

NUTRITION EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL: AN ÉTUDE FOR FOUR HANDS

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I. NUTRITIONISTS' PART

Source: Study of literature1. Setting Nutritional Aims

In this case: to improve a) food habits of schoolchildren and b) through these children those of their parents.

2. Institutions involved

- Nutrition Education Bureau (NEB), The Hague.
- Health Education Project (HEP), Nijmegen.

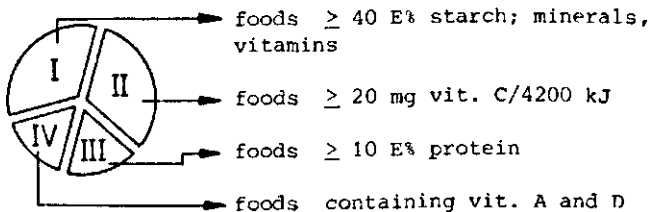
3. Selecting aim-related factors

- NEB emphasizes energy, minerals and vitamins.
- HEP stresses fatty acids, sugar, vitamins, dietary fibre, alcohol, harmful substances.

4. Developing Nutrition Education (N.E.) aids

Technique: grouping foods.

- Meal Guide ('Maaltijdschijf') by NEB



- Food Board ('Voedingsplank') by HEP
- Basic foods : mainly unrefined vegetable and lean animal foods.
- Supplementary foods: linoleic acid rich vegetable and lean animal foods.
- Superfluous foods : refined vegetable and fatty animal foods.

II. TEACHERS' PART

Source: open interviews (n=37)1. Subjects actually taught

- foods x health/diseases.
- foods x quality/toxicity.
- raw materials x preparations.
- variability of food habits.

2. Interestedness in nutrition

- personally : \geq high (10), medium (18), low (2).
- professionally: inversely related with social class pupils x own social class.
- in general : here overconsumption of meat, cakes, sweets, snacks, mayonaise, salt \rightarrow too many fat children.
: elsewhere starvation.

3. Feasibility of N.E.

- Yes, when restricted to basic facts and generally (dis-)approved habits.
 , when incorporated in e.g. biology, geography, history, etc.
 , when methods and reference-books available.
- No , when changes in habits and attitudes are intended, as parents might disapprove.
- Problem: 6-12 year olds unable to grasp abstract concepts.

III. PARENTS' PART

Source: questionnaire (n=262)

Q : Will these subjects be taught?

(n=124)	Yes
- food x health	124
- nutrients	123
- food habits (variability)	114
- available vegetables	109
- processed foods (ingr.)	103
- food x shop	67

Q : Should these subjects be taught?

(n=171)	Yes
- foods x nutrients	169
- vitamins	169
- milk as a food	168
- hunger and starvation	166
- food processing	163
- perishability of foods	162
- food preparation	116

IV. CHILDREN'S PART

Piaget: \leq 11 year olds have not mastered abstract reasoning; - with the aid of concrete material \geq 7 year olds can reason logically.

Contento: Children don't "see" the abstract concept "nutrients"; classify foods in an age-specific way.

Ethno-criteria for classifying raw vegetables.

Method: repertory grid.

Vegetables: tomato, carrot, cucumber, butter-bean, cauliflower.

	n : 102 children age : 8-12 years		20 housewives 42-61 years	
	freq.	order	freq.	order
shape	429	I	13	X
eaten cooked/raw	132	II	103	II
colour	129	III	33	VI
vital features	128	IV	19	VIII
taste (subj.)	81	V	38	V
versatility	29	VI	171	I
consistency	28	VII	14	IX
taste (obj.)	5	VIII	54	IV
wholesomeness	9	IX	79	III
(miscell.)	(31)		(47)	

Results: Same criteria were elicited, but differences in rank order suggest that children and housewives perceive raw vegetables differently.

CONCLUSION

A gap exists between the food knowledge of schoolchildren, adults and nutritionists respectively.

N.E. at the Primary School would benefit from research on the food knowledge of the first two categories as they play three out of four hands in an "Étude à quatre mains" that ought to be played well.