

Teaching Food Literacy in Queensland Secondary Schools: The Influence of Curriculum and School Environments

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Pre-recorded presentation link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkJ2jwBPZ4>

Background/Scope of Study: The World Health Organization identify childhood obesity as a serious 21st Century public health challenge. In 2017-2018, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identified that 41% of young Australians aged between 15-25 were overweight or obese. They labelled this concern a major public health issue due to its impacts on school performance, adult health and projected health care requirements. Schools are avenues for obesity intervention through food literacy education, which straddles Health and Physical Education and Design and Technologies (Home Economics) curriculum areas.

Significance and Research Aims: Food and nutrition education research has advanced since the 2014 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Curriculum review. New evidence has emerged to support the need for change in current food and nutrition educational practices which should be applied to the new Australian Curriculum launching in 2022. This study examined the challenges Queensland secondary school Home Economics teachers face when delivering food literacy programs. It also explored changes Home Economics teachers advocated for in order to support food literacy program delivery from curriculum and school-based perspectives.

Research Design: An exploratory mixed methods case study was employed using an online survey during February-March 2021. Participants ($n = 117$; estimated 12% of the population) included individuals who identify as Queensland secondary school Home Economics teachers. Purposive and snowball sampling enabled recruiting of respondents via the Home Economics Institute of Australia (Queensland) network. SPSS and Leximancer were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data respectively, followed by data convergence to address the research questions.

Key Findings: In order to support holistic food literacy education, 80% of respondents agreed the current Design and Technologies curriculum needs to change, with 61% requiring school-based change. The main themes for curriculum change were the incorporation of more explicit practical food education content descriptions and achievement standards, and transition of nutrition into home economics subjects. School-based change requirements included extra time allocation for planning and teaching and greater respect for home economics education.

Implications for Further Educational Research: This study revealed the need for the generation of an internationally agreed definition and framework for food literacy that is consistently applied in education globally. Furthermore, there is a need to gain a better understanding of the role of home economics in the delivery of food literacy; the availability

of home economics teachers to undertake this work; and further exploration of home economics teacher school-based experiences.