Australian teachers’ perceptions and experiences of food and nutrition education in primary schools: a qualitative study

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BACKGROUND

➢ Australian children’s diets are far from optimal with high consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods. 1
➢ Healthy practices established at early ages, such as following a well-balanced diet have the potential to last a lifetime. 2
➢ Teacher delivered food and nutrition education (FNE) can be effective in improving children’s food literacy and eating habits. 3
➢ However, teachers are known to have some barriers to the delivery of FNE globally. 4

METHODS

➢ Seventeen primary school teachers from Victoria, Australia participated in semi-structured interviews.
➢ Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and underwent thematic analysis through the template analysis technique 5 using the NVivo software.

OBJECTIVE: To obtain a deeper understanding of Australian primary school teachers’ experiences and views of teaching FNE in primary schools.

FINDINGS

➢ Teachers acknowledged the importance of FNE and were willing to include more FNE content into their teaching.
➢ They reported that they taught various food and nutrition topics, including practical components such as cooking and gardening as well as environmental sustainability and food production related topics.
➢ They cooperated with a number of external teaching partners in particular, for practical FNE components.
➢ There were inconsistencies among schools in terms of FNE teaching frequency, the inclusion of topics and resources used.
➢ Several barriers to teaching FNE were mentioned, including scarcity of funds and time, lack of support from school administration, competition for time allocation with other compulsory subjects, and a lack of professional development.

CONCLUSIONS

➢ Teachers are willing to teach FNE and deliver several FNE topics with the assistance of various external teaching partners. However, they face a number barriers including lack of time, funding, principal’s support and professional development.
➢ The efforts to teach FNE in Australian primary schools are promising and addressing the identified barriers would increase the effectiveness of future FNE programs.

REFERENCES

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics National health survey first results. 2018