



Ten years of the Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework for Public Policies: principles, practices and challenges

Uma década do Marco de Referência de Educação Alimentar e Nutricional para as Políticas Públicas: princípios, práticas e desafios

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Celebrating 10 years of the *Food and Nutrition Education Reference Framework for Public Policies* is a privilege and a joy. We are pleased to present the works selected with all the care and rigor that the date requires. Two years have passed since we invited colleagues to contribute to this thematic issue, a symptomatic lapse of time that tells us that we need time... time to think and rethink practices, time to decant our reflections and theoretical-methodological constructions, elements that indicate the paths where advances in the field of Food and Nutritional Education (FNE) are being paved for the next 10 or 12 years.

The *Framework*, affectionate name as we refer to this 2012 publication, *frames* a context for strengthening spaces for social participation and intersectoral initiatives to promote the Human Right to Adequate Food (HRAF) and Food and Nutritional Security (FNS). It also *frames* the relevant and necessary production of a critical reflection on FNE actions, valuing it in the different contexts in which it was already developed and encouraging its insertion in new scenarios.¹

These new scenarios have emerged over the years, also *framed* by a series of adversities, such as (1) attacks on the references of critical education, especially Paulo Freire, produced by a conservative wave that spread across various aspects of social life; (2) the growth of professional performance perspectives strongly marked by neoliberal values that impose on the nutritionist the ideal of becoming “self-entrepreneurs”; (3) the health crisis related to Covid-19 and the need for changes in daily life (including social distancing), which required adaptations to the ways of taking care of food, nutrition, and health and carrying out FNE; and (4) the dismantling, emptying and reconfiguration of public FNS policies and other social policies that, combined with the context of crises (economic, social, climate and health), brought an overwhelming increase in hunger throughout the country.

In addition to the adversities, it is worth noting here the recognized advances regarding debates on food environments, sustainable and fair food systems, and the visibility given to gender and race issues among the health determinants, as well as the *Framework's* contributions in encouraging registration and systematization of new practices, multiple knowledge and ethnic-racial issues in food and nutrition. In the context of these advances, we highlight two important initiatives: initially, in 2012, the creation of the *Ideias na Mesa Virtual Network*, to encourage the exchange of FNE experiences and support the training of professionals to work in this area;² and more recently, the Food and Nutrition Education Innovation

Laboratory (Laboratório de Inovação em Educação Alimentar e Nutricional –LIS-EAN), launched to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the *Framework*, which is dedicated to bringing together successful FNE experiences, besides systematizing knowledge to expand the access and sharing between health managers and professionals and in other sectors.³

We acknowledge in these initiatives the importance of describing, systematizing, and publicizing these experiences and, above all, sharing the successes of FNE professionals. However, despite the large number of experience reports sent to this thematic call, we understand that it was the right time to emphasize the gaps, renewing, once again, the challenges we are faced with in our daily lives and making the possible and necessary progress in the FNE field.

Thus, the articles gathered here present systematizations and analyses that, in the wake of the innovations brought by the *Framework*, were able to support spaces in which, traditionally, FNE practices are developed, such as schools, primary health care units, internships, and extension projects in universities, and also point out new elements that contribute to a conception of FNE freed from the constraints of banking education. This is a permanent challenge that still imposes itself on the FNE field. In other words, changing practices is not at all simple, especially when we are faced with professional training that uses traditional pedagogical approaches, sometimes focused on the demands of a neoliberal world that solely holds the individual responsible, and does not give up on archaic and normative conceptions about the health-illness, right-wrong, good-bad binomials.

The look on praxis spanned the long two years of the editorial process and forced us to separate the “wheat from the chaff” and even the “wheat from the wheat”. In this work – for which we need to choose our lenses to better see sameness and innovation – we were surprised that, among the topics covered, we did not find manuscripts dedicated to the problematization of FNE among workers, an important scenario that marks the origin of training in Nutrition, together with schools. We can perhaps infer a certain retreat in prioritizing scenarios in which FNE can and should be present.

It is worth highlighting that we were able to count on contributions that helped us look at the path taken, historically organizing the innovations built and enabling the identification of gaps in the processes resulting from the publication of the *Framework* in 2012. One must dare, show oneself and expose the principles of praxis, revisiting what was already thought at another time, to consolidate a critical perspective, based on Paulo Freire’s popular education.

Praxis is a concept that speaks of “the action and reflection of men on the world to transform it” (p. 52).⁴ More than a concept, praxis is a living, lived experience that deserves to be shared, and that can help us build new possibilities of being in the world, especially in the world of food and nutrition.

If the concept of praxis is essential for thinking about FNE practices, the concept of awareness, one of the epistemological bases in the Popular Education Reference Framework for Public Policies,⁵ is no less important. This is not about awareness in the traditional sense that we find disseminated in the FNE field – which implies that a professional must make the patient aware of what is good or bad, what they should or should not eat to achieve a healthy diet –, but in the sense that one must form conscious individuals capable of critically looking at their reality and, therefore, taking a position that never ceases to be political. Life is political. Eating is a political act. Hunger is political.

Following the clues left by Paulo Freire and admitted by the FNE field as a path to be explored, we can consider that “the higher the level of awareness, the greater the capacity to 'unveil' reality” (p. 40).¹ In other words, the more the individual/patient and the nutritionist can critically elaborate their positions in the world, the more they can understand their realities and, based on them, build possible solutions to dietary issues.

Awareness does not consist, therefore, in “being faced with reality”, revealing it to others, or assuming a position of false knowledge of reality. Awareness, whether of the nutritionist or the one cared for, cannot exist outside of “praxis”. Praxis is an action-reflection in itself, a dialectical experience that simultaneously enables the process of awareness and construction of knowledge.

In the Food and Nutrition field, we notice that the critical exercise of looking implied by praxis is still incipient. Therefore, we privilege manuscripts that overvalue the analysis of practices, knowledge, and scenarios. In this sense, themes dear to the FNE field are addressed based on the principles presented in the *Framework*, whether in the direction of reaffirming its relevance or pointing out the long path toward its consolidation. This is the case, for example, of themes relating to ongoing training in health, intersectorality, and transdisciplinarity. In a way, what seems to be a consensus is the scarcity of studies that evaluate the coherence between FNE practices and their theoretical-methodological foundations.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that the presence of articles dedicated to thinking about FNE practices from an intersectional perspective brings new horizons to which we must direct our gaze, as the construction of an anti-racist education requires each of us to make some ruptures with the knowledge and certainties that constituted us historically and that *frame* our body and our field.

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