay in Release of Funds:* There is fund flow mechanism in every programme run by the government. Fund for midday meal scheme are released by the MHRD of India to the state finance department for central share. It is jointly funded by the central and the state on 60:40 sharing basis. The flow will be smooth if the centre release it on time but the delay in releasing central has already hit in all the parts of India. Arunachal Pradesh is the worst sufferer in running the programme. The delay used to put school in financial trouble. The school teachers have been serving meals by paying the expenses from their own pockets or by taking credit. The self-help group and school authorities also have to look into the expenses but it put them into great financial stress if the money is not reimbursed for almost 6 months. Increasing enrollment calls for the need of buying and replacing new utensils, repairing of kitchen sheds and salary to the cooks etc. The programme will be highly benefitting if there will be timely release of funds.

*6) Disrupting The Teaching Environment In Schools:* Programme is benefitting enormously but at the same time it is hampering the regular teaching learning environment. Classes are suspended during the time of eating and where there is absence of cook cum helpers, teachers have to engage two students in cooking procedures. Teachers are overburden with the MDM procedures such as monitoring, checking the disciplinary activities of the students like queuing and washing hands, maintaining cleanliness in the school compound etc. Because of unnecessary burden of teachers, children are not taught during the whole time they are in school. In fact, it cannot impact education if there is little teaching taking place in the school. So, monitoring in the functioning of MDM is certainly required.

## V. CONCLUSION

Introduction of MDM in Arunachal Pradesh has no doubt many benefits especially for the rural population like improved enrolment, nutritional support, employment, socialization, development of good habits among students etc. The ministry of human resource provides enough funds to run this programme smoothly and efficiently but at the same time it has some unavoidable disadvantages also like irregularity in serving MDM, corruption practice in the structure of MDM programme, no variety of menu, cleanliness and hygiene issues, delay in releasing conversion costs, irregular inspection of the programme, shortage of cook cum helpers, infrastructures issues and etc. There are many unseen reason behind the failure of MDM scheme and it should be taken seriously. This scheme has a very good intension since the perceived costs of sending school is high followed by low quality benefit in return then the hopes of parents and aspiration of children will get crush and a negative attitude will develop towards gaining universalisation of elementary education. The MDM is not functioning in isolation so it should be the sole responsibility of everyone to work for it successful results, without blaming on individuals involves in this scheme as everyone has eyes and heart to see and feel the functioning of MDM scheme.

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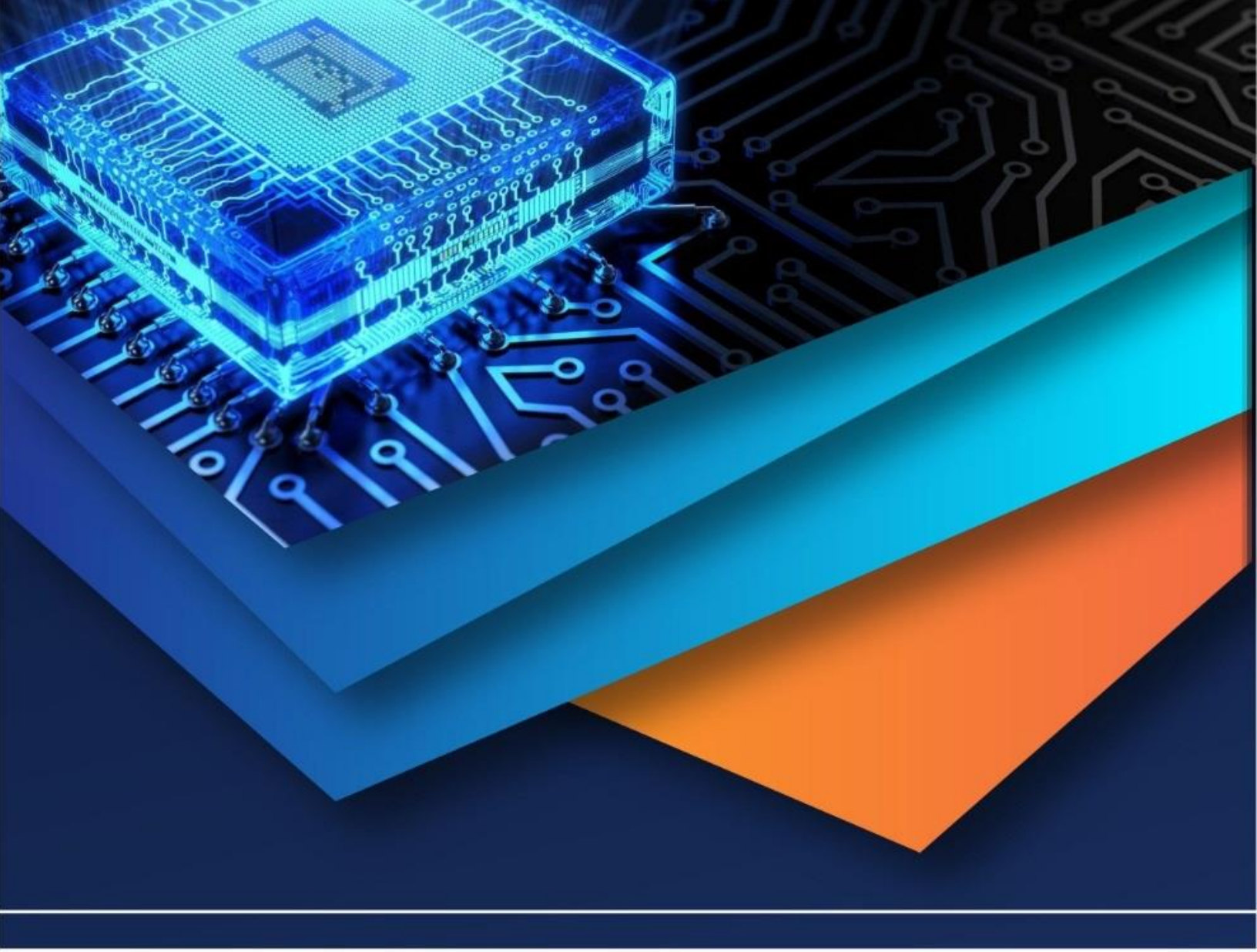

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