

Mid-Day Meals in Primary Schools of Tinsukia District

Abstract

Education act as indicator in building human capital. It plays an important role in socio-economic development of a country. It identifies the inner potentialities of an individual and provides all kind of nourishment so as to enhance healthy growth and development of the individual and to contribute to the well-being of the society. Mid-Day Meal Scheme is one of the major initiatives undertaken by Government of India to achieve the objective of universalization of primary education through the provision of nutritional support to primary school children across the country. The study is an attempt to analyse the performance of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in the enhancement of enrollment in the primary schools of Tinsukia district of Upper Assam.

Keywords: Education, Enhancement, Enrollment, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Tinsukia.

Introduction

Education is the mirror of the society and is the seed as well as flower of the socio economic development. Education transcends human being from ignorance to enlightenment, from the shade of social backwardness to the light of amelioration and the nation from underdevelopment towards faster social and economic development.

Mid-day Meal Programme is the popular name for primary school meal programme in India. On 15th August 1995 P.V. NarsimhaRao the then Prime Minister of India launched the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) also known as Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM) for the first time in India to address classroom hunger by serving hot cooked meal and to improve the nutritious status of children. Initially it was started in 2408 blocks in the country. In Assam the school meal programme was implemented for the first time in 2005. The Programme involves the provision of lunch free of cost to children of the age group of 4 to 14 years of primary schools on all working days. The key objective of the programme is to increase the enrolment and attendance of primary schools children by reducing classroom hunger and by improving socialization among children belonging to all castes and religion and addressing malnutrition.

Study Area

Tinsukia is a district of Upper Assam comprising of 4 revenue circles and 1168 villages. The climate of the district is characterized by the absence of dry hot summer season. The highest temperature is being experienced during the monsoon season along with abundant rainfall and highly humid atmosphere throughout the year. The total population of Tinsukia district as per the Census 2011 is 1327929, of which males comprise of 680231 while female number 647698. The total literacy rate in the Community Development Blocks of Tinsukia district is 65.05 percent, of which the male literacy rate 73.49 percent is more than female literacy rate 56.29 in the district.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to study the performance of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in enhancement of enrollment of students in the Government primary schools of Tinsukia district of Assam.

Methodology

Research method is an integral and essential part of research work. The present study pertains to Tinsukia district of Assam. The study is based on both primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected from the Government Primary Schools of Tinsukia district through interview schedule. Secondary data has been collected from, journals and books, Statistical handbook of Assam, Census reports, Department of Elementary Education, Educational Blocks and Government official websites.



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For the purpose of study a total of 40 schools (lower primary and upper primary) of both rural and urban areas of Tinsukia district have been covered. Sample schools were randomly selected from Hapjan, Margherita and Sadiya Educational Blocks of Tinsukia district.

To analyze the collected raw data, data entry is done in MS Excel. Descriptive analysis is done with the help of tables; graphs, bar diagrams, Growth Rate (Average Annual Growth Rate and Compound Annual Growth Rate). For studying the performance of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in enhancing enrolment of primary school children we have considered the time period from 2004 to 2017.

Analysis

Primary school enrolment means the number of children enrolled in primary education level regardless of age, sex and religion. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was implemented with the objective of enhancing the enrolment of primary school students, especially the students of economically backward class. Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) also known as Enrolment Growth rate is the percentage of difference in enrolment of children between two time periods. The table below shows the enrolment of total children's in primary schools of Tinsukia district.

Table 1: Block wise Distribution of Enrolment of Total students in Sample Schools from 2004-17

Year/ Blocks	Hapjan	Margherita	Sadiya	Total	Percentage Change on base year : 2004	AAGR (%)
2004	4057	1777	993	6827		
2005	4096	1817	985	6898	1.03	1.03
2006	4088	1756	995	6839	0.17	-0.85
2007	4091	1791	1001	6883	0.82	0.64
2008	4076	1788	999	6863	0.52	-0.29
2009	4035	1732	992	6759	-0.99	-1.51
2010	4089	1800	1006	6895	0.99	2.01
2011	4077	1815	1015	6907	1.17	0.17
2012	4039	1826	991	6856	0.42	-0.73
2013	4016	1790	996	6802	-0.36	-0.78
2014	4025	1659	955	6639	-2.75	-2.39
2015	3989	1662	953	6600	-12.11	-0.58
2016	3977	1606	944	6527	-4.39	-1.10
2017	3965	1574	919	6458	-5.40	-1.057

Source: Field Survey

The table above shows the year wise enrollment of students of Primary School of three sample blocks of Tinsukia district namely, Hapjan, Margherita and Sadiya. The table also shows that in the session 2004, the total enrollment of students in Hapjan Block, Margherita Block in Sadiya Block was 4057,1777and 993 respectively. The figures of the above table indicate that there is a continuous increase in the total enrollment of Primary school

students from 2005 (1.03%) to 2012 (0.42%) compared to the base year, except in the year 2009 where a negligible decrease has been seen (-0.99%). However the figures show that there is continuous decrease in the total enrolment from -0.36% in 2013 to -5.40% in 2017. Fall in enrollment is mainly due to emerging private English medium schools in the locality.

Figure 1 Average Annual Growth Rate of primary school students from 2005-2017

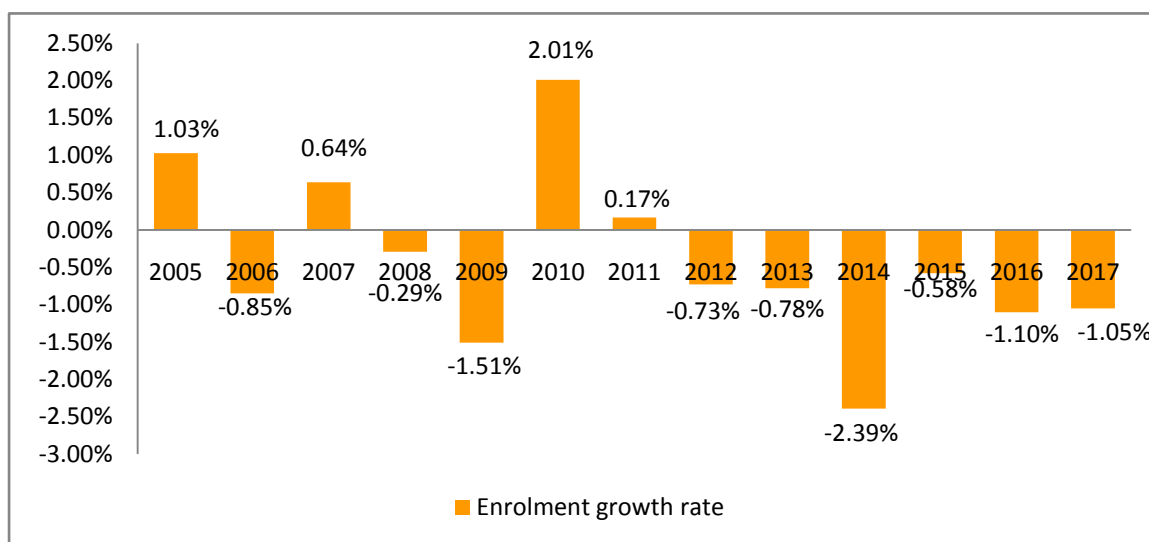


Figure above shows the Average Annual Growth Rate /Enrolment Growth rate of government primary school children in Tinsukia district of Upper Assam since after the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Program. From the above figure it is seen that up to 2011 there is no definite trend in the average annual growth rate of enrollment but from 2012 a

falling trend is clearly visible. Fall in enrolment in government primary schools is mainly due to mushrooming private institutions in the locality. In the following table we have tried to calculate the Compound Annual Growth Rate of enrolment of total students in the study area.

Table 2: Compound Annual Growth Rate of Enrolment of Total Students of Sample Schools

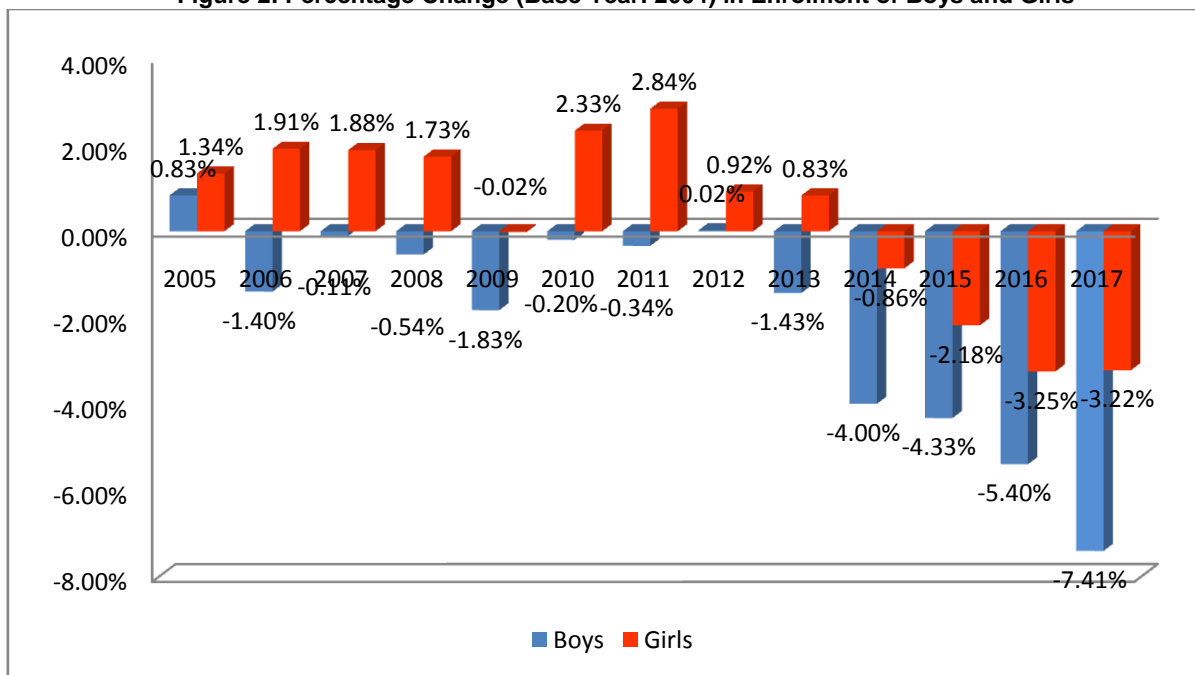
Blocks / Year	Hapjan			Margherita			Sadiya			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
2005	2093	2003	4096	916	901	1817	500	485	985	6898
2006	2070	2018	4088	864	892	1756	497	498	995	6839
2007	2061	2030	4091	911	880	1791	504	497	1001	6883
2008	2046	2030	4076	915	873	1788	500	499	999	6863
2009	2038	1997	4035	880	852	1732	498	494	992	6759
2010	2061	2028	4089	902	898	1800	510	496	1006	6895
2011	2041	2036	4077	918	897	1815	509	506	1015	6907
2012	2033	2006	4039	936	890	1826	512	479	991	6856
2013	2018	1998	4016	903	887	1790	509	487	996	6802
2014	2011	2014	4025	819	840	1659	494	461	955	6639
2015	2008	1977	3985	836	826	1662	485	468	953	6600
2016	2006	1971	3977	813	793	1606	473	471	944	6527
2017	1991	1974	3965	774	800	1574	457	462	919	6458
CAGR (%)	-0.4%	-0.1%	-0.2%	-1.3%	-0.9%	-1%	-0.7%	-0.4%	-0.5%	-0.5%

Source: Field Survey

The Compound Annual Growth Rate values obtained in the table above reveals that there is no

positive change in enrolment of primary school students of the surveyed schools.

Figure 2: Percentage Change (Base Year: 2004) in Enrolment of Boys and Girls



The figure above shows that from the year 2014 the enrolment of both boys and girls are falling compared to the base year 2004. But the fall in enrolment of girls is more than that of boys as parents

prefer to send their boys to private school over the girls.

Findings:

1. There is a continuous increase in the total enrollment of Primary school students from 2005

(1.03%) to 2012 (0.42%) compared to the base year (2004) continuously increases, except in the year 2009 where a negligible decrease has been seen (-0.99%). However there is continuous decrease in the total enrolment from -0.36% in 2013 to -5.40% in 2017. Fall in enrollment is mainly due to emerging private English medium schools in the locality.

2. From the Average Annual Growth Rate /Enrolment Growth rate of government primary school children in Tinsukia district it is seen that up to 2011 there is no definite trend in the average annual growth rate of enrollment but from 2012 a falling trend is clearly visible.
3. From our study it was observed that Mid-Day Meal Programme had no positive impact in increasing the total enrolment of boys in the sample schools because of mushrooming private institutions and the preference of parents to send their boy child to these institutions. On the other hand, in case of enrolment of girls the picture is comparatively better. However from the year 2013, a decline in the enrolment of girls is visible.
4. The Compound Annual Growth Rate values of enrolment obtained during the analysis reveals that there is no positive change in enrolment of primary school students of the surveyed schools of sample blocks during the time period under the study. On the basis of the values of the Compound Annual Growth Rates of the enrolment of total students it can be state that there has not been any positive change in enrolment of primary school students of the surveyed schools of Tinsukia district.

Conclusion

The outcome of this study establishes that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme is playing an important role in reducing classroom hunger of students in the surveyed government primary schools of Tinsukia district. But the scheme is not successful in increasing enrolment of students in these schools because of emerging private English medium schools in the

locality. It has been observed that parents who cannot afford the expenses of private institutions are enrolling their children in these schools only. Also the functioning of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in many surveyed schools of the district is not in accordance with the guidelines of the scheme particularly in respect of timely supply of grains, storage facility of grains and plates for distribution of meal to the children. Appropriate steps need to be taken to remove these loopholes in the implementation of the scheme so that the objectives of the scheme can be realized in the true sense of the term.

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