



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
NATIONAL HERITAGE, CULTURE
AND SPORTS.



TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION AND TRAINING



NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION
POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

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NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

FOREWORD

The Ministry of Education presents the ***National Food and Nutrition Policy for Schools***. This document provides a framework and guidelines that promote a healthier environment in schools, to ensure a healthier future for the children of Fiji.

Healthy nutrition interventions need to occur early in childhood and adolescence in order to prevent or reverse the adverse effects of obesity and poor eating habits. Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for diets of high nutritional quality, as the psychological need for nutrients is high, relative to energy needs during these active stages of development. In addition many core eating habits and behavioural patterns are developed earlier on in life and these persist throughout adulthood.

Educational institutions are obviously, in a powerful position to influence children to acquire a sound knowledge of nutrition. Schools can provide an important opportunity for prevention, because they provide the most effective method of reaching large numbers of people, including youth, school staff, families and community members. Healthy food and improved nutrition should be a high priority on every school agenda because of the positive effects on child well-being, and the subsequent enhancement of learning and academic performance.

School teachers, community leaders, and parents must commit to implementing and sustaining nutrition education programs within schools. An effective policy includes the involvement of all interested parties. Such support is crucial to promoting healthy eating behaviours.

The nutrition guidelines in this document are a result of a collaborative effort amongst the Ministry of Education, school administrators, health professionals and members of the food industry. We thank all the stakeholders who partnered with the Ministry to develop a broad consensus for the ***National Food and Nutrition Policy for Schools***. Their input has been invaluable.

This policy provides a coordinated and systematic approach for the interventions and initiatives for hygienic and healthy eating habits. Healthy nutrition is the building block of a healthy and productive population. For this very important reason, Fiji definitely needs a new generation of healthy, vibrant and happy children.



Emi Rabukawaqa (Mrs)

Permanent Secretary for Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts

1.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

- (i) To create an enabling environment in schools for: “healthy food choices: the only choice for all.”
- (ii) To incorporate nutrition in the curriculum for all levels of formal and non-formal education.
- (iii) To ensure that food security is promoted and practiced at all levels of education.
- (iv) To improve and maintain all aspects of food quality and safety.

2.0 POLICY

2.1 Boarding Schools

2.1.1 All boarding schools must provide balanced meals.

2.1.2 All food handlers in boarding schools must undergo annual medical examinations.

2.2 School Canteens

2.2.1 All food services (school canteens, boarding schools, outside vendors) to be directed towards obtaining and maintaining optimal food quality and safety.

2.2.2 All catering/canteen facilities and other providers must obtain and display an operating license from relevant authorities before operating their business.

2.2.3 All school canteen operators should comply with the Canteen Guidelines.

2.3 Schools and Curriculum

2.3.1 All schools must provide nutritious foods and drinks in the school premises.

2.3.2 All schools shall have their own food policies which should be in line with the Nutrition Policy for Schools.

2.3.3 Nutrition subjects in schools must incorporate nutrition stakeholders' initiatives outside the school framework.



2.3.4 All levels of education in schools must include Nutrition in their curriculum (early childhood through to secondary schools). All must have some elements of nutrition education in their subjects.



2.3.5 All school functions and meetings must practice healthy eating practices using the Healthy Eating Guidelines.

2.3.6 All nutrition information from schools must be disseminated to nutrition stakeholders through the annual reports.

2.3.7 All school food services must coordinate with the school nutrition policy to reinforce messages about healthy eating and ensure that foods offered in Fiji schools promote good nutrition and contribute to the development of lifelong healthy eating habits.

2.3.8 All school compounds should have gardens and fruit trees and should link to the Enterprising Education in schools and Agriculture Science in secondary schools.



2.3.9 All education premises will observe at least one day a week for Fruit and Water Day.



2.3.10 All schools must provide proper linkage between good nutrition and physical education.



3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

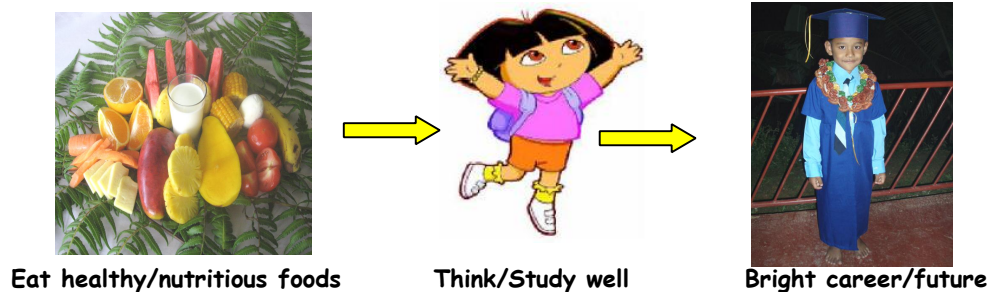
The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, manageable and comprehensive structure for the delivery of Nutrition in all schools in Fiji.

The importance of good nutrition in children cannot be over-emphasized as it is the building block of a healthy and productive population.

Also important is the interaction between good nutrition and infection. A poorly nourished student has an impaired immune system, which means that not only is he more susceptible to disease, but also that treatment may not be as effective. In addition, certain infections raise nutritional requirements, reduce nutrient absorption or decrease appetite - all of which lower nutritional status. For these reasons, nutritional well-being is both a precursor and a product of good health.

3.2 Rationale

The Relationship between Good Nutrition and Education



This policy defines more precisely the role of the Ministry of Education in improving nutrition for students in schools.

Schools can be an important avenue for improving nutrition, not only through nutrition education (Home Economics) but also through allied school activities (e.g., school gardens).

The standard of nutrition in schools has been assessed through a number of surveys and found that:

- ◆ 60% of students surveyed were below levels required for good health.
- ◆ Children spend a great deal of their lives at school so there is a need to ensure that foods and drinks available at school are healthy options.
- ◆ 57% of students get food for recess through school canteens.
- ◆ 43% missed eating at recess and 33% missed lunch.
- ◆ 22% of students in schools were obese.
- ◆ 75% reported drinking sugary drinks – 2 or more days/week.
- ◆ Only 51% said their schools encouraged their students to make healthy food choices.
- ◆ Only 16% rated food and drink choices in school canteens as mostly healthy.
- ◆ 9% ate 4 serves or more vegetables/day.
- ◆ 4% ate 4 serves of fruit/day.
- ◆ 65% of our Fijian boarding schools provide poor quality dhal dishes for students twice a day, five to six days a week (*Menu Analysis Report, MoE 2005*).

Poor health status of school children is particularly serious in boarding schools which mainly cater for Fijian students. Nutrition environment in these schools are at times very challenging. Whilst they can produce their own foods, it is not usually sustainable, and while our environment is richly endowed with both terrestrial and marine foods, students' meals remain mostly rice and dhal. No amount of expert teaching in the classroom will make an impact on the students unless they also have good nutritious meals and that their health is good.

There is an urgent need to promote and encourage good nutrition in schools.

Recommendations have been put forward to Principals and school committees with the view to improving the situation, thereby meeting the students' nutritional needs, and educating students towards adopting better health and nutritional practices.

This policy aims to ensure that all aspects of Food and Nutrition in schools promote good health and the well-being of all students in Fiji.

3.3 DEFINITIONS

Nutrition Education

It is the study of food, the different chemical components and its function in the body.

Nutritional status

The nutritional health of a person as determined by anthropometric measurements (height, weight, circumferences etc.), the biochemical measurements of nutrients, clinical/physical examinations and a dietary analysis.

Balanced Meal

A meal containing foods from the three food groups and eaten in the right proportions.

4.0 RELEVANT POLICIES AND RELEVANT LEGISLATION OR AUTHORITY

Current Relevant Policies

Establishment of schools
Occupational Health and Safety

Current Relevant Legislation or Authority

Suva Declaration 2005
Millennium Development Goals

5.0 GUIDELINES

5.1 Boarding school cooks

All students have a right to healthy meals when they are in school. In practice this would mean:

- That food handlers and cooks should have a sound knowledge of Nutrition.
- Cooks should attend up-skilling workshops to improve their cooking skills.
- That a school must have food security regulations in place.
- All boarding schools shall have Food committees.
- An efficient cooking schedule in a school will rely on good organization in the kitchen.

- Boarding schools with less than sixty boarders should have one cook who will prepare and cook meals and clean up the cooking area.
- Schools with more than sixty but less than one hundred and fifty students shall have two cooks with one being the Chief Cook.
- Three hundred to five hundred students - the school should have three cooks and one Chief Cook.
- All boarding schools must have proper kitchens with proper dining rooms for students to eat in.
- Cooks should be properly attired for their work.

5.2 School Lunches

To ensure that all students have their lunch in schools, schools must:

- Closely monitor students' lunches to ensure that all students are having lunches which are healthy.
- Try to find alternative means of providing lunches to those that cannot bring any lunch from home.
- Advise on the disadvantages of buying lunches from fast foods outlets.
- Encourage students to take time to enjoy their lunches during lunch time.

5.3 School canteens

Students spend a lot of their waking hours in schools so schools should:

- Provide healthy meals in their canteens and practice good food hygiene.
- All canteens should sell food items at a reasonable price so that students can afford them.
- Foods that are detrimental to the good health of school children should be taken off the shelves.
- Canteen owners and vendors should have nutritional knowledge that can guide them to sell only healthy foods in the canteens.

6.0 EFFECTIVE DATE

01/01/2009.



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