

Ontario's School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150): Using concept mapping to guide the co-creation of a research and evaluation agenda

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Presentation Outline

- Background
- Objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Relevance to evaluation practice



Background

- In 2011, the Ministry of Education implemented the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150) in all elementary and secondary schools across the province (2010).
 - Accordingly, schools are required to adhere to P/PM 150's nutritional standards for food and beverages sold on the premises.
- Research from across Canada provides evidence of positive behavioural and health outcomes associated with provincial school nutrition policies (Fung et al. 2012; Mullally et al. 2010)



Background

- However, evidence from Ontario highlights significant barriers associated with policy implementation across regions:
 - Foods compliant with P/PM 150 were **expensive**, students purchase food off school property, and schools experience **lower revenue generation** from vending machines and other outlets (Vine, Elliott & Raine, 2014)
 - P/PM 150 was **negatively restrictive**, stigma impacted its implementation, a need to improve the **nutrition culture** (Vine & Elliott, 2014)
 - **Lack of buy-in/support** at the school level, lack of policy monitoring, lack of resources/support in Peel Region (Valaitis & Hanning, 2016)
 - **Few schools achieve full P/PM 150 compliance** in their vending machine contents (Vine et al. 2017; Orava, Manske & Hanning, 2016)



Background

- In response to the mixed evidence associated with the implementation of P/PM 150, and a desire by the Ontario Ministry of Education to revise and update P/PM 150, funds were secured through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes to hold a planning meeting
- **Meeting held November 2 and 3, 2017 at the University of Waterloo**
- Partners included:
 - Ontario Ministry of Education
 - Dietitians of Canada
 - Ophea



Objectives

- To present results from a CIHR-funded meeting where health researchers and knowledge users working in school-based nutrition, food policy, and food security **came together to present research, engage in discussion, brainstorm and prioritize research gaps and opportunities.**
- Results lead to a co-created research agenda for evaluating the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150).



Methods

1. Researchers and knowledge users from within and outside of Ontario presented findings related to their current research/ support for delivery of school nutrition policies. Group discussions followed.
2. Concept Mapping exercise:
 - Day 1: Brainstorming and prioritization of emerging issues for future research
 - Day 2: Interpretation: sorting and rating concepts



Results

- **Reflections on P/PM 150:**
 - Multiculturalism: how can the policy be revised to reflect the diversity of Ontario's population?
 - Student involvement in policy revision and implementation going forward
 - Consideration of harmonization with other guidelines (e.g., menu planning, student nutrition programs)



Results

- **What is the priority of school food policies?**
 - Shift focus to policy implementation process
 - What are children actually eating?
- Healthy diets lead to improved self-esteem and better mental health
 - How do we connect this to policies and programs targeting children and youth?



Results

Secondary School-level

1. Evaluation: how is the policy being enforced at the school level?
2. Revenue generation: alternatives to vending machines?
3. Measures and outcomes: what should be measured beyond body mass index (BMI) and obesity; attitudes to healthy eating
4. What stakeholders should be involved?
5. Policy objectives: scope, effect on attitudes/behaviours
6. Case studies of effective schools: promising practices
7. Scan of food environment: design, facilities, barriers/facilitators of high school cafeterias



Results

Elementary School-level

1. Need to examine teacher resources to support policy implementation; what do teachers need?
2. What is currently occurring in the school food environment?
 - Scan of breakfast programs, student nutrition programs, structure of the day, school events, catering
3. Examine how policy works differently across regions
4. Student-led initiatives (e.g., peer leaders)
5. Parent engagement



Results

Policy Compliance

1. Consider meaningful indicators of policy outcomes: educators (e.g., behaviours); researchers (e.g., to support other schools)
2. Case study research: scope to be determined, starting point as successful policy implementation in food environment
 - Identify potential sources of case studies (e.g., school boards, public health units, food service providers)
 - Narrative is important; explanation of interconnectedness
 - Variety of cases identified (e.g., student-run, chefs, cafeteria providers)
3. Incentives for schools to participate (e.g., recognition, awards)



Discussion

- Need to support teachers in implementation of policy
 - Request to Ministry of Education for list of allowable/compliant products
- Issues related to enforcement and misinterpretation of policy in schools
- Rewards and incentives in classroom still exist
- Policy mentions comprehensive school health, yet policy does not appear to be comprehensive (e.g., need to also focus on foods brought from home, foods served at no-cost)
- Need to examine the narrative/stories of implementation in schools



Next Steps

- P/PM 150 guidance document in preparation by our research team for the Ministry of Education
- Potential research questions moving forward
- Use of existing data sets to answer research questions (e.g., COMPASS study, APPLE schools)



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