

WLC 2016 : World LUMEN Congress. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty 2016 |  
LUMEN 15th Anniversary Edition

## Perspectives on the Importance of Valorisation of Health Education Knowledge in the Student's Everyday Life

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### Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.09.18>

The health of each people requires, first of all, the existence of an optimum nutritional status, which result from the balance between the need and the intake in terms of energy and nutrients. This status promotes the growth and the development of the body, maintains the health, enables the progress of the daily activity and participates at the body protection against different diseases. The adolescence is one of the most challenging periods of the human development, age border when perfects the shaping of the future adult. Among the characteristics of this period can be mentioned: increasing of the need in nutrients, due to the development and the faster growth in height; changes in eating habits and lifestyle; additional needs in particular situations, such as eating disorders. The research aims to analyze the perception of the students related to the importance of healthy eating habits in their daily life. To this end, it conducted a qualitative research during the workshops with Romanian and Turkish students organized in the frame of *EduForHealth* Project. The research objectives were: (a) measuring the level of students' satisfaction related to their knowledge concerning their healthy habits - *OS1*; (b) measuring the levels of importance on applying their knowledge in their daily life - *OS2*. The research methodology was based on the questioning technique. The measurement was done using a Likert-type scale, and the reporting and interpretation of the results was made through the Nice & Gaps method.

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**Keywords:** Health education; healthy habits; satisfaction; importance; EduForHealth project.



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## 1. Introduction

In the context of the technological progress and also of the universal access of the people to the goods are identified more frequently diverse attitudes and behaviours, both individual and collective: from those related to the purchase and consumption of goods needed for the wellbeing and normal life of the individual from bio-psychosocial perspective to those generated by the curiosity towards to what it is new on the market, including the food market. In the above mentioned framework raises a lot of questions: Is it the society educated on using the food resources under the limits of the indicators specific to health? Can the consumer make the difference between what it is healthy and what can be harmful for the body? Are the people able to make correct choices concerning the food? Are there known the implications of the factors of food risk on the human health? How there are defined “healthy food behaviours”? In Europe and beyond, debates are opened concerning the scope of the public health and global health (Bjegovic-Mikanovic, et al., 2014). The new educations and implicitly the “Education for health” are designed so that to solve numerous aspects related specifically to knowledge, attitudes, behaviours in relationship with satisfying the need for food of the people. Although health education has a long tradition in schools, it has only a part of the curriculum, focused on single causes of ill health in individuals (Stewart Burgher, et al., 1999). The “Education for a healthy diet” is identified as an integrative and cumulative education dedicated to solve the individual, collective and social needs. It is estimated that the education for a healthy nutrition realized early within a formal framework will contribute successfully and in an obvious manner to the improvement and increasing of the quality of life. Today, the educational responsables direct their speech on the aspects related to the sustainable education, on the need to make lifelong learning. According the definition of the sustainable education given by UNESCO (Delors, 2000): “*Education for sustainable development has as scope helping the people to develop attitudes, competences and knowledge in order to be able to take informed decisions, in their own interest and also to others, now and in the future, and to act on the basis of these decisions*”. In this framework, the new educations are seen as “*answers of the educational systems to the imperatives of the contemporary world, by political, economic, ecological, demographical, sanitary nature*” (UNESCO). In agreement with the above mentioned perspective, the specific contents proposed can be found integrated at the level of curriculum, to all the level of education and for all the forms of education. The main scope of the Education for a healthy life is the formation by behaviours and attitudes oriented towards the keeping and promoting of the health at the individual and collective level.

## 2. Problem statement

From the methodological point of view, the implementation of the discipline “*Education for health - Education for nutrition*” in the school curricula should to respond to challenges in terms of content and didactical methodology which facilitate successfully the interest of the learners towards the formation and developing specific skills for a healthy life. The modern pedagogy operates with the notion “*curriculum*” for which it is estimated that this one includes not only the contents found in the school syllabus but also the learning experiences of the students (from those organized in school to those

organized outside the school, through non-formal education). In the literature, there can be found numerous definitions for the concept of curriculum (Dewey, de Landsheere, D'Hainaut, UNESCO). More broadly, the curriculum for “*Education for health*” adapted definition is: “*the structured ensemble of teaching and learning experiences (objectives, contents, didactical materials, planned activities of teaching - learning - evaluation) given under the guidance of an educational institution, inside and outside of this one, in order to achieve the predetermined goals*”. The comprehensive approach of the curriculum (Potolea, 2002) supposes “*the identification of the cognitive acquisitions available and compatible each to other that could be selected and articulated coherently in an integrator concept of curriculum*”. In this framework, the curriculum for the discipline “*Education for a healthy nutrition*” must to answer to some challenges linked to: the adequacy to the social and cultural context, the anchorage in scientific explanation, the coherence between educational contents and finalities, pertinence in relation to the educational objectives, accomplishment of a dynamic educational step. In education, it is operated frequently with the concept “*competence*” operationalized at the level of: knowledge, abilities, attitudes or structured assemblies of knowledge, skills and values. The education centred on competences envisages the granting of an increasing importance to the methodology used by teacher with the aim to deliver knowledge. At the same time, this one must to have a strong pragmatism. The competence, considered a microstructural finality of the education, as answer to the social needs, represents the students’ ability to solve a certain situation, on the basis of some skills and knowledge previously acquired. In this research we will refer especially to the competences of knowledge in relation to topics of education for a healthy nutrition.

### **3. Research methodology**

In the context of the assertions related to the education based on the building and developing of the students’ competences through “*Education for a healthy nutrition*”, it will be addressed mostly the forming and developing of individual behaviours desirable in relation to the responsible consumption of food, to the concerning linked with the increasing of the quality of life, to the capacity to identify, prevent and combat the risk factors which can change the food quality with serious injuries on health. Thus, the research aims to analyse the students’ perception related to the importance of the healthy eating habits knowledge. A research was realized under the qualitative type format, during a series of workshops organized in the frame of the EduforHealth project. The unit of analysis was the students group who was involved in implemented activities of the training modules at the discipline “*Education for health*” in Romania and Turkey in the frame of the project. The explanatory paradigm took into account the aspects related to the food habits in the cultural context. It was formulated the next working hypothesis: the cultural factor doesn’t influence the behaviours and attitudes of the individuals in relation with the objective knowledge of the issue “*healthy diet*”. The groups of students had a heterogenic structure: students from the secondary inferior level, aged between 12 and 16.

### **4. Research objectives**

The research objectives were: measuring the level of the students’ satisfaction related to their own knowledge concerning the healthy diet in their daily life (*OSI*); measuring the level of importance

concerning the application of the knowledge acquired in the frame of the lessons by Education for a healthy diet in their daily life (OS2). The limits of research were imposed by the following explanation: there are considered healthy dietary habits those behaviours that are in agreement with recognized food behaviours, accepted and influenced by the cultural gastronomy and based on the consumption of food that are recognized at the level of common sense as healthy. Likewise, the dimension of the education for a healthy nutrition was analysed in the context of the knowledge by the students of its specific problematic: aspects related to food hygiene, risk factors in diet, biological and chemical contamination of food, the role of the nutrients in the body growth, the impact of the biological active compounds on the health and so on. The methodology used in the frame of the groups moderating was based on the interrogation technique. The results were measured using a Likert-scale and for reporting and interpretation a bi-dimensional matrix type Nice & Gaps was used.

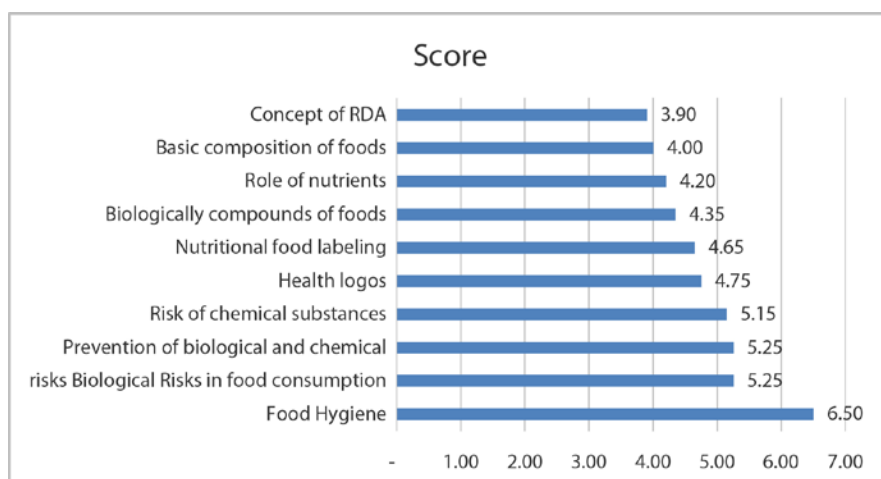
## 5. Findings

Topics addressed during the research of students' knowledge in terms of importance and satisfaction

**Table 1.**

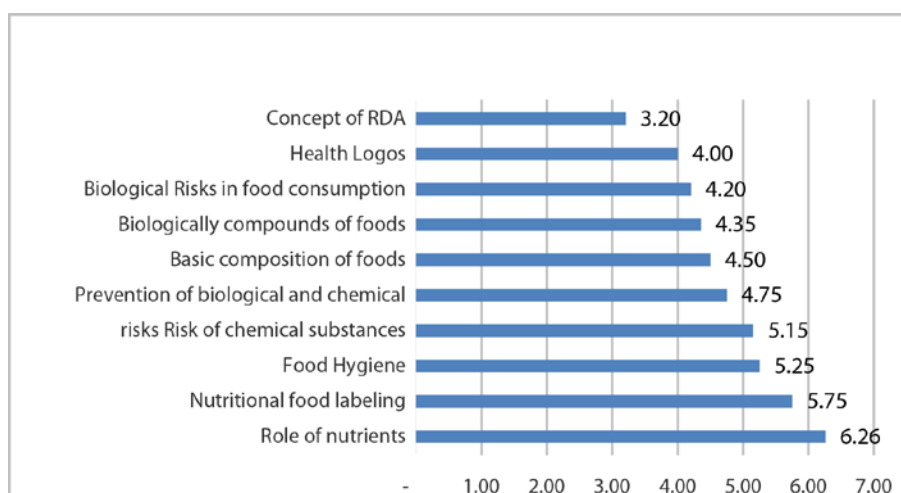
No.	Title of the topic
1	Basic composition of food
2	Role of the nutrients in human health
3	Biological active compounds of food
4	Chemical risks in food consumption
5	Biological risks in food consumption
6	Prevention of the chemical and biological risks related to food
7	Nutritional food labeling
8	Concept of RDA
9	Health logos
10	Food Hygiene

Analyzing comparatively the students' perception on the importance of the topics discussed by those ones during the lessons related to the healthy nutrition, the group from Turkey considered as very important the knowledge concerning the Food Hygiene (6.50 on a scale from 1 to 7), in opposition with those linked to Recommended Daily Allowance (3.90 on a scale from 1 to 7). There were important the knowledge related to the topic of the prevention of foodborne illness based on the management of the factors of risk. For this one, the Turkish students given a higher score to the importance of the knowledge of the factors of food risks "Biological Risks in food consumption" with a score by 5.25, on a par with "Prevention of the chemical and biological risks". The above described situation emphasizes that the indicator perceived of the increasing of the quality of life is the health and its maintaining in the conditions of a "preventive" diet. However, it is necessary to awareness the knowledge of the food compounds and nutrients. According the students, to this topic it is not given a higher importance, the registered score being by 4.00. The distribution of the perception on the importance of knowledge of the topic of the healthy diet is illustrated in Fig.1.



**Fig. 1.** Perception on the importance (group 1)

Within the Romanian students group, the opinion related to the perception on the importance of knowledge of the topics concerning the healthy diet sets on the first place the role of the nutrients on a par with “Labelling”, underlying thus a major concern towards what they eat. At the lower pole was placed Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA), as was observed with the perception of the Turkish group of students. The distribution of the answers is presented in Fig.2.



**Fig. 2.** Perception on the importance (group 2)

It can be observed that the cultural factor doesn't influence the orientation of the food behaviours, such as it was demonstrated based on the score obtained on level of importance of the content „Health Logos”, the respondents positioning it second.

Concerning the satisfaction in relationship with the knowledge acquired in the frame of the educational process, through cumulation of the scores and establishing an average between the two groups, it was found that the students think that they have most knowledge about Food Hygiene that stands in the top of rankings. With a higher score were named the topics which represent the subject of the prevention activities. In opposition are the knowledge related to „Health logos”. Thus, it can be considered that it is necessary to disseminate broadly the knowledge related to what it means the logos of a healthy diet, more and more present on the labelling of the food products. It seems that the society

is more and more exposed to consumption to the detrimental of the positive campaigns of awareness of the importance of a healthy diet in the life of the people (Fig.3).

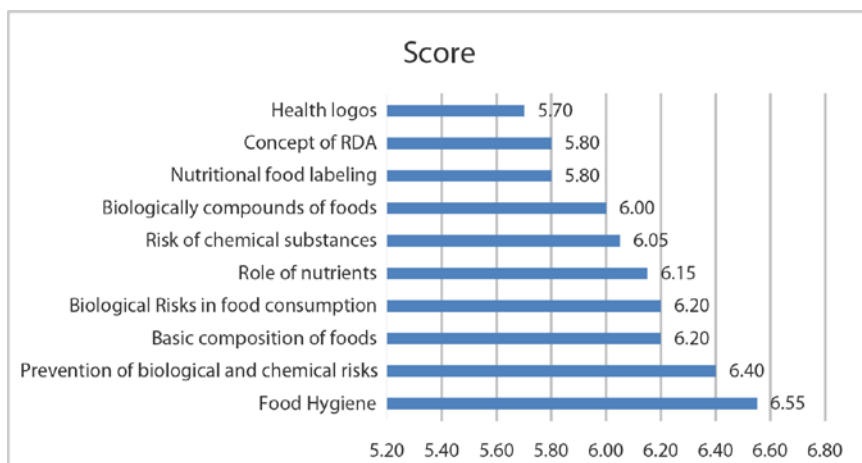


Fig. 3. Perception on satisfaction

The Nice& Gaps bi-dimensional matrix was designed based on the correlation of the data on the satisfaction - importance level (Fig. 4).

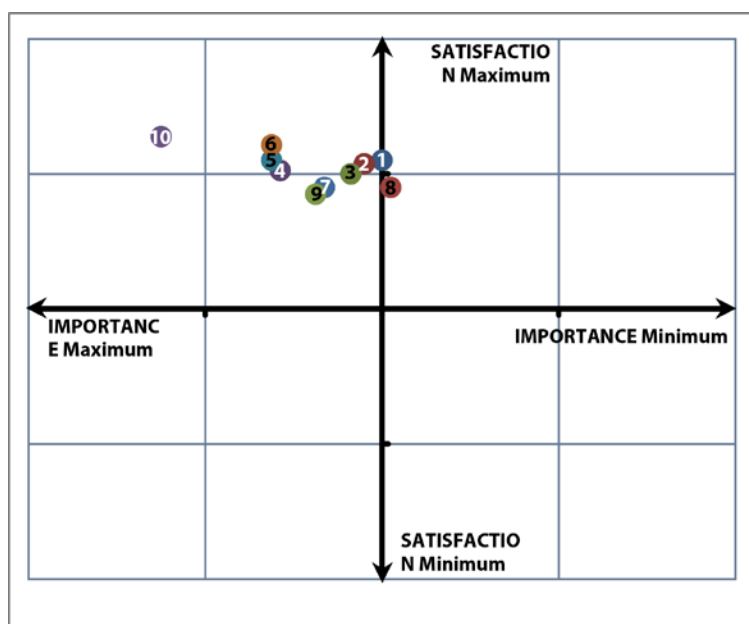


Fig. 4. The Nice&Gaps Matrix

From the analysis of the matrix, it can be concluded that in the students' opinion, all the topics taught in the frame of the training process are important, generating a higher level of satisfaction in relationship with the acquired knowledge. In the left upper quadrant, it can be observed that the subject "Food Hygiene" separates from the other contents of the learning, what can be considered a strategic advantage for the design of the curriculum. On the borderland between satisfaction and importance is found the topic related to the *Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)*, aspect which can lead to a reconsideration of the design of this content in relation to the students' expectations and importance in relationship with the knowledge.

## 6. Conclusions

In a globalized world, a lot of challenges in relationship with the food security and food safety stand in front of policy makers, producers and people as consumers. In the developed countries the main challenges refer to a suitable choice of a kind of food, in accordance with the consumer's needs from all points of view (including its health status) and also to food safety. Education institutions have to participate in networks for education and practice, so that to be able to offer to children the knowledge as prerequisite for welfare and a healthy life.

## Acknowledgements

The paper capitalizes some of the results obtained in the project ERASMUS+ Strategic partnerships Project code: 2014-1-RO01-KA200-002931 - "*EduForHealth - Let's make it better! Raising the awareness of the triad nutrition-health-food safety in school education*", funded with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. We are grateful to all the teachers and school management staff involved in the research.

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