SUGGESTIONS

Mid-day meal scheme in the schools is world’s largest feeding programme with a number of objectives. The study reveals that the implementation level of the scheme is average as there are certain issues raised by teacher(s). The main problems noted in the study are delay in availability of funds and food grain for smooth running of the scheme. Other problems include infrastructure related problems like insufficiency of funds for kitchen construction, lack of proper venue for serving cooked meal which creates hurdles for systematic implementation of the scheme. The quality and quantity aspects of the served meal are satisfactory but these could be improved for better results. The menu is pre decided by the State Government which is implemented all over Punjab. Implementation of same menu for long time creates monotony among the students. The monotony further de-motivates the student to a large extent even though they keep on taking the meal out of pressure. The study further reveals that the objective of increasing enrollment has not been achieved as only the students from socially and economically backward sections of the society get them registered in the government and government aided schools. Although the enrollment of the students in primary and upper primary classes has increased from previous years but this is seen in private schools. Similarly, there is very less impact of mid-day meal scheme in decreasing dropout rate in these schools due to various like poor economic background of the student, poor health status, etc. This scheme also focuses on improving health of the students by providing them nutritional food. But on the other hand, there are many nutritional items missing in the menu like milk, curd, fruits, etc. There are guidelines under mid-day meal scheme for health checkup of the students. But the study indicates that
doctors are not able to checkup so many children in one visit. As a result, the health aspects of the students get overlooked. The study reveals that teachers assigned with MDMS responsibility showed a propensity to shirk away from their teaching accountability. It is a huge loss for the primary objective of the students for coming school. The study discovered that the organization of the MDMS in the state is barely acceptable and there is need to improve the programme management. To make the scheme more effective following suggestions have been given:

- **REGULARIZATION IN DISTRIBUTING FOOD GRAINS AND COOKING COST**

  It is found from the survey that there are irregularities in distribution of mid day meal. The reason for this is delays in receiving funds and food grains in some of the schools. The schools are not receiving financial reimbursement on time. The unnecessary stoppage in the transfer of fund (cooking cost) to schools has literally killed the passion of the teachers for running the scheme. A one-time transfer to a joint account of the school authorities along with an electronic accounting and auditing process are urgent. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are yet to show lively interest in the management of the scheme. During the survey, teachers stated informally that they either take credit from the local vendors or spend from their own pockets to ensure regularization of MDM. There should be proper delivery of food grain and budget to the schools so that distribution of MDM is not disturbed. Monitoring committees should be active at district or block level for effective implementation. Proper information should be transferred electronically.
• **INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

There is lack of proper infrastructure in the schools. In number of schools, the teachers find it difficult to construct the kitchen due to insufficiency of amount. Storage provisions are rarely available in most of the schools. There is unplanned arrangement for storage of items and in many schools these are kept in the school office, staff room or in the classrooms. It is also noticed that meal is distributed among the children in classroom, verandah or open space in the school. Kitchen sheds, buildings for mid-day meal scheme should be looked by nodal ministry. District level meetings should be held after certain duration and these should be well commuted to central and state level authorities for smoothing functioning of these schemes.

• **PROPER UTENSIL FACILITIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION**

It was found from the survey that students bring utensils from their own home like katoris (bowls) along with spoon. So it is required to provide proper utensils to the students so that they can really enjoy their meal.

• **CHANGE IN MENU**

As found from the survey that the students didn’t like some items of the menu i.e, sweet rice. A menu of students’ liking should be introduced. There is no benefit if the students are not eating what is given to them. So the menu should be changed keeping in the mind the taste of the students.
• **SAFE DRINKING WATER FACILITY**

It has been found that there is water facility in maximum schools but very rare with water purifier. There should be provision of safe water for cooking MDM as well as for drinking purpose. Clean toilets should be provided with hygienic sanitation.

• **INCREASE IN THE VISITS OF UPPER AUTHORITIES**

Visits by block, district, state & central level authorities are there for valuable accomplishment of the scheme but these are less in numbers. Increase in number of visits by upper authorities will make them more aware regarding number of problems faced in execution of the scheme. One additional benefit is that the school authorities will be more conscious in running the scheme. As a result more fruitful benefits can be extracted from multipurpose scheme.

• **FOCUS ON INCREASING ENROLLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION BY PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION**

Mid-day meal scheme has started with prime objective of increasing enrollment, attendance and retention of the socially and economically backward sections of the society. It has been found in the survey that there is no or very less impact of the scheme on these parameters. As per data available, there is increase in private schooling among the children although there is no free lunch scheme in these schools. So, by focusing on the quality education, these government schools can realize the objectives of Right to Food and Right to Education especially for marginalized sections of the society.
• CREATION OF AWARENESS AMONG THE PARENTS

Counseling of parents about the value of education for the future of their children can help for better policy implications. Ignorance of the parents creates a causal approach amongst the children for study. As a result, they lag behind and lose interest in studies which further increases absenteeism and dropout.

• INCREASE IN FREQUENCY OF MEDICAL CHECKUPS

Increase in number of doctor’s visits in a year for medical checkup of the students is required for detection of diseases in the students. Maintenance of medical checkup records and inspection of records should be followed up regularly to reduce health related issues. To generate more effective results of the scheme, rigorous feedback should be obtained after certain duration from children and parents regarding quality, quantity and all other essential parameters of the scheme.

• HEALTH AND HYGIENE

It has been found from the survey that still many students don’t wash their hands before having Mid-day Meal. So, during the lunch hour the teachers should take care that every student is following the instructions or not. It should be the responsibility of the teachers to check it more strictly.

• SUBSTITUTION OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS WITH TEACHERS

By substituting women of the villages and mothers of beneficiary students, the involvement of the teachers can be decreased. So, the financial conditions of the families can be improved. They can be made responsible for cooking, serving and
cleaning the utensils. The school staff should be restricted only to monitor and supervise the serving. Confinement of the teachers in only administration will help them to concentrate on providing education.

There are many schemes in India to promote education. The Government of India has initiated a number of programs to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education in a time bound manner. Some major initiatives are the Non-Formal Education, Mahila Samakya, District Primary Education Programme, Mid-Day Meal Scheme And Sarva Siksha Abhiyan. But this is one of the leading schemes which work on three aspects simultaneously i.e, fulfillment of necessity of food, keeping check on health of the students and supporting education. Physical development and educational achievement of the children hampers due to lack of sufficient food and nutrition. The current mid-day meal programme implemented at the national level has been successful in eliminating classroom hunger. So, there is an urgent requisition to focus on the weak areas of the scheme in order to make it a success.