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ROLE OF MID DAY MEAL (AKSHARA DASOHA) PROGRAMME IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract:-The Mid Day Meal Scheme is a multi-faceted programme of the Government of India that, among other things, seeks to address issues of food security, lack of nutrition and access to education on a pan nation scale. It involves provision for free lunch on working days for children in Primary and Upper Primary Classes in Government, Government Aided, Local Body, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternate Innovative Education (AIE) Centres, Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Schools run by Ministry of Labour. The primary objective of the scheme is to provide hot cooked meal to children of primary and upper primary classes. With other objectives of improving nutritional status of children, encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities, thereby increasing the enrolment, retention and attendance rates. According to the government, it is the world's largest school feeding programme, reaching out to about 120,000,000 children in over 1,265,000 schools and Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres across the country. In 1953, Uttar Pradesh Government introduced a scheme, on voluntary basis, to provide meals consisting of boiled or roasted or sprouted grams, ground-nut, puffed rice, boiled potatoes or seasonal fruits. During 1962-63, Tamil Nadu became the first state in India to initiate a noon meal programme to children with the launch of Mid Day Meal Programme in primary schools. The present study explores that quality concern of Government of Karnataka to improve the enrolment of students at primary school level through providing Midday meal programme. Even the researcher made an attempt to explore that how far the programme is carrying at primary school level, whether the parents are having the knowledge about providing of nutrition food in school. Moreover, providing midday meal at primary school level how far it retains the enrolment of students at primary school level. To know above all these the researcher conducted an interview for teachers, parents and the students. However, by the opinion of interview from various authorities do raise issues and suggest important considerations regarding the conditions that the providing of midday meal programme at primary school level.

Keywords: Midday Meal Programme, Primary School, Quality, Enrolment,

INTRODUCTION:

Mid Day Meal Programme is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) and is being implemented in partnership with State Government to cover the entire Karnataka.

Government of Karnataka has implemented the scheme of providing hot cooked meals to the children of classes 1 to 10 of both Govt and Govt aided schools in the state with the co-operation of Government of India.

Mid Day Meal is also served to children on all school working days and on National Holidays such as Independence Day, Republic Day, Teachers' Day, Gandhi Jayanthi and Children's Day. If the State Govt declares blocks or districts as drought hit areas, Mid Day Meal is served during summer vacation also.

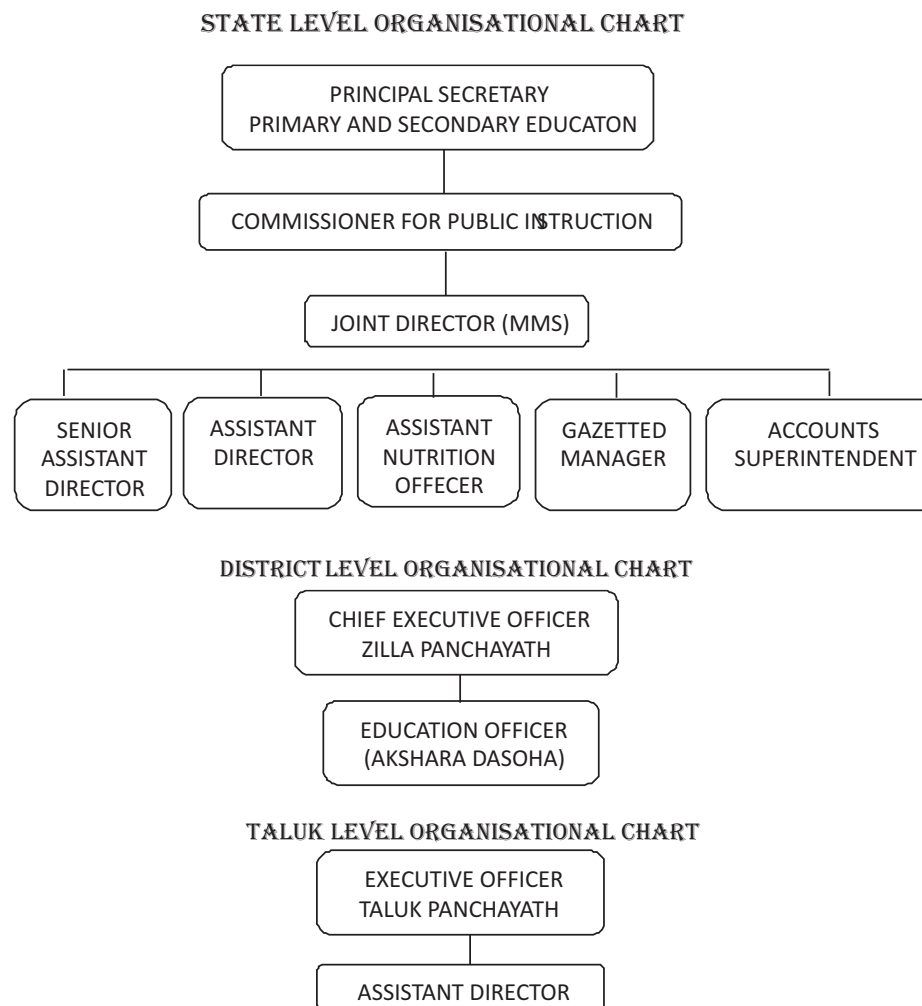
Many NGOs have voluntarily participated and joined hands with Government in Mid Day Meal Programme. These

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NGO's are supposed to have kitchen, transport vehicles and cooks. They are provided with 100gms rice and 150gms rice, Rs 2.69 and Rs 4.03 cooking cost to classes from 1 to 5 and 6 to 10 respectively. Transportation charges for rice @ Rs 75/quintal is also given. NGOs are expected to serve mid day meals to children on no profit basis. They should have only service motive. NGOs are expected to provide good quality food as per the Government norms.

Concept of Mid Day Meals Programme

With an intention to boost the universalisation of education and simultaneously improve the nutrition of students in primary classes, Government of India (GOI) launched (August 1995) the National Programme of Nutritional support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) as a centrally sponsored scheme. Under the scheme the children studying in Class I to V were supplied dry food grains (Rice/Wheat) at three Kgs per student per month provided the child had attendance of 80 per cent. Integrating the centrally sponsored scheme, the State Government launched (June 2002) the Akshara Dasoha Scheme [Mid-day Meal (MDM) Scheme] in seven districts of the State. The scheme was extended to the entire State in July 2003. The scheme initially covered children studying in classes I to V in Government/Local Bodies schools. The scheme was extended to students studying in Aided Schools (September 2004) and Class VI and VII (October 2004). Now the Government of India is funding the scheme for children of classes 1 to 8. Government of Karnataka is providing hot cooked meals to the children of 9th & 10th standards of Government and Government Aided schools out of its own resources.



The main objectives of the Midday Meal programme are:

- To improve enrolment and attendance.
- To improve retention rate.
- To improve child health by increasing nutrition level.
- To improve learning ability levels of children.

To develop social integration among the children

Mid day meal programme is the central government programme. It is one of the needful and responsible programmes. But now a day we here that mid day meal programmes are becoming more complicate for teaching and learning at school level. Most of the teachers expressed that maintaining the Akshara dasoha programme is very hard task and they cannot concentrate on the teaching learning process effectively. Parents express doubt about the food given in the programme is not so hygiene and nutritious. Government records show that Akshara dasoha programme is helpful to improve children health and also retention rate of the students in the school. So, the researcher has taken up this study for finding out the reality of this execution of the programme at grass root level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the status of mid day meal programme in the primary school.
- To study the positions/implementation of mid day meal programme at primary school level
- Opinion of the teachers
- Opinion of the parents
- Opinion of the students

METHODOLOGY:

Survey method was adopted to collect the relevant data for the present study.

Sampling:

The sample of the study consisted of 729 Government primary school students, 333 primary school teachers and 389 parents. They were selected from seven taluks of Shivamogga district by using Stratified random sampling method.

Tools Used for Collection Data:

- 1.Questionnaire related to opinion of the students related to Akshara Dasoha Programme developed by the investigator.
- 2.Questionnaire related to opinion of the teachers related to Akshara Dasoha Programme developed by the investigator.
- 3.Interview schedule related to opinion of the students related to Akshara Dasoha Programme developed by the investigator.

Statistical techniques used: To analyse the data average percentage is used.

Analysis and Interpretation:

1.Beneficiaries of Akshara Dasoha Programme

| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
|---------|---|-------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Is Midday meal programme has increased the level of learning among your school? | Yes | 281 | 84.39 |
| | | No | 7 | 2.10 |
| | | No Response | 45 | 13.51 |

According to Table:1.1, 84.39% teachers opinion that Mid Day Meal Programme has increased the level of learning among school.

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| Table:1.2 Student's opinion | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
| 1 | Do you take mid day meals in the School? | Yes | 696 | 95.47 |
| | | No | 9 | 1.23 |
| | | No Response | 23 | 3.16 |
| 2 | If yes, Why Do you take mid day meals in the School? | i. Food is tastier | 643 | 88.20 |
| | | ii. Because of parents pressure | 36 | 4.94 |
| | | iii. Because of parents pressure | 69 | 9.47 |
| | | iv. Community force | 14 | 1.92 |
| | | v. S.D.M.C Members | 46 | 6.31 |
| | | vi. Because of Government free service | 211 | 28.94 |

According to Table: 1.2 95.47% of the students opine that they take Mid Day Meal in the school. 88.20 % of the student's opinion is that food is tastier.

| Table:1.3 Parent's opinion | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
| 1 | Weather your child is taking midday meals in school? | Yes | 330 | 84.83 |
| | | No | 75 | 19.28 |

According to Table: 1.3 84.83 % of the parent's opinion that their children are taking Mid Day Meals in the school.

Akshara Dasoha Programme enrolment and attendance of the School

| Table:2.1 Teacher's opinion | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
| 1 | If there is any increase in attendance because of Midday meal programme in your school? | Yes | 285 | 85.58 |
| | | No | 2 | 0.60 |
| | | No Response | 46 | 13.81 |

According to Table: 2.1, 85.58% of the teacher's opine that Mid Day Meal programme increased the attendance of students in the school.

| Table:2.2 Student's opinion | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
| 1 | Are you attending school daily because of Akshara Dasoha programme? | Yes | 326 | 44.72 |
| | | No | 341 | 46.78 |
| | | No response | 61 | 8.37 |

According to Table: 2.2, the response of the students was very interesting that 44.72 percent of students agree that they are coming to school because of providing of Mid day meals. Simultaneously 46.78 percent of students do not agree that they are not coming to school for Providing of midday meals.

Akshara Dasoha Programme Healths and Nutrition

| Table: 3.1 Teacher's opinion | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
| 1 | Are your school children having developed good health because of Midday meal? | Yes | 283 | 84.98 |
| | | No | 4 | 1.20 |
| | | No Response | 46 | 13.81 |
| 2 | Are you giving nutrition balancing tablets to your school children providing from Health and Family welfare Department? | Yes | 232 | 69.67 |
| | | No | 6 | 1.80 |
| | | No Response | 95 | 28.53 |
| 3 | If given, what types of tablets are giving? | i. Albendazole /worms | 248 | 74.47 |
| | | ii. Iron tablet | 274 | 82.28 |
| | | iii. Vitamin - A tablet | 244 | 73.27 |
| 4 | What are the responses of students to take these tablets? | i. Students shows interest | 260 | 78.08 |
| | | ii. Students avoids | 27 | 8.11 |
| | | iii. Parents avoids | 12 | 3.60 |
| | | No Response | 33 | 9.91 |

According to Table: 3.1 84.98% of the teacher's opinion that school children have developed good health because of Midday meal. 69.67 % of the teacher's opinion that they are giving nutrition balancing tablets to the school children. Teachers give opinion that they know the importance of nutrition balancing tablets. 78.08% of the teachers opine that students show interest to take the tablets.

| Table: 3.1 Student's opinion | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
| 1 | How about the quality of midday meal in your school? | i. Nutritious | 633 | 86.83 |
| | | ii. Tastier | 504 | 69.14 |
| | | iii. Hygiene | 451 | 61.87 |
| 2 | Whether the teachers are providing the tablets provided by Health and Family Welfare Department? | Yes | 609 | 83.54 |
| | | No | 19 | 2.61 |
| | | No Response | 100 | 13.72 |
| 3 | If providing, which tablets are provided? | i. Albendazole /worms | 472 | 64.75 |
| | | ii. Iron tablet | 554 | 75.99 |
| | | iii. Vitamin - A tablet | 491 | 67.35 |
| 4 | Are you consuming these tablets? | Yes | 623 | 85.46 |
| | | No | 25 | 3.43 |
| | | No Response | 80 | 10.97 |

According to Table: 3.2 86.83 % of the student's opinion that Mid Day Meal is Nutritious and 69.14% of the student's opinion that Mid Day Meal is tastier. 83.54 % of the student's opine that teachers are providing the tablets for them provided by Health and Family Welfare Department. Student's have idea about importance of nutrition tablets. 85.46% of the student's opinion that they are consuming the nutrition tablets given by teachers the school.

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| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
|---------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Whether the teachers have given the nutritious tablets to your child provided by Health and family welfare department ? | Yes | 233 | 59.90 |
| | | No | 147 | 37.79 |
| 2 | If yes, What tablets given? | i. Worms tablets | 36 | 9.25 |
| | | ii. Iron Tablets | 66 | 16.97 |
| | | iii. Vitamin - A Tablets | 25 | 6.43 |
| | | iv. No Idea | 278 | 71.47 |
| 3 | Whether your child consuming these tablets? | Yes | 144 | 37.02 |
| | | No | 151 | 38.82 |
| | | Sometimes | 46 | 11.83 |
| | | No Idea | 48 | 12.33 |

According to Table: 3.3 59.90 % of the parents opine that teachers have given the nutritious tablets to their children. 71.47% of the parents opine that they are not having idea about importance of nutrition tablets. 37.02% of the parents opinion that their children consuming the nutrition tablets given by the schools.

Akshara Dasoha Programme Hygiene and Safety Measures

| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
|---------|---|-------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Do you also involve in food preparation work? | Yes | 92 | 27.63 |
| | | No | 187 | 56.16 |
| | | No Response | 54 | 16.22 |
| 2 | Do children participate while preparing the food? | Yes | 11 | 3.30 |
| | | No | 265 | 79.58 |
| | | No Response | 57 | 17.12 |

According to Table: 4.1 56.16% of the teachers opine that they not involve in food preparation work in the school. 79.58% of the teacher's opine that school children do not participate while preparing the food.

| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
|---------|---|----------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Whether the cooking person involves you in the food preparation work? | i. Maximum | 26 | 3.57 |
| | | ii. Medium | 47 | 6.45 |
| | | iii. Sometimes | 276 | 37.86 |
| | | iv. No | 362 | 49.66 |
| | | No Response | 18 | 2.47 |

According to Table: 4.2 49.66% of the students' opinion that the cooking persons not involve them in the food preparation work.

| Sl. No. | Questions | Response | Total no. of teachers response | % |
|---------|--|-------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Whether you discuss with your child about midday meals taking in the school? | Yes | 244 | 62.72 |
| | | No | 98 | 25.19 |
| | | No Response | 39 | 10.03 |
| 2 | Whether you have taken the midday meals in your child's school? | Yes | 124 | 31.88 |
| | | No | 245 | 62.98 |
| 3 | Do teachers involve your child in preparing midday meals? | Yes | 116 | 29.82 |
| | | No | 193 | 49.61 |
| | | No idea | 78 | 20.05 |

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According to Table: 4.3 62.72% of the parents opine that they are discussing with their children about mid day meals taking in the schools. 62.98% of the parents give opinion that they not tasted the mid day meals in their children school. 49.61% of the parents opinion that teachers do not involve their children in preparing midday meal programme.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

Providing of mid day meal increases the enrolment of the students in the school
Providing of mid day meal retain the attendance of the students continuously.
The parents expressed that they are satisfied about providing of midday meals for their children.
Teachers expressed that providing of mid day meal programme moderately increased the health of the students.
Teachers expressed that they know the importance of nutrition balancing tablet. Students also show interest to take the tablets.
Students expressed that mid day meal is nutritious and tasty. They are consuming the nutrition balancing tablets.
Parents are not having an idea about providing nutrition tablets for their children.
Maximum teachers give opinion that they are not involving in the mid day meal programme. Most of the teachers expressed that school students do not participate while preparing food.
Nearly 50% of the students expressed that cooks not involve them in the food preparation work.
Most of the parents give opinion that they are discussing with their children about mid day meal programme. Maximum number of the parents are not tasted the quality of food in the school. Nearly 50% of the parents expressed that teachers does not involve their children in the food preparation work.

CONCLUSION:

Akshara Dasoha (Mid day meal) programme is one of the central government scheme. The main aim of this programme is to improve the attendance and enrolment by providing hot cooked nutritious food for the government and government aided school 1st to 10th standard students. The findings of this study focuses that this programme has increased the level of attendance and enrolment. Maximum teachers are taking care about health and hygiene of the students. But teachers failed in developing awareness and giving guidance to the parents about the activities and achievement of the students.

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