

Standing Committee Report Summary

Implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid-Day-Meal Scheme

- The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (Chairperson: Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya) submitted its report on the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day-Meal Scheme (MDMS) on December 15, 2016. The Committee examined the implementation of SSA and MDMS in West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Haryana, Kerala, and Rajasthan.
- SSA, launched in 2000, seeks to achieve universal access to education and retention of students in schools. MDMS, launched in 1995, seeks to address the issues of hunger and education in schools by serving hot cooked meals and improving the nutritional status of children, enrolment, attendance and retention rates.
- **Outcomes:** The Committee noted that due to SSA, enrolment is now near universal. However, learning outcomes are still far from satisfactory. For example, only about half the children in standard V could do a two-digit subtraction problem with borrowing. The Committee recommended that states should undertake measures at their own level to improve learning outcomes. The policy should shift its orientation from input-based expenditure to outcome-focused achievement. The funding should focus on progress towards goals, such as improving learning outcomes of children in elementary schools.
- **Educational development across the country:** The Committee noted that educational development has been better in economically developed areas with strong infrastructural support as compared to the backward regions of the country. It recommended that the government should introduce programmes to minimise the gap between states with regard to educational status. Further, states should use SSA as an opportunity to create their own vision of elementary education.
- **Implementation of SSA:** The Committee noted that State Institutes of Educational Management and Trainings, which act on state specific issues and innovations, are absent. Further there are wide variations in the nature and effectiveness of the District Institutes of Education and Training. The Committee recommended that the discrepancies between national and state systems (such as the norms for age of entry) should be removed.
- The Committee also observed a large number of teacher vacancies under SSA, which adversely affects the implementation of the scheme. It recommended that vacancies created under SSA must remain as sanctioned posts and the states can recruit fresh teachers against these vacancies.
- **Implementation of MDMS:** The Committee noted that MDMS has diverted the attention of teachers and students on activities related to it, rather than towards teaching and learning activities. A shortfall in the infrastructure required for the implementation of MDMS was also observed. For example, lack of pucca buildings, separate toilet facilities for boys & girls, unavailability and poor functional condition of kitchen sheds, etc. Further, the Committee noted that MDMS led to more attendance of pupils but did not significantly aid fresh enrolments into schools.
- The Committee also noted that most states did not follow the central government's guidelines on delivering food grains at the school by Public Distribution System dealers. There were also instances where due to the long supply chain, the supplied food grains got adulterated and pilfered. The Committee recommended that the district nodal authorities must strictly demand utilisation certificates from the implementing authority and the schools so that delivery of funds or food grains are not delayed.
- **Devolution of funds:** The Committee noted that states have not earmarked funds for priority areas in education out of the increased fund devolution to states post the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission. It recommended that the states must proportionately adjust the increased devolution of funds for education.
- **New initiatives:** Several new initiatives have been started by the central government to aid the implementation of SSA and MDMS. These include accreditation of teachers' training institutes, Swachha Vidyalaya, Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat, and Shaala – Siddhi. The Committee also recommended that the pilot project of establishing Smart Classes in government schools must be initiated. This would help make the teaching–learning process more effective through computer enabled techniques.

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