



## **Dinner in Dubai? The Role of Creative Art Workshops in Examining the Nutrition Education of Emirati Students**

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### **Abstract**

This study sought to investigate the issues of nutrition education within four classrooms in four different public schools in Dubai. Research suggests that the changing lifestyle in the United Arab Emirates has manifested itself in many new ways including new eating habits as well as changes in individual's daily physical activity. The growing trend in obesity and associated conditions such as diabetes and heart disease is one of international and national concern. In order to alleviate the possible future demands on the health service and as a means to empowering the individual at a civic level, numerous countries have implemented 'healthy eating and lifestyle' programs. Within the UAE no comprehensive study has been conducted to date that has sought to examine how the formal education system could be used to address this problem. While traditional research methods (questionnaires, diaries, interviews) have generated interesting findings there is growing evidence that these methods do not necessarily allow the individual to explain their own understanding of their social world in their own words. This study therefore used a creative visual research method. Art based workshops were conducted that allowed students to concretely represent and describe their beliefs, attitudes and nutrition behaviour (diet and exercise) using visual representations such as pictures from magazines and newspapers, their own drawings, and product wrappers. The results from the art based workshops revealed that students had a complex understanding of the issues involved in nutrition education which extended beyond identifying food and exercise as 'good' or 'bad'. Issues that dealt with economic and cultural reasons for food and exercise choices were made explicit. Furthermore notions concerning the locus of control in food and exercise decisions also highlighted the issues concerning the 'idealized' perception of their nutritional and physical activity selves and their understanding of their own 'actual reality'.