The Status of Food and Cooking Education in Maltese Primary Schools: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Quality Food and Cooking Education (FCE) in schools can contribute to promoting children’s wellbeing and is advocated as a curricular entitlement. This study sought to explore how food and nutrition (FN) and food preparation and cooking (FPC) education are being implemented in Maltese primary schools.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the extent and type of food and nutrition (FN) and food preparation and cooking (FPC) education being implemented in Maltese primary schools.
- To identify teachers’ self-perceived competency and interest in FN and FPC.
- To analyze the most common topics taught in FN and FPC.
- To identify the most common cross-curricular integration of food topics with literacy and science.

STUDY DESIGN & PARTICIPANTS

- A quantitative approach was adopted using an online survey.
- An original questionnaire was designed through the Google Forms App and distributed in November 2021.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

- 51 teachers completed the survey: 45 females (90%), 6 males (12%)
- Age: 72% 23–45 yrs, 26% 46+ yrs
- Schools: 65% State, 22% Church, 14% Independent
- Teaching experience: 11+ yrs

MORE COMMONLY TAUGHT TOPICS

- Snacks (54%)
- Packaged lunch (40%)
- Breakfast (39%)
- Smoothies (54%)

LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT TOPICS

- Meals
- Supper (16%)
- Rabbit meat (10%)
- Nuts (18%)
- Herbs and spices (14%)

RESULTS

- 89% of the teachers had done FPC
- Healthy way (p. 38)
- I discuss about food randomly during the day, for example smoothies.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- FCE implementation in Maltese primary classrooms is fairly broad, but does not address all food literacy components.
- Further research is required to develop a national FCE curriculum, supported by teacher training and resources.

SNB Competency:
Nutrition education program design, implementation and evaluation