



Pre-operating study: A reform of the nutrition and consumer education in schools

Coordinator:	Prof. Dr. H. Heseke (University of Paderborn)
Partners:	Prof. Dr. I. Heindl (University of Flensburg) Prof. Dr. B. Methfessel (University of Education, Heidelberg) Prof. Dr. K. Schlegel-Matthies (University of Paderborn)
Coworkers:	Dipl. Päd. S. Beer, Dr. U. Johannsen, Dipl. oec. troph. A. Oepping, Dipl. oec. troph. P. Schack, Dipl. Biol. C. Vohmann

Summary

The main objective of the project "A reform of the nutrition and consumer education in schools" is to provide support on different levels for the innovation and the enhancements of nutrition and consumer education in schools. This should be done on the basis of current international developments, whilst also taking into account the educational policy of the different German states.

Background

Social changes are largely associated with alterations of habit and lifestyle. Allowing for these changes requires new and extended skills. Current dynamics of social change show that these skills can no longer be acquired through family interaction or random life experience. The spheres of nutrition and consumption illustrate very clearly, which changes are caused by the scientific, technological, political, social and economic innovations that have become part of our everyday life.

New nutritional perceptions point to, among other things, the importance of:

- an adequate nutrition for our health;
- a sustainable nutrition for the relationship between human, social and natural environment;
- a socially orientated nutrition (meals and eating culture) within the households of any given community;
- food of good and wide ranging taste and appearance, adding to life quality and sensual aesthetic development.

The development of the markets, the banks and the credit system as well as the "culture of consumption" require an informed and confident consumer, who is able to recognize and reflect upon his conditions, requirements and needs in an adequate way.

With regard to the problems individuals and society are faced with, if basic competencies for lifestyle are missing, the following problems can occur:

- nutritional problems like obesity and eating disorders, as well as consumption problems such as excessive debt problems in adolescents;
- loss of competency in households in the area of general food knowledge, as well as knowledge of food preparation and cooking;
- missing or insufficient „financial literacy“ concerning the credit system.

These deficits result in developments, which can cause a significant lowering of life quality for the individual as well as high economic (e. g. health) and social (e. g. family) costs for society. The nationwide analysis and evaluation of the nutrition education in schools (EiS-project) has demonstrated that the resulting demands for education in the German states are inadequately met by existing curricula.

Institutionalisation and curricular definition of nutrition and consumer education on one side, and education, training and assignment of teachers, as well as didactic conceptions on the other, differ considerably in their quality and quantity. They often do not meet the standards necessary for the acquisition of a basic qualification. Positive developments in this area are not sufficiently publicised. Additionally, the lack of acknowledgement of school subjects mainly responsible for the teaching of these competencies (e. g. home-economics), means that adequate recognition of them is often a hard-fought struggle. As is the case in almost all school subjects, new didactic developments rarely and even then only tentatively find their way into current school curriculum, thus preventing the necessary change of the subject's comprehension as well as confirming existing prejudices regarding these new developments.

The current educational discussion requires close revision of educational goals and standards, the curriculum, the educational materials and the training programs in the field of nutrition and consumer education. As far as other subjects are concerned, it is important to follow international developments in this area whilst also taking into account the federal structures of the individual German states. Educational materials, teacher's manuals and training programs are available nationwide in large variety and in different scientific and didactic quality.

Overall the proposals are often overlooked, biased, not always technically correct and are also often difficult to find. Therefore we have started this collaborative project to work out feasible proposals for the reform of the nutrition and consumer education in schools together with institutions of selected German states. The results will be made available to the ministries of education, to curricular commissions and of course, to schools.

Working programme and objectives

The main outcomes and objectives of the pre-operating study REVIS are:

- to develop a core curriculum and educational standards for all levels of education in the field of nutrition and consumer education, which can be used for different courses of instruction, are internationally comparable in their aims and intentions and also take the federal structures into account;
- to collect and systematically evaluate existing teaching materials and to develop model teaching and learning modules as well as supporting teaching materials;
- to develop portfolios with training and assignment profiles of the personal performance and qualification of teachers;
- to develop a central internet resource for teachers in the field of nutrition and consumer education (www.ernaehrung-und-verbraucherbildung.de);
- to evaluate the acceptance of the newly developed curriculum and of the model teaching and learning modules in a field study in two or three German states.

Financing of the pre-operating study

We appreciate the financial support of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture.