

KU releases social audit report of Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Academics underscore importance of elementary, secondary education

Srinagar, Dec 28: The University of Kashmir on Monday released the findings of a social audit conducted into the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in select schools of Kashmir division.

Dean Research Prof Shakil A Romshoo released the report of the social audit, carried out by the varsity's Department of Social Work (DoSW) under a study sponsored by J&K's School Education Department.

In his presidential address, Prof Romshoo said the social auditing of welfare schemes like the MDM can lead to course correction and help achieve the objectives of such programmes in an optimal manner.

Referring to Japan's revolutionary school lunch programme, Prof Romshoo said the schemes like MDM, apart from leading to increase in enrollments and decrease in dropout rates, should become a source of great learning for children about the importance of food, food security, nutrition, balanced diet, cultivation and farming etc.

"Education is essentially about learning and understanding rather than merely studying to get degrees," he said.

Prof Siddiq Wahid, former Vice-Chancellor of IUST Awantipora, who was a guest of honour on the occasion, spoke about the critical importance of elementary and secondary-level education.

"Schooling is a critical phase in a child's life," he said, underlining the importance of including teaching of history, culture, economics and philosophy in the curriculum right from the elementary level.

Prof Wahid said the National Education Policy-2020 is not rigid from an education point of view and offers fair autonomy to incorporate elements of creativity and thinking into the school curriculum.

Coordinator DoSW Dr Aadil Bashir said the social audit of MDM Scheme was conducted by his department, in Ganderbal and Budgam districts, in line with the MHRD guidelines and instructions from the School Education Department.

A key finding of the study reveals that the MDM Scheme has increased interest in children to attend government schools while decreasing the dropout rate to a large extent.

"Girl students are more enrolled in schools in both the districts," the report reads.

The report has also highlighted some issues and challenges vis-à-vis implementation of MDM Scheme in the twin districts.

The report-release function was, among others, attended by ZEOs, CEOs, school principals from Ganderbal and Budgam districts, apart from faculty members, scholars and students from the DoSW.

Dr Javed Rashid conducted proceedings of the function.