

Teaching and Learning Approaches in Current Secondary School Food Literacy Curricula

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Food literacy is a new and emerging concept that helps understand the impact of food choices on individual well-being. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the importance of food literacy education, teaching and learning approaches used in the classroom, and the challenges and barriers faced by teachers in teaching the food literacy curriculum in secondary schools. The teachers who teach the subjects Health and Physical Education, Agriculture and Food Technology, Home Economics, Practical and Technical Skills, and Science in the Northern Province were selected using the maximum variation sampling technique. A total of 96 teachers participated in 11 focus group discussions. The discussions were analyzed using the template analysis technique using the NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software and six major themes related to teaching and learning approaches were identified. All teachers approved of the importance of food literacy. Most teachers indicated that they use textbooks, blackboard and school gardens as the main teaching tools. Practical sessions, group discussions, and field visits were identified as the main methods of teaching. Most teachers perceived textbooks and practical sessions as the most effective teaching tools and methods. Student assignments and school term examinations were considered as the major evaluation methods. Though the majority of teachers were generally positive and understood the importance of food literacy education, they face certain barriers and challenges such as lack of support from parents and school administration and shortages in resources including funds, tools, equipment, and teacher training in food and nutrition. Hence, more resources and training to facilitate the delivery of food literacy education is needed. The findings of this study help understand the strengths, drawbacks, and potential areas for improvements in secondary school food literacy education in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Food literacy, Focus groups, Secondary school students, Teaching and learning approaches, Individual well-being