ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India launched a centrally sponsored school meal programme in August, 1995, which is popularly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The aim of this programme was the “Universalization of Primary Education by increasing enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impacting on nutrition of students in primary classes”. The present study was undertaken to evaluate how far this Mid-Day Scheme of Government was successful in achieving its aims in Bathinda District of Punjab. The major objectives of the study were: (i) To study the historical and policy perspectives of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. (ii) To evaluate whether the scheme was effective in raising the overall current enrolment rate, checking the Dropout Rate and reducing the Gender Gap in the primary schools of Bathinda District of Punjab. (iii) To study the views and perceptions of stakeholders, head teachers, teachers, and cooks about the problems faced in running the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in the Bathinda District of Punjab. (iv) To suggest measures to further improve the planning and implementation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

The sample was drawn from all the six blocks of Bathinda District. A considerable positive impact of implementation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on the GER & NER of primary school students of Bathinda District of Punjab was observed. The scheme was also found to be helpful in reducing the Gender Gap in the schools of this District.
Moreover, a positive impact of the scheme on the Dropout Rate was also seen. Majority of the students revealed that the scheme had made a positive impact on their classroom learning. All the students wanted that the scheme should be continued but many stake holders perceived that the quality of the school meals was not satisfactory as compared to the home cooked meal. Moreover, lack of separate kitchens, no proper arrangement of water supply and lack of storage facilities were found to be the major problems in the management of Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The investigator recommended that vibrant school-community network must be promoted and positive opportunities for community participation especially for mothers in monitoring the working of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme should be considered on priority basis and the Parent Teacher Association must be asked to shoulder responsibilities beyond its normal domain.