



Point-of-Service Systems in School Nutrition Programs: *Types, Challenges, and Training*

INTRODUCTION

Point-of-service (POS) systems play an integral role in the claiming process for many school districts. These systems are commonly used to help track the number of meals; verify student identity; verify whether a student receives full-price, reduced-price, or free meals; complete sales transactions and update student accounts; and generate reports for reimbursement claims. The purpose of this research was to investigate the use of paper-based and electronic POS systems in school nutrition (SN) programs, including associated, desired skills, and training practices for personnel.



METHOD

- Individual interviews were conducted with state child nutrition program directors and district-level SN program directors in 14 states representing all seven United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regions.
- An electronic survey was developed, reviewed by a panel of experts, and pilot tested. It was then sent out to a random sample of 1,500 district SN program directors.
- To increase the participation of small districts where online survey access may not be available or convenient, 500 paper-based questionnaires were sent to the smallest districts in the sample.

TRAINING PRACTICES FOR POS HANDLERS

Training providers: District directors ($n=158$, 49.5%), POS system providers ($n = 123$, 38.6%) and another employee who had previously handled the POS system ($n = 111$, 34.8%).

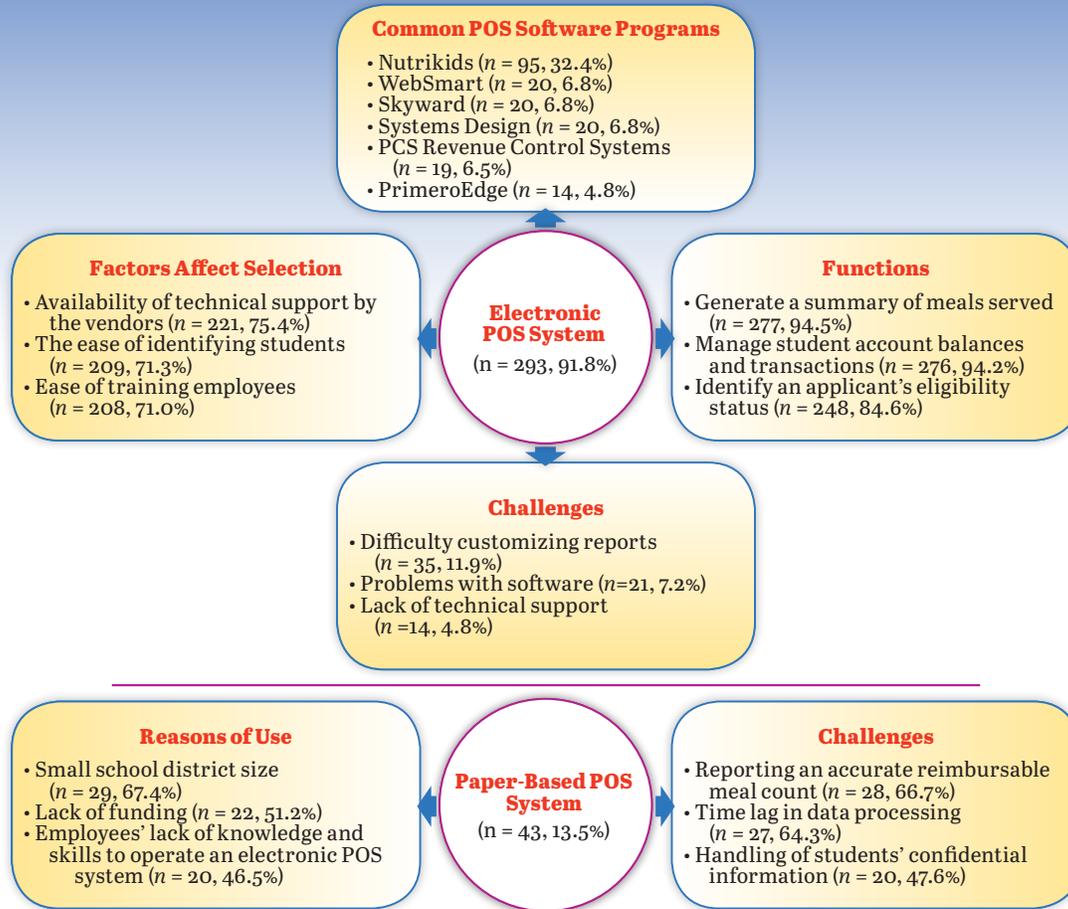
Training frequency: Newly assigned as cashier ($n = 222$, 70.9%) or at the beginning of each academic year ($n=164$, 52.4%).

Training formats: On-the-job-training ($n = 286$, 89.7%) and off-the-job, standalone training ($n = 105$, 32.9%).

Length of training: Mostly less than one hour ($n = 84$, 26.3%) or between one and two hours ($n = 84$, 26.3%).

RESULTS

A total of 319 (20.9% response rate) provided usable data.



Top Three Desirable Skills for POS System Handlers

- Good customer service skills ($n = 187, 58.6\%$)
- Computer proficiency ($n = 164, 51.4\%$)
- Knowledge about NSLP payment and reimbursement ($n = 154, 48.3\%$)

CONCLUSIONS

- Electronic POS systems improve efficiency of SN operations, but there are challenges. Point-of-service system providers may need to offer routine training and technical support to SN professionals.
- Soft skills, such as customer service, and technical skills, such as computer proficiency, are important skills for employees operating POS systems.

For more information, you can download the executive summary of the original report at <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20160714023517.pdf>

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