

## THE EVALUATION OF A PRE-SCHOOL NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Beginning in 1973 the teachers in an Adelaide Kindergarten, required for the first time to have the children eat their lunch at school, instigated several controls. Certain foods were encouraged while others were proscribed and if brought to school were sent home. The reasons were discussed with the children and their parents and the programme was well accepted. When we heard, quite by chance, that one child had retained, well into primary school, the habits and preferences developed at kindergarten, we decided to try to establish whether such long term effects were general.

A total of 55 children who had experienced the programme were located. A control group was established by matching each of the treatment children with a current classmate who had attended a kindergarten without a nutrition education programme. The children were asked questions about what they eat for lunch, breakfast and snacks and about parental control of the food choice. Similar questions were put to the parents. Scores were allocated for quality of diets and parental control.

Individual food items reported eaten were rated on a scale of nutritional value (3 - high, 2 - medium, 1 - low) as adjudged mainly by nutrient density and sugar content. A score of quality of a meal was obtained from summation of the number of food items in each category multiplied by the relevant value factor.

Results are given in Table 1 of the quality of lunches reported on the day of the interview.

TABLE 1 Quality of lunches eaten on day of interview

Group	No.	Foods rated			Mean Score	Significance
		High	Medium	Low		
Experimental	55	94	38	28	7.0	N.S.
Control	55	96	49	28	7.5	

There were no significant differences between the two groups in any of the parameters measured. The absence of treatment effects will be discussed together with several methodological considerations.

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