

THE FOOD SERVICE IMPROVING IT'S QUALITY IN SCHOOL CATERING INNOVATION PROCESS

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1 INTRODUCTION

School catering plays a particularly important role in the school environment, as it has a direct impact on students' health, concentration and academic performance. The aim of this study is to map innovation processes aimed at improving the quality of kitchen service in the school catering system. The research uses qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews with school staff and catering service providers, and a questionnaire survey among students and parents. The results highlight that improving the quality of service requires not only technological developments, but also organizational culture changes, communication and attitude-shaping steps. The study formulates practical recommendations for the introduction of sustainable and child-centred catering innovations, thus contributing to long-term health education and the development of school services.

2 MATERIAL AND METHODS

A mixed methodological approach was used in the research. As part of the qualitative data collection, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with kitchen staff, school leaders and representatives of catering service providers in three secondary schools. In addition, focus group discussions were held with students and parents to explore their experiences with eating habits and satisfaction. Quantitative data collection was carried out using an online questionnaire, in which a total of 100 people participated. The questionnaire included questions related to the quality of catering, the choice of food, the dining environment and the reliability of the service. The data were processed using statistical and thematic analysis methods. The aim of the study was not only to assess the current state, but also to develop proposals for the practical implementation of innovative developments.

3 RESULTS

The research sheds light on the weaknesses and strengths of the current school catering system, with particular regard to the subjective assessment of the quality of the service from the perspective of different stakeholder groups (students, parents, school staff, service providers). The results identify critical points where intervention and innovation are needed – for example, modernizing the food selection, developing kitchen technologies, strengthening nutrition education or improving parental communication. Furthermore, good practices and innovative solutions (e.g. using local, seasonal ingredients, interactive menus, involving

students in food decisions) are outlined that can be adapted for other institutions. The results of the research may form the basis for the development of a comprehensive package of development proposals that will promote the development of a sustainable, health-conscious and child-friendly public catering system in the long term.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research, it can be concluded that improving the quality of school catering does not depend solely on technological developments or economic investments, but requires a complex, systemic change in approach. Based on the feedback from students, parents and school staff, the quality of service is influenced not only by the taste and composition of the food, but also by the dining environment, the method of service and knowledge about healthy nutrition. The qualitative and quantitative results show that the public catering system could be improved in several ways: for example, by increasing the flexibility of menus, involving local producers, and actively taking into account children's needs and feedback. In addition, the role of school communities – especially teachers and parents – is crucial in shaping the food culture. The study also confirms that innovation does not only mean the introduction of technical tools (e.g. digital menus, nutrient calculation systems), but also organizational and attitudinal changes that make public catering more sustainable and child-centred in the long term. Overall, the research can contribute to the development of a modern public catering model that can simultaneously meet health, pedagogical and environmental expectations.

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