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Secondary school food and nutrition teachers' professional learning requirements: A qualitative exploration of teacher educators' views.

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Secondary school teachers contribute to the development of food-literate citizens among adolescents in food and nutrition curricula in many countries.⁽¹⁾ Their dissemination of sound food and nutrition information towards the promotion of healthy food practices is vital for the success of food education, alongside nutritional and health goals. Prior research suggests that secondary school teachers with varied educational backgrounds such as teaching outside their area of subject expertise may affect their exposure to sound food and nutrition knowledge with detrimental consequences on their confidence to teach food curricula.⁽²⁾ Inquiry into teachers' food and nutrition professional learning requirements is necessary for the design of suitable professional development. This qualitative study explored the perspectives of food and nutrition professionals including academics and pre-service teacher educators; professional development providers; and food education curriculum developers. The study aimed to explore teachers' food and nutrition learning requirements and provide rich data for subsequent research into their professional development needs. Purposive sampling was used to recruit eligible volunteers $n = 19$ from food and nutrition education professional networks in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, Korea, and the United Kingdom. The interviewees participated in a one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interview. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Codes were assigned to the transcripts in the process of inductive thematic analysis using NVivo software. There were three themes constructed from the data: adolescent food, nutrition, and health dilemmas; the value of food and nutrition curricula enactment; and influences on teachers' access to food and nutrition education. Participants reported that adolescents' exposure to health risks such as obesity and dental caries are likely associated with the marketing and consumption of ultra-processed products, and their socioeconomic circumstances. They affirmed the potential for school-based food curricula to develop critical food literacy that can help students to mitigate health risks. Participants described the potential for teacher deployment practices of teachers without an educational background in food and nutrition to increase the demand for professional development. However, lack of resources such as available time and money are barriers to teachers' engagement in food and nutrition professional development. These findings suggest that complex education policies and resource constraints may pose a risk to food and nutrition curriculum fidelity; the transmission of consistent food and nutrition messages; and restrict teachers' access to professional development. In conclusion, an improvement in food curricula recognition and greater resource allocation is necessary to meet the specialised needs of food and nutrition education teachers. The findings provide policy guidance for governments, education sectors, and secondary schools to support successful food education. They can inform the design of professional development programs that aim to foster teachers' food and nutrition capabilities to promote food literacy and healthy food practices in secondary school food and nutrition education courses.

References

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2. Boddy G, Booth A & Worsley A (2019) *Health Educ* 119, 277–290.