

CASE METHOD

Learning from Experiences

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EXCEL BOOKS

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AKSHAYA PATRA: NOURISHING SOULS AND FEEDING MINDS*

The establishment of Akshaya Patra Foundation was done by Madhu Pandit Dasa in the year 2000 in Bangalore. The motive behind this organisation was to propel children to the school with food as a driving force. This cause was supported by the government through the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Expanding the horizons of its operations, Akshaya Patra also took up other social initiatives, such as Anganwadi program, Akshaya Kalewa and Aap Ki Rasoi. Akshaya Patra adopted a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model to put into operation its Mid-Day Meal Program. In this PPP, 50–60% was funded by the Government and 40–50% was raised from the corporate, voluntary donations, social funding, public funding, etc.

This case focuses on the Jaipur operations of Akshaya Patra. Akshaya Patra was started in Jaipur in the year 2004 with 5000 children. With the passage of time this number gradually increased. In the year 2013, Akshaya Patra was providing food to 1,50,000 students in about 1450 schools in Jaipur. Despite the successful implementation, there were certain challenges and issues which need to be discussed through the given case.

INTRODUCTION

Way back in the year 2000, poor children in Bangalore flocked in the premises of the ISKON Temple for the 'Prasadam' i.e. the food offered to Lord Krishna. The basic purpose for their presence was not guided by religious motives but to fulfil their basic need of food. They even skipped their schools and thronged in the temple in their uniforms just to have the *prasadam* which appeared to them more lucrative than attending the school. With each passing day, the numbers were increasing. This observation seemed enough for Madhu Pandit Dasa to start an inspiring revolution which had the power of changing lives. The increasing numbers turning up in their school uniforms made him realise that students were missing the schools and neglecting studies, as, their basic need for food was overshadowing their urge for education. This moved

* This case was developed by Dr Punam Mishra (JK Lakshmipat University, Jaipur), Swati Jain, Savita Panwar, Swati Jha (Poornima School of Management, Jaipur) and Ashish Nagar (Poornima University, Jaipur) during the Faculty Development Program organised by Department of Management Studies, Poornima Group of Colleges, Jaipur in 2013.

him and he thought that if food is what can bring small children to temples then this will definitely bring them to schools too! This led to the inception of 'Akshaya Patra'— a stellar in India's mid-day meal scheme.

THE MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME

One small boy, herding cattle in a forgotten part of India, brought about a monumental change in the country. When Tamil Nadu's former Chief Minister K. Kamaraj saw a boy near the town of Cheranmahadevi herding livestock, he asked him that why didn't he go to school? He instantaneously replied that I could not learn with a hungry stomach. This gave rise to the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in 1960s in Tamil Nadu. The program was set up to reduce hunger and encourage universal primary education. On November 28, 2001 the Supreme Court of India passed an order stating:

"We direct the State Governments/Union Territories to implement the Mid-Day Meal Scheme by providing every child in every Government and Government-assisted primary school with a prepared mid-day meal."

With this, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme got started in India feeding millions of small children studying in various government schools.

Figure 1 shows the objectives of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

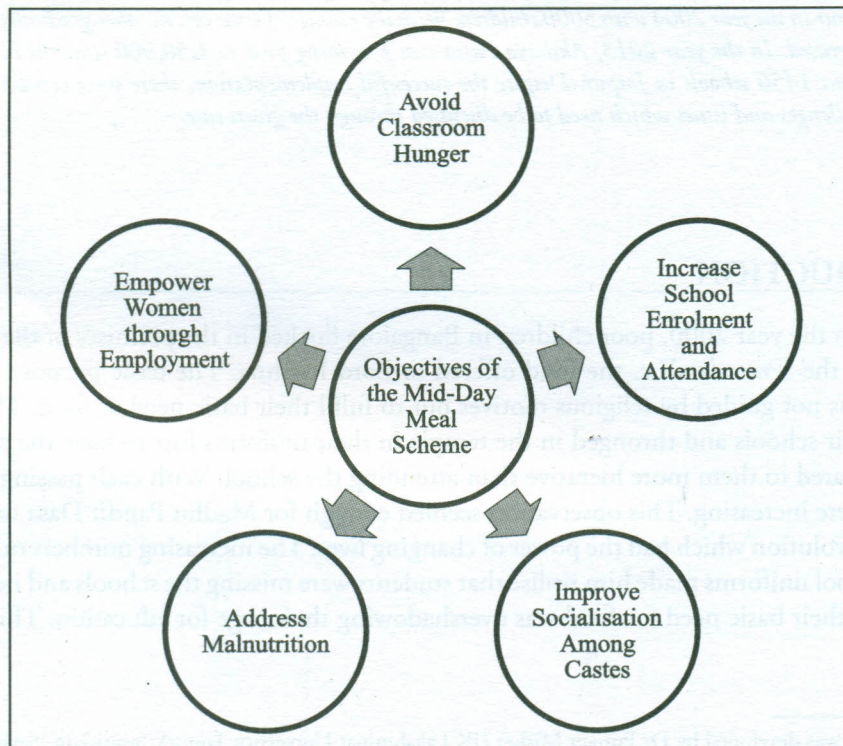


FIGURE 1: OBJECTIVES OF THE MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME

AKSHAYA PATRA: A MEAL WITH A CAUSE

The word 'Akshaya Patra' is derived from Indian Mythology from the epic of '*Mahabharat*'. When the Pandavas were in exile, Surya gave Yudhishtira a vessel that could feed an inexhaustible supply of food each day for 12 years. On the similar lines, the Akshaya Patra Foundation, an NGO established in 2000 in Bangalore, joined hands with the government in the Mid-Day Meal scheme and, ran school lunch programs wherein it distributed freshly cooked, healthy meals across India. It began with the noble vision that "No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger."

In thirteen years, the Foundation grew to become one of the largest and most innovative school lunch programs in the world. In a country where malnutrition was a grave problem, Akshaya Patra was providing the underprivileged children with the necessary nutrients — becoming the food for education. In 2013, it reached out to approximately 14 lakh children in 20 locations across 8 states of India, covering 9,075 schools of the country, providing them with freshly cooked meal on all school days. With the mission of reaching out to 5 million children by 2020, Akshaya Patra was making a difference.

REACHING THE MASSES

Expanding the horizons of its operations, Akshaya Patra also took up other social initiatives. The *Anganwadi program* which was a child and mother care centre, aimed to reduce child hunger and malnutrition through the most crucial years of a child's development: from the early stages of pregnancy to 6 years of age. In Baran and Jaipur, Akshaya Patra served wholesome, nutritious food for pregnant and nursing mothers in government-sponsored centres of the districts.

Another initiative is the *Akshaya Kalewa* scheme that was started in Jaipur in 2005–2006; this was a program that provided food for the underprivileged sections of society at subsidised rates. The Akshaya Kalewa scheme was run by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation in association with Akshaya Patra, to serve cooked food at a subsidised rate of ₹ 5.

Aap Ki Rasoi program began in 2007 in Delhi and was set up by Akshaya Patra to give food at subsidised rates to the underprivileged people of the city. Akshaya Patra in its *Emergency Programs* provided emergency relief during natural calamities, as desired by the district councils of the areas affected. In the year 2013, Akshaya Patra provided food items to the victims of the massive flood in Kedarnath Shrine at Uttarakhand. Under their *Senior Citizens Feeding Program*, 12000 elderly citizens of Bangalore were provided with lunch every day, cooked in Akshaya Patra's Bangalore kitchens.

THE SPIRITUAL CONNECT

It was a daily practice at all the Akshaya Patra kitchens that the food that was cooked was first offered to Lord Krishna as *Prasadam* and then subsequently distributed in the various schools. It was believed that *Prasadam* had the divine powers that purified the soul of the person and thus refrained him from misdeeds. It was believed that the grace of the lord descended to the devotee through *Prasadam*. With this conviction in mind, Akshaya Patra provided 'soul nourishing'

food to children which satiated their hunger, which if not fulfilled may push them to various sinful activities. Satiation of this need could also lead them to the righteous path. The increasing attendance in the government schools reflected the effectiveness of this program.

AKSHAYA PATRA – JAIPUR

Akshaya Patra started its operation in Jaipur in 2004 with 5000 children. With the passage of time, this number gradually increased. In the year 2013, Akshaya Patra was providing food to 1,50,000 students in around 1450 schools in Jaipur. Apart from the Jaipur kitchen, two more kitchens were also operational in the Baran, Nathdwara and Jodhpur districts of Rajasthan. In Baran, it serves around 15,000 children in approximately 170 villages; whereas in Nathdwara, it serves around 20,000 children in approximately 230 villages. In Jaipur, Nathdwara and Jodhpur, Akshaya Patra followed a centralised model; whereas in Baran, they followed a decentralised model through Self-help Groups (SHGs), wherein the food was prepared and distributed by the local resident women. As far as the centralised model was concerned, Akshaya Patra worked in a different manner. The head office delegated the responsibility to the regional offices for the purchase of the raw materials in bulk, which, in turn, distributed it to the other locations.

The production, store, purchase, food safety and distribution departments at Jaipur unit comprised 450 employees in all, out of which 50 handled administration and 400 employees were involved in operations. There are 50 voluntary employees, known as devotees, who also provide selfless services to the organisation.

FUNDS MANAGEMENT

Since its beginning, the Akshaya Patra Foundation received precious support from its benevolent corporate partners. Many institutions from public and private sector wholeheartedly supported the social cause of Akshaya Patra. CSR support in the form of donations, volunteering and fundraising had helped Akshaya Patra in creating awareness and achieving many of its objectives. Akshaya Patra adopted a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model to put into operation its Mid-Day Meal Program. In this PPP, 50-60% was funded by the Government and 40-50% was raised from the corporate, voluntary donations, social funding, public funding, etc.

The fund raised from the Government included 80% by State Government and 20% by Central Government. Many a times they were not able to meet the cost, and the market debt increased. The government provided the funds in terms of conversion cost per student which it revised every year. The conversion cost effective from July 2013 was ₹ 3.34 per primary student (1st–5th class) and ₹ 5 per upper primary student (6th–8th Class).

Akshaya Patra, Jaipur continuously received donations from various big corporate houses, local public, etc. Japan official development assistance donated chapatti-making machine to the Jaipur centre which had the capacity of making 40,000 chapattis per hour. The vehicles of Akshaya Patra were tax exempted from the State Government. In contingent situations such as heavy rains, collector-declared holidays, etc., when schools were closed without any prior intimation, the food could not be distributed to schools. In this situation, the undistributed food was sent to slum areas and *gaushala* to prevent the wastage. On an average, out of every

rupee donated, 89 paise was spent towards feeding a child, and the rest went in administrative and fundraising costs. Over the past 5 years, up to 56% of the revenues have been generated through well-wishers who sponsored children on a regular basis.

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

The Jaipur office, located in Jagatpura area, followed similar functional guidelines. The production process started from the procurement of raw materials. The dry raw materials (like cereals, flour, rice, etc.) were stored in store rooms having various sections. Raw vegetables were stored in cold storage mechanism. Akshaya Patra maintained a stock of 7 days to have uninterrupted food preparation.

The production planning started from feedback as taken by the distribution executive, about the quality and quantity, from the schools. The entire production process was mechanised. The kitchen was divided into two sections – wet and dry. The dry section produced chapattis. The chapatti-making process started with the Atta Kneading Machine, in which 75 kg dough could be made at a time. This dough goes to the dye to check the thickness of the chapattis. After this, it goes to the oven section, where the temperature of 300-400 degree Celsius was to be maintained. Then, the oiling of the chapattis was done through pumps and sprays. Post this process, the chapattis were weighed and they were stored in the containers. The whole process took around 35–40 minutes. The wet kitchen produced dal/sabji and rice through steam-based cooking. There were 6 cauldron of 1200 litres/cauldron capacity for dal/sabji and 8 cauldron of 500 litres/cauldron capacity for rice. The production department manufactured bakery products made from wheat (cookies, cakes, etc.) which were sent to the schools once in a week. The food quality was checked by the food technologist, in the food quality zone.

Post-production of the cooked food, it was loaded into the airtight containers. A foodlist was prepared for the container, which had the name of the school, the name of the food item, the number of items, etc. These containers were then loaded into the delivery vehicles. The route-wise planning for every part of the city was done. There were 65 vehicles in totality, which delivered the food to 1450 government schools. Out of the 65 food delivery vehicles, 40 were self-owned and the rest were outsourced from the market as per the need. Each vehicle covered a minimum of 20-25 schools in a route. A route typically covered a distance of around 60–70 km, one way. The first batch of food is dispatched from the production house at around 6:00 a.m. It assured the on-time delivery of meals to the respective schools between 7:00–9:30 a.m.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The organisation was working on a large scale and hence faced a lot of challenges. As the whole system depended on the on-time delivery of the food, shortage of manpower was the major issue of concern. Shortage of manpower in any department had adverse effects on the efficiency of the system. Learning from the past events of crisis, the Akshaya Patra Foundation had now adopted a hands-on approach to deal with it, i.e. they recruited 1-2% extra manpower than required as a buffer.

At times of heavy rains, adverse weather conditions or emergency situation, the government-declared holidays without any prior notice. In such a condition, the prepared food couldn't be supplied to schools and thus got wasted. Though it was a very rare phenomenon, but in such a condition, the food was supplied in nearby slum areas. Even after this, if some food remained, then it was disposed of as a waste. Disposal of this waste was again a big problem. Apart from such contingent situations, in incidents of complaints about the food quality, they immediately replaced the food with alternative food items and also investigated the problem. For handling such situations, they had trained their supervisors and delivery persons.

As the whole system was fully automated and dependent on the electricity as a power source, electricity failure created a situation of menace. The system managed to run under contingency approach on large generators but operating such a huge plant on generator was often cumbersome. Another challenge that Akshaya Patra facing was the negative perception that some of the people held about the organisation. Perception about the quality of food, cooking methods, utilisation of funds, etc. was often an issue of concern for the organisation.

CONCLUSION

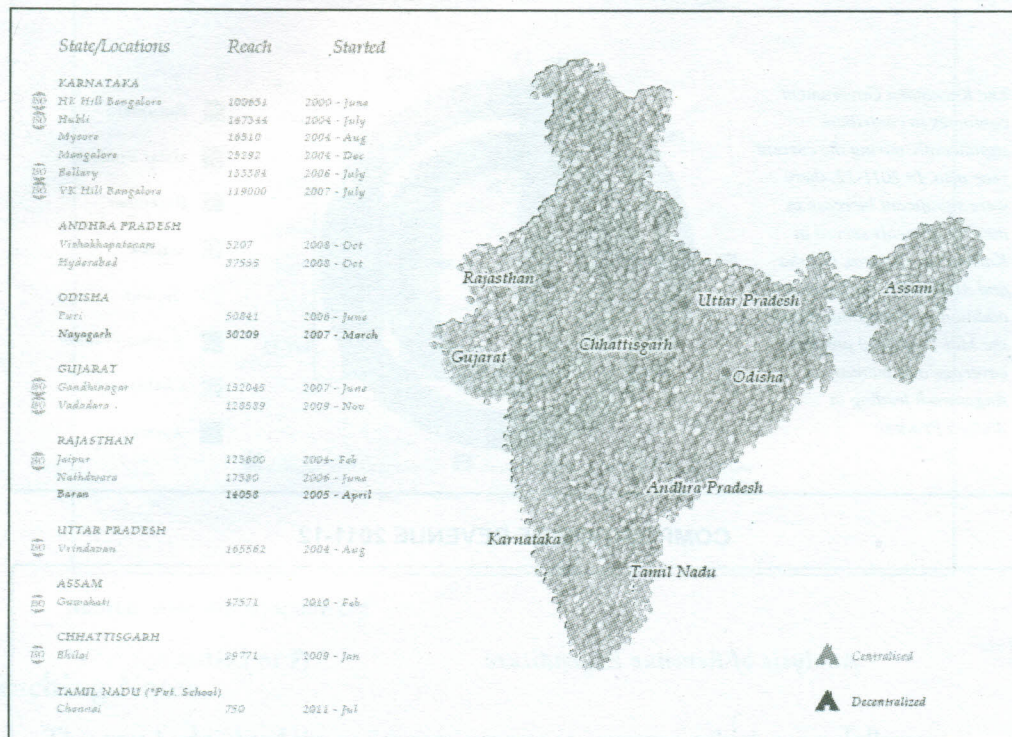
Akshaya Patra worked with a mission of reaching 50 lakh children by the year 2020 for which it was getting support from the government, public and the corporate. The noble cause was well aligned with the idea of providing food for education. They were continuously taking varied initiatives to reach out to the masses by expanding their operations in other cities in India. In Rajasthan itself, settingup of one more unit at Bikaner was in pipeline.

QUESTIONS

1. Suggest the strategies that can be adopted in case of food wastage in various contingent situations such as heavy rains, collector-declared holidays, etc.?
2. Akshaya Patra has adopted Public-Private Partnership model to implement the Mid-Day Meal scheme. What initiatives can be taken in this venture apart from cost sharing with government?
3. Akshaya Patra has been feeding millions of people in India, still many people carried negative perception about the organisation. Consider yourself as the Vice President of Akshaya Patra, Jaipur and suggest some initiatives to improve their public image.
4. Consider yourself as the Head of the Production and Distribution Department at Akshaya Patra, Jaipur. Are you satisfied with the current production and distribution strategy? Justify your answer.

APPENDIX

KITCHENS ACROSS INDIA



SUBSIDIES FROM GOVERNMENT

Subsidies from Government

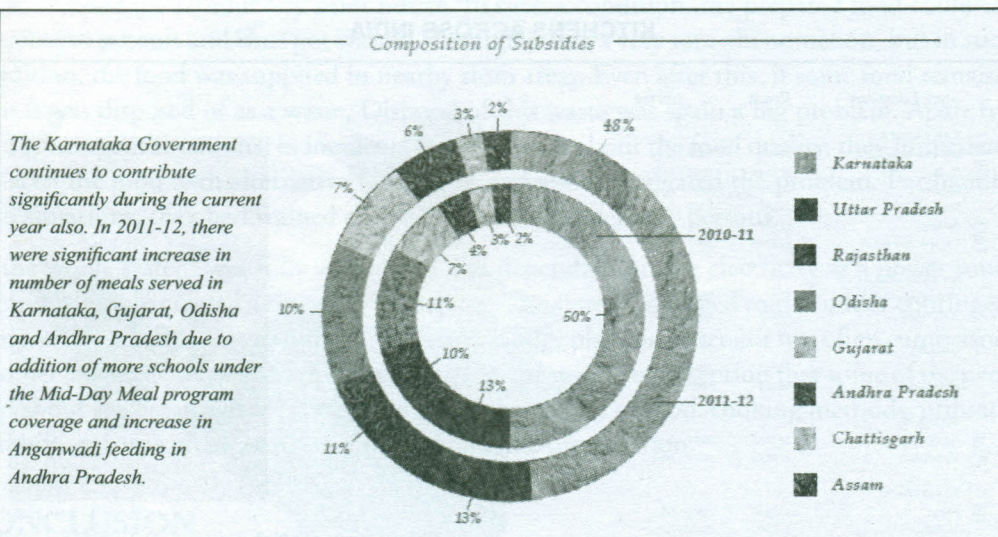
The incremental revenue from the Government during the year is ₹ 1,298.20 lakhs. This growth of 19% is contributed by 13% increase in number of meals served over the previous year and the rest due to increase in cash subsidy rates per meal.

₹ in lakhs

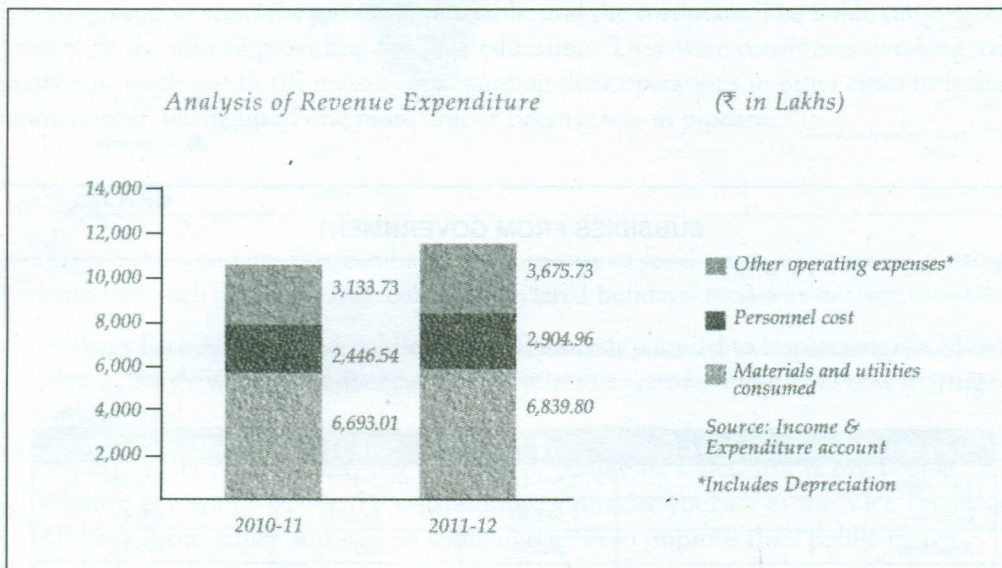
State wise Subsidies (Cash & Grain)	2011-12	2010-11	Incremental
Karnataka	3,906.46	3,410.72	495.74
Gujarat	1,051.90	861.28	190.62
Rajasthan	878.59	711.71	166.88
Uttar Pradesh	836.57	743.67	92.90
Odisha	576.54	468.35	108.19
Andhra Pradesh	489.90	282.13	207.77
Assam	202.52	165.66	36.86
Chhattisgarh	177.47	175.03	2.44
New Delhi	-	3.20	(3.20)
Total Subsidies (Cash & Grain)	8,119.95	6,821.75	1,298.20

Table 1: Analysis of Subsidies (Cash & Grains)

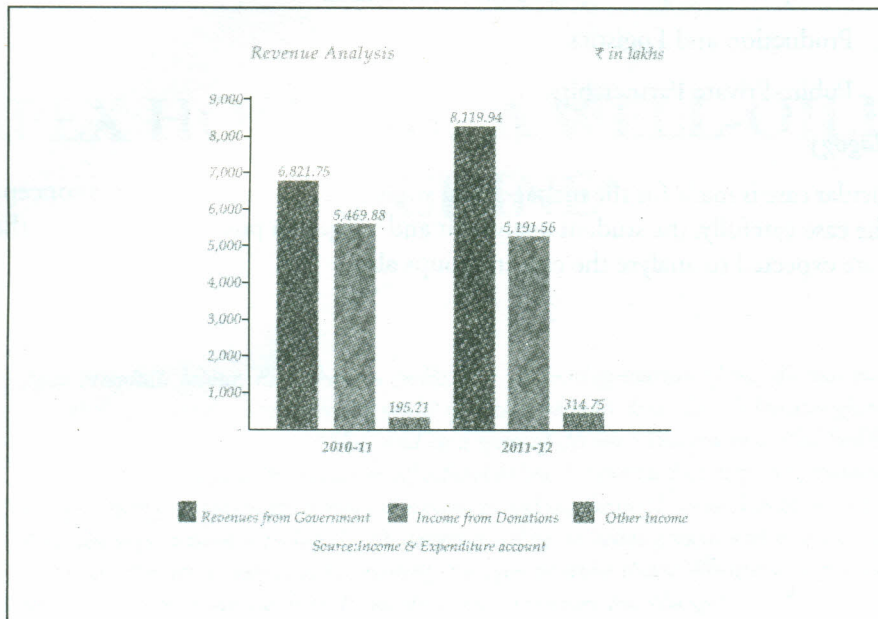
COMPOSITION OF SUBSIDIES



COMPOSITION OF REVENUE 2011-12



Source: www.akshayapatra.org

SOURCES OF REVENUE 2011-12

Source: www.akshayapatra.org

Teaching Notes

1. This case highlighted the various management concepts, which are as follows:
 - (i) Social Entrepreneurship
 - (ii) Production and Operations Management
 - (iii) Crisis Management
 - (iv) Public-Private Partnership
2. The major challenges in the case were as follows:
 - (i) Sustainability development to have a deeper reach, by the year 2020
 - (ii) Handling the crisis related to excess food and manpower shortage
 - (iii) Changing the negative perception of the masses, related with food quality and workers hygiene
 - (iv) Optimum Resource Utilisation
3. The above-mentioned issues have been given equal time for discussion, i.e. 15 minutes each.
4. Before the discussion of the case, the reader must have the knowledge of the following concepts:
 - (i) Mid-Day Meal concept

- (ii) Entrepreneurship
- (iii) Production and Logistics
- (iv) Public-Private Partnership

Case Pedagogy

This particular case is made for the management students to understand various concepts. After reading the case carefully, the student analyses it and suggests a possible solution for the issues. Students are expected to analyse the case in groups also.