

Analysis of Food and Nutrition Education Books oriented to Social Assistance Services

Análise dos Cadernos sobre Educação Alimentar e Nutricional voltados aos Serviços Socioassistenciais

Letícia Simon¹
Maurem Ramos²
Roger dos Santos Rosa³

¹ Prefeitura Municipal de Caxias do Sul – RS, Fundação de Assistência Social. Caxias do Sul-RS, Brasil.

² Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Faculdade de Medicina, Departamento de Nutrição. Porto Alegre-RS, Brasil.

³ Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Faculdade de Medicina, Departamento de Medicina Social. Porto Alegre-RS, Brasil.

Correspondence
Letícia Simon
E-mail: leti _ nutricao@yahoo.com.br

Abstract

Context: Food and Nutrition Education plays an important role in promoting health through changing eating behavior. Given this, it has been incorporated as a strategy in the Brazilian public policies of several sectors. Social assistance services aim at reducing risks and vulnerability, as well as promoting rights, configuring spaces with potential for the educational process. *Objective:* To analyze critically, in the light of Paulo Freire and in the perspective of educational/ didactic material, the *Cadernos de Educação Alimentar e Nutricional* [Food and Nutrition Education Books] focused on social assistance services, identifying the theoretical and methodological dimension in its construction, applicability of concepts and information addressed, by implementing the Food and Nutrition Education process and verifying its structure and writing. *Results:* After analyzing the *Cadernos*, it was verified that (i) the theoretical-methodological basis to be followed is not mentioned and, although they allude to Paulo Freire, the proposed activities are not in agreement with the concepts presupposed by him; (ii) the writing presents flaws in relation to the written standard and the use of references; (iii) the professional responsible for carrying out the actions is not indicated. *Conclusion:* The publication of guidelines for the Food and Nutrition Education process is fundamental, but it must have a clear and concise theoretical and methodological basis to actually contribute to the autonomous and voluntary change of eating behavior.

Keywords: Food and Nutrition Education. Social Assistance. Health Promotion. Food and Nutrition Security. Public Policies.

Resumo

Contexto: A Educação Alimentar e Nutricional tem importante papel na promoção da saúde por meio da mudança do comportamento alimentar. Diante disso, vem

sendo incorporada como estratégia nas políticas públicas brasileiras de diversos setores. Os serviços socioassistenciais visam à redução de riscos e vulnerabilidade, bem como à promoção de direitos, configurando espaços com potencial para o processo educativo. *Objetivo:* Analisar criticamente, à luz de Paulo Freire e na perspectiva de material educativo/didático, os Cadernos de Educação Alimentar e Nutricional voltados aos serviços socioassistenciais, identificando a dimensão teórico-metodológica na sua construção, aplicabilidade de conceitos e informações abordados, a responsabilidade pela implementação do processo de Educação Alimentar e Nutricional e verificando sua estrutura e redação. *Resultados:* Após análise dos Cadernos, verificou-se que (i) a fundamentação teórico-metodológica a ser seguida não é mencionada e, embora façam alusão a Paulo Freire, as atividades propostas não estão de acordo com os conceitos pressupostos por este; (ii) a redação apresenta falhas com relação à norma escrita e ao uso de referências; (iii) o profissional responsável pela execução das ações não está indicado. *Conclusão:* A publicação de orientações para o processo de Educação Alimentar e Nutricional é fundamental, mas deve ter fundamentação teórico-metodológica clara e concisa para, de fato, contribuir com a mudança autônoma e voluntária do comportamento alimentar.

Palavras-chave: Educação Alimentar e Nutricional. Assistência Social. Promoção da Saúde. Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. Políticas Públicas.

Introduction

Feeding is a basic human need and its suitability is essential for the health and quality of life of the individual. Not only access to healthy food is essential, but also understanding the importance of good nutrition.¹

The human being lives carried by his/her desires, passions and pleasure. When eating, often his/her choice is not for good nutrition, because humans eat food, not nutrients.² The palate, taste, texture of food are fundamental in the choices that are made, although it is known that physical and financial access is at the basis of this behavior.³

In addition to its biological and physiological function of quenching hunger, eating is a social act and represents “inherited and / or learned beliefs, knowledge and practices” of a given culture or social group. Feeding based on choices that, socially shared, structure the food act, steadfast in rules, category and impediments.⁴

As stated in the *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population*,⁵ it is understood that feeding can be considered healthy when there is viability for combinations of foods, preferably *in natura*. Such a combination should respect culture and foster a “socially and environmentally sustainable food system,” and not the scientifically produced model with “always provisional” truths, until they are replaced by others.⁶

The “Health Promotion” concept outlined in the 1986 Ottawa Charter states that this process should develop individuals’ abilities to recognize their needs and make choices that lead to health, food and education being two of the conditions for its attainment.⁷

Food and Nutrition Education can be understood as the combination of educational strategies aimed at the voluntary adoption of food choices and other behaviors related to food and nutrition that lead to health and well-being.⁸ It is also seen as a strategy for valuing food, in order to respect, but also modify, beliefs, values, attitudes, practices and social relations that are established around food, allowing access to adequate feeding that provides health, pleasure and social life.⁹

In 2012, the Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework for Public Policies was published with the aim of promoting a common field of reflection and orientation of the practice in the actions of Food and Nutrition Education adopted in the public policies, in order to contemplate all the sectors involved in the production, distribution, supply and consumption of food.¹⁰ And, in 2014, the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger), published the Food and Nutrition Education Books: the Human Right to Adequate Feeding and the strengthening of family ties in social assistance services, with the aim of subsidizing the work of the professionals of the social assistance services when approaching the process of Food and Nutrition Education.^{11,12}

Social assistance services are ongoing activities aimed at helping the population to improve their quality of life, with actions focused on the basic needs of the individual.¹³ Such services should provide a set of safeguards for risk and vulnerability reduction, including social security, through socio-educational work that strengthen social ties, and security of autonomy, which aims at the development of skills so that the individual is able to make his/her choices.¹⁴

Considering that such services aim at risk prevention and access to social rights, the use of Food and Nutrition Education in these places can contribute to the achievement of the Human Right to Adequate Feeding, being possible to develop it in specific or intergenerational groups, in order to encourage reflection on the promotion of healthy eating practices in the family context.”

However, the families that use social assistance services are socially vulnerable, a result of social inequality. In addition, it is not possible to think of a homogeneous model of families, which hinders Food and Nutrition Education interventions thought away from the reality lived and felt. Thus, the planning construction for this process is defended based on the recognized educator Paulo Freire, in a participatory manner with the target audience.¹⁵

In view of this, the present work had the objective of critically analyzing the Food and Nutrition Education Books focused on social assistance services, in the light of Paulo Freire and in the perspective of educational / didactic material. The aim was to identify the theoretical-methodological dimension under construction, the applicability of concepts and information addressed, the responsibility for the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Education process, and its structure and writing.

Methodology

A qualitative study was carried out from the perspective of documentary analysis. It refers to the examination of materials that have not yet received analytical treatment or which may be reexamined in the search for new or complementary interpretations. Written materials (newspapers, magazines, journals, literary, scientific and technical works, etc.), statistics and iconographic elements are considered documents.¹⁶

According to Poupart et al.,¹⁷ a preliminary analysis of the target document should look at aspects concerning the context in which it was produced, its authors and the reliability, nature and key concepts of the text. After this preliminary analysis, the researcher can interpret it in a coherent way, based on the theme or the initial questioning. In the study in question, the Books (denominated of Theoretical and of Activities) of Food and Nutrition Education directed to the social assistance services published by the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger) were analyzed in a critical way.

Questions were raised about the construction of the key concepts and information contained in the “theoretical book” and the theoretical-methodological conception of Freire in the applicability of this information. The responsibility for implementing the proposed Food and Nutrition Education actions was discussed and the structure and writing of the presented text were verified.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

In the preliminary analysis of the document, the lack of authorship of the document caused surprise, appearing the inconvenience of how to refer it. The context of “elaboration” mentions

as source “suggestions” of “about 220 people” through public consultation, without clarifying the methodology used.

For Andreola,¹⁸ according to Paulo Freire, interdisciplinarity is considered very important in the construction of educational material, without opposing technology - in this case, the use of public consultation via the web. However, this construction must follow the same methodology of generating themes that is, through a process of investigation, and then put to the screen of the public consultation, which cannot be said to have occurred.

In a general way, the educational material presents concepts that refer to the transmission of knowledge typical of what Freire¹⁵ conceptualized as a banking conception of education. In the book with suggestions of activities, the proposed group dynamics generate illusion of knowledge construction with the participation of the target audience of the Food and Nutrition Education process.

This view of educational process does not cause estrangement, since the Food and Nutrition Education conceived by many nutritionists still remains anchored in traditional pedagogy, despite the scientific production guiding the educational model to a critical pedagogy represented by the thought of Paulo Freire.¹⁹ Likewise, according to Lima & Carloto,²⁰ social workers, in their practice of socio-educational actions, “are still based on the transmission of information and guidance without the participation of the population served in the definition and choice of program content.”

In the presentation of the “theoretical” book, it is recorded that the contributions, through suggestions by public consultation improved the content and made possible the planning and organization of activities of the Food and Nutrition Education process. If executed in the methodology of generating themes, these two questions would be the result of surveying the reality of the professionals to whom the educational material is intended, in the same way in relation to the planning and organization of the process, to which the families that are the target of the actions must participate dialogically.¹⁵

Without the proper understanding of the needs, difficulties and conceptions of the professionals to whom the educational material is destined, the information presented may be insufficient to subsidize the same in the activities to be planned and executed with the target public, mainly including the lack of theoretical-methodological orientation for the operationalization of socio-educational groups.

Proposed information and activities

In the Theoretical Book, Chapter 1, Part 1, entitled “The Human Right to Adequate Feeding”, the text presents a summary interpretation of the concepts of Human Right to Adequate Feeding

and Food and Nutrition Security (one page). Related to this theme, the first activity proposed in the Activity Book consists of a reflection on the basic social rights known by the participants, with emphasis on the Human Right to Adequate Feeding. The activity foresees that the driver helps the participants to construct a concept of Human Right to Adequate Feeding, and in the discussion of daily situations, that exemplify the access or not to this right.

Considering the attribution of social assistance services to promote the individuals' access to social rights, the proposed activity is important in helping participants to know their rights. However, it is questioned: is knowledge of rights enough to change the reality of families in food and nutritional insecurity? When does the educational material problematize with families how to ensure the guarantee of their rights?

In Part 2, entitled "Food and Nutrition Education - FNE", the Theoretical Book brings the concept of Food and Nutrition Education and the principles that must be observed in its actions, according to the provisions of the Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework for Public Policies.

The concept adopted by the Framework and the publication in question states that Food and Nutrition Education "is a field of knowledge and continuous and permanent, transdisciplinary, intersectoral and multiprofessional practice, which aims to promote the autonomous and voluntary practice of healthy eating habits." However, this publication does not discuss such concepts.

With regard to the principles for the actions of Food and Nutrition Education, the Book transcribes in full eight of the nine principles described in the Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework for Public Policies.¹⁰ The description of the principles gives only a brief explanation, not to mention how they can be developed and what the theoretical-methodological foundation to be adopted for its implementation.

The ninth principle of the Food and Nutrition Education Framework, not mentioned in the Theoretical Book, refers precisely to the process of planning, evaluating and monitoring actions, with a view to identifying priorities and elaborating appropriate strategies, but also does not define method for their achievement.

According to Santos,²² both in the academic literature and in reference documents of public policies, there are few references on theoretical, methodological and operational basis for the actions of Food and Nutrition Education.

With regard to the principle of intersectorality, the Theoretical Book lists some actions and programs of other governmental sectors with which partnerships can be made. There is a brief explanation of some programs in the area of health and education, being necessary the search of information in other places to further deepen its functioning. Of the programs related to the

Food Security area, only the Food Acquisition Program is cited, to the detriment of the others, such as Food Bank, Popular Restaurants and Community Kitchens, which should be known, for possible forwarding of demands.

In an articulated way, the intersectoriality allows the exchange of knowledge and actions, broadening the approach of the social problematic in its complex and multidimensional character. However, it is necessary that there is the political will of the sectors in order to plan the necessary articulation in a planned way. It is not a question of personal will, in an individualistic way, this search for knowledge and doing of the other, in the way it is placed in the books under analysis.²³

In Part 3, entitled “Adequate and healthy feeding from the perspective of Food and Nutrition Security”, the text briefly addresses the changes in food consumption of the Brazilian population (one page). There is no explanation as to what, in fact, would be healthy eating and how it could be achieved. Thus, the content of the text does not match the title.

The *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population* states that food involves not only the intake of nutrients, but also foods that are a source of nutrients, how they are combined and prepared, the mode of eating, and cultural and social characteristics of food practices. It also recommends that recommendations to promote adequate and healthy food should be in line with the food scenario and health conditions of the population, and take into account the impacts of food production and distribution on social justice and environmental integrity.⁵

Part 3 also has a small three-paragraph subtitle, which deals with transgenic foods. It is observed that there is no explanation about what transgenic foods are. Only the possible risks of their consumption are addressed, mentioning the decree that regulates the obligatory information on food labels about their presence. If transgenic are cited in view of the issue of food healthiness, why not point out the use of pesticides?

Lastly, the text discusses food labeling, but mentions only the importance of interpreting labels for the promotion of healthy choices and presents a figure as a model of nutrition information table. On this topic, the Activity Book suggests the *Activity 9 - What are food labels saying?*, in which participants should bring labels of food consumed in their homes, and the driver must work on the nutrition labeling items with them.

Various studies and research²⁴⁻²⁶ have highlighted the importance of nutritional labeling of foods for the promotion of healthy eating, noting the growing demand of society for reliable information. In addition to benefiting consumers, the standardization of food labeling also aims to avoid technical barriers to trade in products between countries.²⁷

Food labeling assists consumers in the food choice process,²⁴ especially for individuals whose pathologies present nutrient restrictions, and their interpretation is important for this choice. For example, the *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population*, indicates the reading of the list of

ingredients on the labels as a form of identifying if a food is ultra-processed, since this type of food should be avoided.⁵

In a study carried out in two supermarkets of a city of the State of São Paulo, however, it was observed that most consumers did not consider nutritional information important and have difficulty in using and understanding the content of food labels.²⁵ Another study, conducted in the city of Niterói-RJ, concluded that the information contained in food labels often generated doubts, discredit and consumer dissatisfaction.²⁶

Chapter II of the Theoretical Book deals with food in different life cycles, containing a first part in which it addresses the *Food in childhood*. The topic provides a brief introduction on the importance of dietary practices for child development and then addresses breastfeeding, complementary feeding and healthy eating practices after six months of age. Regarding breastfeeding, it covers its importance and advantages for the baby, the mother and the family, and also mentions the law that guarantees the mother's right to breastfeed, through a text of three paragraphs and two tables.

In this regard, the Activity Book suggests the *Activity 2 - Breastfeeding*, proposing a discussion with pregnant women, mothers and their families about the advantages of breastfeeding and its importance. If specific information on breastfeeding is needed, it suggests seeking partnerships with other services to deepen the topic and / or refer the family to the health network. Therefore, the theoretical content provided is limited to general aspects of breastfeeding, and not enough for the clarification of possible doubts that arise on the part of the driver of the activity and / or the participants.

With respect to complementary feeding, it provides general guidelines on how food should be introduced after the age of six months, with superficial information that does not allow adequate clarification to the reader and without citing the references used. It also mentions that specific guidelines on the quantity and number of meals per day can be obtained from the health services.

On this theme, the Activities Book proposes the *Activity 3 - Caring for the feeding of the children in 10 steps*, which recommends the discussion with the families on the "Ten steps for a Healthy Feeding" contained in the Guide Food for children under two years, elaborated by the *Ministério da Saúde* (Ministry of Health). The "Ten Steps" are not mentioned in the Theoretical Book, and it is possible that the driver does not know how to interpret them in their entirety, in order to properly conduct the activity. Once again, it is suggested the search for partnerships and / or the referral of families to the health network to clarify specific doubts.

The second part of Chapter 2 addresses the *Feeding in adolescence*. The text of a page characterizes the physical and behavioral changes of this phase, influences in the food choices and points to observe in the actions developed with this public. It does not address specific dietary needs of this age group.

To work with adolescents, the Activity Book suggests *Activity 8 - The influence of food advertising on food choice*. In the orientation, the driver must present the advertisements to the participants and then start the discussion by asking some questions. For Freire,¹⁵ the problematization of reality leads to the process of criticism, which leads individuals to awareness, generating change in action.

The regulation of advertising has been debated, as evidence indicates the influence of television media on food preferences.²⁸ In a study carried out by García & Díez,²⁹ it has been observed that the strategies used by food advertising use artifices to which children and adolescents are sensitive, such as joyful songs, cartoon characters, vivid colors, and association of food to social success. The majority of commercials broadcast on open television channels in Brazil, and in other countries, refer to foods rich in fat, sugar and salt,³⁰ which influence their consumption and, consequently, the indices of overweight.

The text referring to *Food in the adult phase* briefly provides about the nutritional transition that is occurring in the Brazilian population, changes in the food pattern that are generating an increase in excess weight and non-communicable chronic diseases, mentioning that adequate food is essential. It does not address specific issues about proper eating habits for the age group. As support material, it suggests the *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population*.

The second edition of *Food Guide for the Brazilian Population*⁵ focuses on the consumption of *in natura* and minimally processed foods, as a feeding base, moderate use of salt, sugar and fat in the preparation of food, limited consumption of processed foods and guidance for ultra-processed foods to be avoided. It also provides guidance on the appropriate combination of foods, the importance of eating, possible obstacles to the type of food proposed and how they can be overcome.

The last part addresses *The Elderly's Feeding*, mentioning changes arising from the aging process that may influence the feeding of the elderly. It is stated that Food and Nutrition Education for this age group can be based on the promotion of active and healthy aging, to promote the quality of life, adequate food and social coexistence.

In general, all texts referring to feeding in life cycles are short, with an average of one page each. It is perceived that, depending on the action of Food and Nutrition Education that may be carried out by the team, the presented content may be insufficient to support the execution of the activity and for the understanding on the subject by the driver, especially if he/she does not have previous training on the subject in question.

At the end of each text, there are suggestions for topics to be worked on with this age group. As many of the suggested topics are not addressed in the Theoretical Book, it would be necessary to seek information from other sources. The text suggests the search for partnerships with other services, such as health and education, to approach specific topics, that is, this search may be necessary in most subjects if a trained professional does not belong to the team.

The suggestion of predetermined themes contradicts the concept of Food and Nutrition Education adopted with regard to *promotion of autonomous and voluntary practice*, because they may not be the demand of a certain population. According to Freire,¹⁵ in order for the educational practice to be liberating and generate autonomy, before the planning of actions, it is necessary that there be dialogue with the target audience to investigate the “thematic universe”, that is, the demands and social reality existing in the life and thought of the participants. According to the author, “authentic education is not made from ‘A’ to ‘B’ or of ‘A’ over ‘B’, but of ‘A’ with ‘B’”.

Throughout the Theoretical Book, various *links* from *websites* are suggested to find more information. So, it is necessary for the professional to have access to these contents. According to Boog,³¹ problematization of reality, critical analysis,³¹ and reflection on problems and challenges do not occur when obtaining information from the internet, requiring the mediation of a teacher with liberating educational practice to achieve this understanding.

In addition to the activities already mentioned, the Activity Book suggests five other activities. The *Activity 4 - Where do food come from?* It consists in working the origin of the food with the participants, through a debate with the use of food packaging and *in natura* food, focused on the valorization of the food produced in the region. Thinking about the conduct of the proposed debate, it would be important for the driver of the activity to have a minimum knowledge about the production process, the composition of processed foods and the local production to be grounded in order to clarify possible doubts about the origin of certain foods, degree of processing and the presence of additives. The Theoretical Book does not present this information, and it is necessary to seek other sources, if the driver does not feel prepared to approach the subject.

The *Activity 5 - Once upon a time* and the *Activity 10 – Patchwork* propose similar actions. The first one aimed at several age groups, and the second one aimed at the elderly. Both aim to rescue the culture and local eating habits through reports from elderly about the changes in food, with subsequent representation of stories told in texts, drawings, etc. If, in fact, the activities aim to rescue the food culture, without discussing the healthy nature or not of the habits mentioned, both can be easily conducted by a professional who has no previous knowledge about it.

The *Activity 6 - Knowing the local production* suggests the visit to agricultural properties, agroindustries, fairs, supply centers, among others, with the purpose of knowing the local production, with later construction of mural with photos and discussion about what was observed on the tour. This activity also does not require prior driver training, unless it involves the use of concepts related to healthy eating habits and food composition in the debate. However, it is observed the need for resources to operationalize the activity, as well as the preparation of a visit script, points not covered in the Activity Book and that, if not foreseen, may make it impossible to be executed.

And finally, in Activity 7 - Discovering foods through the senses, an action with children is proposed, basically consisting of the tasting of fruits of the region, in which they must have their eyes bandaged so that they discover what the fruit offered by means of the palate, smell and touch. As the purpose of the activity is only to promote the contact of the target audience with new foods, it is not necessary that the driver has previous knowledge about food and nutrition, except when using the moment to inform about the nutritional properties of each food.

In general terms, what was perceived is that, although the concept and the guidelines recommended in the Theoretical Book mention the promotion of autonomy and the active participation of individuals in the actions of Food and Nutrition Education, in practice, in the way the activities are proposed, they do not fit the assumption. The absence of an implicit definition of a theoretical-methodological basis in the text to direct the educational practice of actions makes it difficult to understand and execute what is proposed, and may lead to different interpretations on the part of the executors.

Study carried out by Santos¹⁹ found that, despite the growing concern with the theoretical and methodological bases for FNE actions, being many of them with reference to Paulo Freire and popular education, they are located in traditional models based on the transmission of information, prevailing techniques such as lectures and production of informative materials, among others. It was also observed that Food and Nutrition Education has been the subject of debates for its conception as governmental action, but there is a gap between the formulation of public policies and the actions carried out at the local level.

Structure and writing

The Food and Nutrition Education Books for social assistance services are divided into two volumes: a Theoretical Book and an Activities Book.^{11,12}

The Theoretical Book presents two chapters: the first one covers concepts and principles for the implementation of food and nutrition education actions, from the perspective of Food and Nutrition Security and the Human Right to Adequate Food. The second chapter presents information about the approach in the different life cycles (child, adolescent, adult and elderly).

The Activity Book brings suggestions of food and nutrition education activities to be carried out in social assistance services, some for all age groups, and others for specific age groups.

Analyzing the Theoretical Book from the writing point of view, errors were observed in relation to the written standard, presenting punctuation and concordance errors, or even incomprehensible phrases (e.g., page 29, in the first paragraph, “...restricted to that added to main baby foods Are

not recommended to be offered, and in the third paragraph, “Offering foods sources of these nutrients helps in the prevention of those of hypovitaminosis A and iron deficiency anemia.”).

Another example is on page 22, second paragraph, where the text is not clear:

[...] In this sense, protection of environmental and consumer law is combined, with emphasis on the environmental responsibility of the supplier and the producer for the fact of the product, the principle of information and labeling of products, as mechanisms to protect the environment and consumer health.

According to Soares,³² improper use of the language in the writing of any type of text degrades the copywriter and the institution represented, in addition to making it difficult to understand the information to be transmitted.

With regard to the references used, it was found that there are excerpts from texts and whole texts without references, as noted for example in chapter 1, on pages 11 to 16. The text on the Principles of Food and Nutrition Education Actions found in the Food and Nutrition Education Framework for public policies¹⁰ is transcribed almost in its entirety. There is only one mention in the first paragraph of this item on the Food and Nutrition Education Framework, and there is no reference on the following pages or at the end in the bibliographic references section.

Similarly, chapter 2 begins on page 25, but only on page 31 the first reference of the text is mentioned, that is, only on the seventh page of the chapter. In addition, at least ten references cited in the text and figures are not broken down at the end: Burity et al., 2010 (page 8); Kepple, 2010 and CONSEA, 2010 (figure, page 9); Brazil, 2009a (page 13); Diez-Garcia; Castro, 2010 (page 14); Monteiro et al., 2010 (page 21); Leite et al., 2012 (page 21); Brazil, 2005 (figure, page 24); Levy-Costa et al., 2005 (page 32); and Brazil, 2003 (page 34).

The Activity Book mentions only three references that are not mentioned at the end, since there is no section of bibliographical references in this book.

According to the *Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas* (Brazilian Association of Technical Standards),³³ reference is the set of descriptive elements taken from a document that allows its individual identification. The references should be listed in their own list, with the inclusion of all the sources effectively used in the elaboration of the work.³⁴ Therefore, in the Books in question, the use of references is not in accordance with what was recommended.

Responsibility for Food and Nutrition Education actions

Throughout the text, the Books characterize Food and Nutrition Education as a multiprofessional practice and mention that actions in this sense would be carried out by technical staff of the social

assistance services. At no time does it mention which professional should be responsible for the execution of the actions. This corroborates the orientation of the Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework for Public Policies, according to which the nutritionist will only be called to take responsibility for FNE as a therapeutic resource, that is, for individuals or groups with some pathology or disease.

The Basic Operational Standard of Human Resources of the Unified Social Assistance System considers the social workers, psychologists and mid-level technicians as members of the reference teams of the social assistance services. The participation of the nutritionist is not foreseen.³⁵ As the activity of this professional is not recognized in the social assistance segment, his/her presence in social assistance services becomes uncommon. However, it is known that the nutritionist also works in the social assistance network. It is common the offer of meals in various services, being this professional restricted to the practice of food and nutrition units as responsible for the execution of the meals of these places.

One point that may lead to the non-inclusion of the nutritionist in the social assistance network are the curricula of undergraduate courses in Nutrition, which often offer subjects directed to public health, with vague content and / or focused only on health policies. The National Curricular Guidelines for undergraduate courses in Nutrition in article 5, single paragraph, state that the training of the nutritionist, in terms of social health needs, should focus on the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (SUS - Unified Health System).³⁶ Thus, such guidelines may have been based on a limited view of the fields of action of the nutritionist, since the focus on SUS leads the nutritionist to be recognized as a health professional only in this public policy.³⁷

In order for the nutritionist and other professionals to carry out educational actions, being it food and nutrition or other socio-educational actions, as foreseen in the Unified Social Assistance System, the competence as an educator must be developed. It is necessary preparation to develop an educational practice as proposed by Freire. To make a difference, the professional must have a perspective that allows planning with the community / group with whom one is going to work. Collective and participatory planning start from this reality. It is from this that generative themes can be born with meaning, and that can make a difference, generating possibilities, creating strategies.

Bayer,³⁸ in a study on nutritional education carried out with 22 social educators who worked in the *Centros de Referência de Assistência Social* (CRAS - Social Assistance Referral Centers) of Novo Hamburgo-RS, found that 55% of the interviewees had doubts about specific nutrition knowledge and would like to receive more training on the subject. The result can be verified by applying specific questions about nutrition knowledge, in which of the eight questions applied, five had 50% of incorrect answers. The author also observed few suggestions of FNE activities to be performed with the groups, demonstrating the difficulty of the interviewees in developing the theme.

Final Considerations

FNE is an important strategy for health promotion and has been included in Brazilian public policies in several areas. In the field of social assistance, educational actions for this purpose can and should be worked on social assistance services, since these are spaces for the achievement of the individuals' rights.

Analyzing the Guidance books for social assistance services in the light of Paulo Freire, it is verified that, although they mention concepts and principles for the promotion of the autonomy of individuals, in practice the activities are characterized as the model of knowledge transmission, typical of the “banking conception”, in which the educator “deposits information” in the learner. The Books also present flaws in their writing, in the insertion of references and are presented without authorship, points that may affect the credibility of the publication.

Failure to indicate the professional responsible for the execution of the actions creates a precedent so that no one takes this task and / or for professionals who are not qualified to carry out the actions in any way they deem appropriate, which implies actions without effectiveness.

The insertion of the nutritionist in social assistance services would facilitate the inclusion of the Food and Nutrition Education process and other actions of the services, provided that this professional also has well-defined theoretical and methodological bases and receives adequate conditions to the exercise of his/her work. It is also important to include the theme “Unified Social Assistance System” in undergraduate courses in Nutrition.

The publication of guidelines for the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Education process is of fundamental importance to assist professionals in their work with the population. However, it is also crucial that they have a clear and concise theoretical and methodological foundation, aiming at actions that, in fact, contribute to the autonomous and voluntary change of feeding behavior.

Contributors

All authors worked on all stages of the study, from conception to review of the final version of the article.

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