

DISCOURSES OF “HEALTHY” AND “UNHEALTHY” NUTRITION CONSTRUCTED BY PUPILS AND ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The article explores pupils' eating habits in Latvia through the research prism of the pupil as a nutrition agent. In the analysis, the emphasis is placed on the interpretation of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition meanings developed by pupils and adults. The aim of the study was to find out the conditions of the formation of food meanings in the school environment of Latvia, as well as to understand and evaluate the impact of these various food discourses on pupils' daily dietary habits.

Data from multiple case studies were analysed using a critical discourse analysis approach.

The study concludes that the concepts of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition in the interpretation of both pupils and adults are characterised by polysemous nature and constant transformation and change of meanings, depending on the situation and social context.

While defining these concepts, pupils use mostly pre-constructed interpretations of discourse on dietary practices borrowed from adults, but at the same time they place these borrowed meanings in the re-contextualisation of their dietary practices. This, in turn, determines and affects the dietary practice of pupils in both school and outside school environments, and also describes the pupil as a nutrition agent.

Keywords: pupil as a nutrition agent, school nutrition programme, eating habits, critical discourse analysis, re-contextualisation's praxis

INTRODUCTION

So far, the interest of sociologists in the study of the study of dietary habits has been focused on the factors influenced by food consumption and the risks they pose for the quality of children's lives. Similarly, nutrition and the food environment of pupils in today's academic studies have been predominantly seen in the context of "healthy" and "unhealthy" diets, but only in some cases providing a detailed definition of "healthy" and "unhealthy" food. It is not possible to fully and reasonably explore the individual's eating habits and the factors that influence them without the conceptual conceptualization of these concepts, especially considering that the public as a whole tends to interpret food regulations very differently (Jertle et al. 1997; Robert et al. 2001).

In addition, the opinions about the "healthy" and "unhealthy" diet and its impact on human health in the public space are mainly expressed by adults, which also mark the presence of power and critical discourse on food and nutrition issues. Unfortunately, children's voices in organizing their food practices in the school environment in Latvia are still quiet, marginalized or fragmented, as they are manifested only in individual healthy eating initiatives organized by adults (The Actions Days of ECO-schools, organized by Environmental Fund of Latvia in 2013).

However, it is important to understand what role pupils themselves give to food, how they interpret the concept of "healthy diet" and whether they oppose it to the "unhealthy diet", and how the understanding of the role of food is reflected in their daily dietary practices. In addition, does the knowledge of this diet help them plan their daily nutrition? The answers to these questions would describe the role of the nutritional policy in Latvia and nutritional education and reveal the pupils' ability to exercise their nutrition practices on a daily basis. From the discourse of power, looking at pupils' dietary habits, it is important to understand the role of adults and the environment in which the pupil is a consumer of food.

School-age children (11–15-year or 6–9-year-old) were selected as target groups in this qualitative approach study because problems with excess body weight and obesity in adolescents continue to increase in Latvia – especially at the age of 11–13 (Pudule et al. 2015). Poor nutrition and sedentary lifestyles are mentioned as the main cause of this problem. It has been concluded that students

with obesity or signs of excess weight are a risk group not only for medical conditions, but also for psychological and behavioural problems – social stigmatization, depression, eating disorders, and other negative manifestations of quality of life (Birch et al. 2007).

It is also important that a child spends most of his/her life as a pupil at a school where s/he may be affected by peer and other pupils' perceptions of dietary habits (Salvy et al. 2012). The pupils' dietary habits are also most directly influenced by the knowledge of healthy lifestyles of adults (in the family – parents, school – teachers, etc.) and their daily food consumption habits (Davison and Birch 2002; Joffe et al. 2009), which, as the statistics show, are sooner unhealthy than healthy in Latvia (Pudule et al. 2011). The problem of malnutrition and food poverty also seriously raises the issue of food security (Tisenkopfs and Griviņš 2018). The issue of food safety is closely related to the impact of technological advances and the harmful effects of substances harmful to health on the quality of human life in industrial products. In order to avoid harmful substances in food, the consumer should have knowledge of it and be able to make alternative food choices. In addition, public opinion in Latvia is that “healthy eating” should also be taught in schools (DNB barometer 2014), not just in families with parents. For several years, schools in Latvia have been involved in various international healthy lifestyle promotion programmes, which also include pupils' educational activities, such as Eco-schools, School Milk and School Fruit and Vegetable programmes, but no extensive or in-depth research has been conducted to find out how these programmes affect pupils' understanding of “healthy” or “unhealthy” diets.

Usually, the concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” diet are mainly used as opposing various dietary practices implemented by people. In this article, the term “nutrition” is deliberately explored instead of “food”, because the term “food” includes a much narrower explanation of the meaning of “health” and “un-healthiness” for certain foods. While the concept of “nutrition” is much wider in interpretation and based on the individual's chosen dietary practices and models (including other aspects of the individual's lifestyle, such as physical activity), it also allows for the naming of certain foods in defining one's dietary habits.

In total, 44 students were observed in this study (pupils of grades 5th to 9th), and 35 adults (teachers, school directors, children's parents, cooks, nutritionists, municipal representatives, etc.). 217 qualitative questionnaires were filled out by students at the request of the author of this research.

In general, the study of pupils' dietary habits was a complex and interdisciplinary process, and it also indicates the need for longitudinal research in the future. This article has been based on the promotion work "Pupil as a Nutrition Agent" by the author of this paper.

DEFINITION AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE PUPIL AS A NUTRITION AGENT

To analyse the pupil's eating habits, which are considered as the social practice of the individual, it is necessary to determine the role of this social agent in the structure of society. Any social action in its main manifestations includes the process of constructing personality and identity, and also reflects the various roles that an individual occupies in a social group or system, creating or spreading not only cultural values, but also traditions, habits and practices, including the importance of food and eating praxis. Thus, the pupil's knowledge of nutrition is his/her cultural capital, but the eating habits reflect the role assigned to self or to others (both peers and adults).

Social life is a dynamic process because society does not exist as a static unit, it is constantly being created and recreated when people interact with each other (Stryker 2006). In addition, the process of eating is associated with social interaction, the creation of symbolic values, the assignment of meanings and the distribution of roles in the social context of nutrition. For example, people can attribute both the positive and negative values to a specific food or eating practice, because food that interacts with the human body has a certain symbolic meaning assigned to it by a person. The eating habits of a person influence the roles assigned to a person and the expectations of people from them. For example, pupil's nutritional restrictions in the school environment, especially nowadays, when the importance of interpreting the topicality of health and quality of life in the context of food consumption becomes more and more important, also affect the nutritional practices of pupils.

To more deeply understand the process of forming different social roles (not only the role of the individual, but also social interactions), symbolic interactionist theories (Charon 2001; Blumer 1969; Burr 2006) focusing on how people create, interpret and perceive the values and symbols of various social phenomena in the environment will be analysed, thus, also, how it is formed, assigned and transferred to food, nutrition and eating practices.

The symbolic interactionism looks at the human being as an action organism, which means that “a person can be the object of his own action” (Blumer 1969, 12).

The fundamental condition for symbolic interactionism is that it explores society from the point of view of an individual’s actions, and cultural prescriptions – traditions, values, norms, and social structure – social status, roles that derive from the individual’s own actions. The actions result from interactions between various members of society (Blumer 1969). Referring to the concept of Mead, people communicate with each other through symbols, they are symbolically interacting with meanings, which, in turn, include the languages in use.

Language is the main tool of human communication, not only in terms of symbolic interactionism, but also in structuralism (Elliott 2013), which emphasizes that the role and effectiveness of an individual depends on his social status or position in society. Thus, in this theoretical approach, social status determines what social roles an individual should assume. In addition, based on the social status of a person, society also understands the roles that can be expected from a specific social status (Kockelman 2007). Thereby, if we theoretically assign the role of a (active) nutrition agent to a pupil, it follows from this that the social status of the pupil implies that s/he must follow the behavioural rules introduced in the school in the context of the action and should accumulate the knowledge gained by the teacher at the level of learning. Accordingly, the role of the pupil as a nutrition agent can manifest itself as an action of an agent for obedience and reception of nutritional knowledge and norms.

But how is it actually in life?

The above mentioned sociological theories have a significant drawback – they do not emphasize the existing link between the objective reality and the subjective reality constructed by the individual, that is, they do not allow individuals, while being affected by the same social structure, to explain the same social phenomena or aspects in the completely different way. For example, pupils of one class (age), while living in the same environment on a daily basis, can differently define nutritional standards.

This gap deficiency is overcome by the theoretical approach of social constructionism, which emphasizes the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and influenced not only by the institutional context and interaction between individuals, but also by the context of culture and history, because the individual’s knowledge is determined by history and culture. Vivien Burr points out that the individual’s knowledge also depends on the views of a particular group

(Burr 2006). Hence individuals' perceptions of the world are determined by categories (such as gender, the social status of a pupil or teacher, a dietary doctor or a nutritionist in the teaching profession, etc.), which also form a different field of social reality.

Also, in the socio-psychological dimension, conflicting views on the factors that influence the development of pupils' eating habits are expressed by external theorists vs. developmental researchers (for example, Benn and Carlsson 2014; Salvy et al. 2012). Conceptually, in these theoretical approaches, social responsibility for a child's eating habits is shifted, in one case, from the family to the environment, in the other case, from the environment to the family, thus making the study of the pupil's eating habits more complex and conflicting. However, in the perspective of social constructivism, interlocking not only the presence of internal and external influences in the formation of the concept of role, but also an essential element in the construction of language as knowledge, because it is the language that constructs the social reality. The language is considered to be the central and key element that creates categories and meanings, it is a means of explaining our (community's) activities (Cromby and Nightingale 1999). Therefore pupils' eating habits are also designed through the prism of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition interpretations.

In contrast, the theoretical approach developed by the critical discourse analyst Theo van Leeuwen helps to see how social practices are transformed or modified with different discourses. Leeuwen emphasizes that it is essential to see the difference between social practice and the representation of this social practice, as different discourses are the result of the re-contextualisation of social practice (Leeuwen 2008, 2009). Although this text can be used for analysis, it does not offer enough evidence to reconstruct the discourse. "Healthy nutrition", for example, in the modern social environment is used in different text types – it can be the regulations developed by the Ministry of Health for pupils' diets, a cookbook with "healthy" recipes, and a publication on a new diet, etc. In other words, the discourse "healthy nutrition" (and, conversely, "unhealthy") includes not only "the subject of the study", but also "the definition of the legitimate perspective of the knowledge agent" in the particular context (Foucault 1977, 135). Thus, discourse not only depicts what is happening, but also evaluates it by offering a goal, justifying, and so on.

Again, all in all – in the theoretical approach of social constructivism, the roles of the individual (in this case, the pupil as a nutrition agent) are formed in social reality – influencing both external structural

(normative, laws) and institutional (belonging to school, family) restrictions, as well as the individual knowledge of the person, and concepts (cultural-historical context). On the other hand, these roles are constructed in the language of the individual because it is the language of the individual (pupil as a nutrition agent) or the group of society (for example, teachers) that forms the roles of their own and other (nutrition agents).

CHARACTERISTICS OF NUTRITION POLICY IN SCHOOLS IN LATVIA

To highlight the environment in which a healthy and “unhealthy” nutrition discourse for a pupil is developing and spreading in Latvia today at a national and institutional level, the school nutrition policy will be briefly described below: the school nutrition policy determines and influences not only the adult (as a pupils’ feeder) in Latvia, but also pupils (as recipients of food, in some cases – non-recipients of food) about what “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition is.

The current normative documents regulating the nutrition of schools in Latvia reflect and describe the situation in Latvia and how the nutrition policy in educational institutions is developed. At present, catering for students in Latvia should be carried out in accordance with the Healthy Nutrition Standards developed by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia, which entered into force on 13 March, 2012. The official title of this document is the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 172 “Regulations on Nutrition Standards for Educators of Educational Institutions, for Clients of Social Care and Social Rehabilitation Institutions and for Patients of Medical Institutions.”

There have also been several editions of the law, but the public counter-reaction was most pronounced in January 2016, following the amendment to this law, which caused even so-called “Buns’ wars” in Latvian educational institutions. A very active public debate began after some journalists had tried to get into a café in a school in Riga by force, to show that illicit buns, banned under the new diet regulations, were being sold there. In general, the main purpose of these Regulations is to prevent pupils from eating certain “unhealthy products” (e.g. ketchup, deep fried or fried potatoes, sausages and frankfurters containing less than 70% meat and other products) and to limit the use of salt and various artificial flavours as well as the flavour enhancers, synthetic dyes or preservatives in the cooking

process in pupils' food (refer to law). Also, this law refers to the amount of nutrients that a pupil needs with food.

In turn, the manager of the particular educational institution is responsible for and in cooperation with parents and the food service provider decides on the catering organization and exactly what the pupils' menu will be. In addition, any company that has registered with the Food and Veterinary Service and operates in accordance with regulatory enactments and regulations may become a student caterer in Latvian schools.

Since 2004/2005, the Ministry of Agriculture has started implementing "The School Milk" programme in schools of Latvia and since 2010/2011 the programme "The School Fruit and Vegetable" financed by the European Commission has been introduced. The aim of both programmes is to provide pupils with fresh fruits, vegetables and milk free of charge in order to increase their dietary intake and change their eating habits, as well as to increase pupils' knowledge of "healthy eating" and of the importance of fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy products.

Currently, various non-governmental organizations (adults as institutional pupils' nutritional agents) are active in Latvia as important and financially supported school nutrition policy makers in the Ministry of Health setting different goals in the context of pupils' nutrition.

"HEALTHY" VS. "UNHEALTHY" NUTRITION AND ITS RECONSTRUCTION

In exploring the practice of defining "healthy" and "unhealthy" diets in different social contexts and on the basis of the theoretical assumption of pupils' practices as adult-dependent individuals, emphasis should be placed on comparing practices of adults vs. pupils' definitions of these concepts.

The results of the study show that the interpretation of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition can vary widely between adults and pupils.

First of all, let's look at the meanings constructed by adults. For nutritionists and doctors, these definitions were mainly based on their professional activities on institutional goals. The teachers, in the definition of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition created by them, use discourse construction strategies different from those of nutritionists. These are: 1) by intertextualising "healthy" nutrition – quoted by memory or indirectly referring to what a nutritionist says, or 2) by generating "healthy" and "unhealthy" diets – pointing out

the broad definition possibilities, or 3) by specifying and naming specific foods or groups of products within the meaning of the concept of “healthy” or “unhealthy” nutrition, and 4) by personifying – with particular emphasis on own individual dietary practices and adapting the definitions of both mentioned concepts.

However, despite the differences in the definition of “healthy” vs. “unhealthy” nutrition strategies used by different adults, in their interviews teachers particularly emphasize the fact that the terms “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition are too simplistic terms to include the complex nature of today’s food environment. Therefore, in their interviews teachers underline the fact that the concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition are interpreted as the appropriate definitions for the junior pupils, whereas the pupils of senior grades (7th to 9th) should already be told about the “balanced” and more extensive dietary habits, and the social importance of food should be explained to them as well. It is also important to note that, at defining dietary habits in their health categories, adult respondents use different terms, not only “healthy diet”, but also “balanced diets”, “adequate nutrition”, “moderate nutrition”, thus focusing not only on the “health” of certain foods, but also on the assessment of eating habits in general. Those adults, who define the “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition as a generic description, instead of the term “healthy” often use a different name, e.g. “balanced”, “different”, “regular”, “correct”, “full-fledged”, and “ecological”. However, the “unhealthy” nutrition is always reflected only in this one concept – “unhealthy”.

Also, the interpretations of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition provided by pupils include both extensive and generalized explanations of “healthy” and “unhealthy” meanings, supplemented by mentioning the names of specific products. At using this approach in defining nutrition, pupils often mention not only specific groups of foods and/or products, but also meals such as porridge, soups, etc., and describe the intensity of their use or non-use. Within the definition of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition pupils often include the behaviour associated with the eating process, thus indicating the social practice of defining nutrition as a description of action; often linking the definition of “healthy” nutrition to physical activity, and usually sporting.

A very common strategy for defining “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition used by pupils is to employ the description of the same actions or words (the same semiotics) – in opposite meanings, that is, through the opposite approach, thus demonstrating that the definition is lacking in-depth knowledge of the issue, e.g.: “Healthy nutrition – when not eating too much, and unhealthy nutrition –

when eating too little or too much" (7th grade student (girl), interviewed on 23 May 2015, Tukums, Latvia). This lack of nutritional knowledge for primary school children derives also from the situation that they can acquire this knowledge only during their studies in secondary school. It is therefore important to reassess the current educational programme for primary school children and encourage the inclusion of dietary training there.

The definition of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition can be influenced by a variety of external environmental factors, such as an on-site fast food restaurant. And if there are any bans or controls that prevent students from attending this out-of-school restaurant, the concepts of "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition may reflect the narrowing of the suppressed protest by reconstituting "unhealthy" as "healthy" and vice versa, e.g. "Healthy is Hesburger, but green salad is unhealthy" (7th grade student (boy), interviewed on 23 May 2015, Tukums, Latvia). Pupils sometimes do not tend to define what is "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition, but simply state what it is not. Practice shows that pupils' behaviour in relation to school nutrition (hence the understanding of what is "healthy nutrition") is very different and is often treated by adults as wrong or even punishable by nature, for example, in case a student uses a lunchtime to go to a nearby grocery store or a fast-food outlet instead of eating a meal in the school dining facility.

At the same time, shortening of lunch breaks in schools (due to various circumstances) by school administration in an arbitrary way is very critical. It promotes the wrong idea among schoolchildren that the emphasis is not on the concept of "healthy", but rather on the speed of eating. In such a way, the "healthy" dietary habits of students become "unhealthy".

In turn, the pupils' criticism of the school kitchen shows how the adult-defined discourse of a "healthy menu", whereby the "healthy" foods, such as fresh vegetables, potatoes or meat, previously named by the pupils themselves, are re-contextualised as "inedible" because of the way they are prepared (e.g. oiled, overcooked or undercooked). Thus, it shows that pupils can, by redefining food from a "healthy" to "unhealthy" product, redirect one and the same food, depending on the context based on his/her own food practice experience. In addition, when a pupil defines what "healthy" or "unhealthy" nutrition is, not only pupil's knowledge of the subject is demonstrated in this definition, but also his/her practical experience of cooking and preparing food is manifested. In this context, it is obvious in some cases that a pupil has not been given the opportunity of acquiring nutritional knowledge, as well as the elementary cooking skills.

In addition to the control mechanism established by teachers, pupils' dietary practices in the school environment are strongly influenced by school cuisine and the food offered there. Considering that Latvian schools feed their students according to specific regulations introduced by the Cabinet of Ministers (Cabinet Regulation No. 172), which adults have defined as oriented towards developing healthy and balanced dietary habits of pupils, then in many cases in order to define a "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition the pupil often uses the terms borrowed from the school kitchen menu classifying the food into "eatable" or 'uneatable', but without a deeper understanding of the motives for his/her choice in terms of health and quality of life.

Although pupils (regardless of age or geographical location of the school) construct the definitions of "healthy" vs. "unhealthy" nutrition, actively re-contextualising the nutritional knowledge of adults, nevertheless in some cases the opinions of pupils as individual and critical assessors also appear. This is not only reflected in the evaluation of the menu offered by the school, but also in the analysis of the national nutrition programmes retrospectively carried out by the pupils. For example, while an adult, creating a discourse on the School Fruit and Vegetable programme, emphasizes the need for local, seasonal, and ecological product purchases, meanwhile, as the primary criteria, pupils set the taste of the product, the way it is served, and the need to increase the variety of the product range, which includes the opposite directions – the need to use global and foreign market resources. For example, students encourage adults to offer "healthy bananas" instead of local apples. The pupils often do not eat the fruit and vegetables available in this programme (and defined by adults as "healthy") for various reasons: 1) because they are still sour and hard, or 2) not as juicy as those one buys in the shop, 3) do not taste good (not mentioning the reason why), 4) packed in plastic bags and are wet and unpleasant.

Similarly "healthy" and "unhealthy" nutrition is defined by the pupils in the School Milk programme. While adults (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture) characterize the School Milk programme emphasizing that milk is a food that is a "fresh and healthy diet" and promotes a "healthy lifestyle", pupils often interpret this adult-defined meaning by re-contextualisation praxis. Some pupils define milk as "unhealthy" considering it as fatty, cold, etc.) and compare it to some other food products (e.g. buns, chips), which adults have labelled as "unhealthy" nutrition in the discourse of school nutrition programmes; whereas pupils call them "healthy" products: "It [milk] was tasty, but only if accompanied by buns!" (8th grade pupil (boy),

interviewed on 25 May 2015, Jaunpils, Latvia). Pupils often mention the alternative ways of using milk, such as milk as thirst quencher, as an alternative to “healthy” water, as a criterion for “health”.

The case studies, where the role of food in pupils’ cooking experience was investigated, led to the conclusion that a long-term positive impact on pupils’ eating habits can be achieved and promoted by nationally-based systematic activities (e.g. the campaign “Porridge days” for pupils of junior classes), but not by separate individually organized initiatives (as, for example, Cooking School organized by retail operator Rimi in 2012/1). Despite that due to the innovative approach to teaching new cooking habits, the latter arouse greater short-term interest (compared to e.g. “School Milk” or other national programmes), long-term effects on pupils’ dietary habits are observed) as a result of the national programmes rather than individual campaigns. In addition, by linking knowledge transfer with demonstrating cooking practically, pupils are encouraged to include specific groups of food in the interpretation of “healthy” nutrition rather than individual food products. The communicative interaction of such knowledge can also result in the re-contextualisation of the concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition.

In the approach of social constructionism, looking at the importance of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition in different social contexts and as a result of social interaction, various practices of re-contextualisation of these concepts have crystallized. However, it has to be concluded that all of these social contexts are specifically designed by adults as a pupil’s nutritional agents (including the fact that pupils are interviewed by a researcher – an adult, thus encouraging the pupil to focus on the topic of nutrition), and in some specific way they try to strengthen the concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition in consciousness of pupils.

Thereby it is confirmed in another way, that macro-cognition structures are transformed when they are used in microstructures: binary opposing knowledge overlaps, reflecting the intertextual relationship of opposition discourses (Griviņš and Tisenkopfs 2015). Consequently, the discursive practices of defining concepts such as “healthy” or “unhealthy” nutrition by pupils as nutrition agents reflect not only the pupils’ dietary practices and knowledge of “healthy” or “unhealthy” nutrition, but also provide information as a result of the social interaction of various nutritional agents, re-contextualising (newly created) nutritional knowledge and practices. In addition, the newly developed dietary knowledge and practices are in constant, intermittent interaction – both on the level of individual self-identity, so also in social relations, and in the wider collective interaction. In

this way, examples of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition in the school environment not only reflect the pupils’ nutritional knowledge and dynamics of practice, but also allow identifying the intensity of the environmental impact and the way in which the development of nutritional knowledge and practice occurs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The interest of sociologists in researching pupils’ dietary habits is mainly focused on the factors affecting the consumption of food and the risks they cause to the quality of life of the children and the future of society. In addition, pupils’ diets and the food environment in today’s academic studies are predominantly viewed as the issue of “healthy” and “unhealthy” diet.

If the main subject of the research is a pupil, it is advisable to include the influence of the social structure in the process of studying the current problem, because the pupil performs his social functions as a representative of the institution – the school. However, in the perspective of symbolic interactionism, an individual (or social agent) is not defined as a passive recipient of norms and roles created by society, but as an active constructor of meanings, who interacts to form a common understanding and knowledge. In turn, one of the most important acknowledgments of the theory of structuralism is to propose the language as the main object of research, and the social agent – the human being – who manages this language and moves (transforms) meanings through the use of language and creates a social reality that already consists from a variety of interpretations.

For a contemporary Latvian pupil as a social agent in the context of food consumption, on the one hand, there is a lack of autonomy of action and the need to integrate into the institutional control system (both family and school) and, on the other hand, to offer new opportunities to take social responsibility not only about a pupil’s dietary choices, but also about educating the surrounding community on nutrition issues.

The concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” nutrition in the interpretation of both pupils and adults are characterized by polysemous nature and constant re-contextualisation and change of meanings, depending on the situation and social context. Pupils define “healthy” vs. “unhealthy” diets, either specific foods or product groups, or they describe eating habits, processes and activities related to a healthy lifestyle.

While defining these concepts, pupils use mostly adults' pre-constructed interpretations of discourse on dietary practices, but at the same time, they place the meanings borrowed from other people into the re-contextualization of their dietary practices thereby using them as a means for legitimizing "healthiness" or "un-healthiness" of food.

Thinking about interventions that promote pupils' healthier eating habits, it is necessary to introduce innovative approaches to school nutrition policy. One of these innovative approaches (not only on a local level) would be obtaining of new nutrition knowledge for the pupil to be socially active and participate in cooking or preparing the school's lunch menu. Therefore, the main factors that determined the choice of the subject of this study and its relevance still remain valid. They are the inadequate nutrition knowledge of the contemporary Latvian pupil, as well as the lack of ability to behave in the school environment as a nutritional agent and manage own eating habits – which is also confirmed by the results of the study.

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