ToWe Project

Enhancing Opportunities for Toddlers' Wellbeing

Toddlers' Meal Times

Manual & Audit Tool

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Introduction

The different chapters of this manual make contributions for the reflection of early childhood educators and educational services. All the contributions are designed to improve education and well-being opportunities for disadvantaged children. The aim of this chapter is to contribute to improving the welfare of all children and educators who share time and space in an educational setting, in this case more specifically for the improvement of the well-being during meal times. It is based on the premise that eating is not just a nutritional moment, but it is also a time for socializing and establishing links, developing autonomy and self-knowledge. This chapter of the manual explains and questions the importance of spaces and materials, the possibilities of autonomy and communication among people in meals.

Objectives of the manual

- Provide tools for reflection on the educational value of meals during early childhood.
- Describe and approach the theoretical referents from the fields of psychology, sociology and pedagogy which contribute to understanding the educational value of meal times.
- Provide tools for the reflection, assessment and evaluation of meal times in child care services.

Introduction

Lunchtime is part of what we call the noon break. This break also includes what the children do after eating and before starting their afternoon classes. In this research, we focus our attention only on the purpose of lunchtime for children aged 2 to 3 years old, which will stimulate us to expand and complete the task we have started in the future.

Q1. How do you organize lunchtime at your settings?

Preschool routines for children aged 2 to 3

Everything that happens every day is a learning experience, so everything that happens at school is also a learning opportunity. In this section, we shall focus on the pedagogy of everyday life, meaning that which revolves around the importance and high educational potential of situations that commonly take place during any day, situations in which there are both children and adults. These actions range from classroom situations to playtime, washing up, outings, mealtimes, entering and leaving school and rest times.

In the latest literature, we can find many referents that defend the high educational value of everyday moments at preschool (Bassedas, Huguet & Solé, 1996; Bondioli & Nigito, 2011; Bosch, 2003; Casals & Defis (coord.), 1999; Domènech, 2009; Duart, 1999; Goldschmied, 1998; Hoyuelos, 2004; Hoyuelos & Cabanellas, 1996; Jubete (ed.), 2007; Malaguzzi, 2001; Palacions & Paniagua, 2005; Falk (ed.), 2004; Ritscher, 2011; Ritscher & Staccioli, 2006; Santos Guerra, 1990; Silveira, 2002, 2013; Van Manen, 1998, 2003). What is clear in all of these references is the desire to assess all the moments which children spend together at school (all the situations and places in which they wash up, eat meals, rest, play and enter and leave school) as situations that are equally educationally important as those that the educator prepares as specific situations to work on the curriculum (stations, projects, corners, programming units, workshops, etc.). In the literature, therefore, benchmark authors in the field of education have shown us how details, minor interactions and everyday actions have educational importance. Some of these authors speak about educational routines. In this sense, we particularly wish to highlight Silveira,[1] who makes an etymological search of the word *routine*. She defines it thus: "Routines can be considered the cultural products created, produced and reproduced in day-to-day life whose goal is to organise everyday life" (2002, p. 13). Even though the author makes no explicit reference to lunchtime at school or in the lunchroom, she claims that all everyday actions are permeated with culture and that these actions become routines by automating them. Routines allow us to organise our lives, our day-to-day existences, without the need to constantly be reflecting on how each action should be done. In this sense, each school should reflect on what sociocultural meanings it wishes to attribute to each routine so that they become pedagogical routines. These pedagogical routines should become the backbone around which the remaining activities should be organised. In our view, pedagogical routines are situations involving washing-up, meals (breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack), classroom or outdoor play, breaks, entrances and exits.

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[1] M. Carmen Silveira Barbosa's doctoral thesis revolves around an etymological search of routines. *Por amor & por força. Rotinas na educação infantil* (2000). The thesis can be found in the virtual archive of theses at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Faculdade de Educação.

The school is a place brimming with opportunities to learn how to do, how to be, how to learn and how to live together (Delors, 1996). It is difficult to believe that only classroom situations or those that have previously been planned by the teacher or educator are educational situations. Any exchange among the children themselves, with adults (be they family, teachers, lunchroom monitors, extracurricular activities, neighbours, etc.) or with objects are full of educational content.

Q2. What are the educational aspects for lunchtime at your settings?

School lunchrooms viewed as educational spaces

Not only thinking about what is being eaten, but also how it is eaten.

Penny Ritscher (2011, p. 120)

All the time a child spends at school is educational, and the time in the lunchroom is an important moment in children's everyday lives.

Eating not only contributes to ensuring that children grow physiologically; rather it also helps them to grow socially and affectively, culturally and intellectually. Anthropologists claim that in almost all societies, the act of eating is a social activity. In fact, every culture has its own eating patterns, and thus we can talk about food cultures. According to Contreras and Gracia Arnaiz (2005), the eating behaviour of the majority of people can be predicted according to their cultural patterns (technological resources, social organisation, activities, timetables, professions, family relations, responsibilities, etc.). The fact that eating is full of cultural patterns leads us to believe that we cannot apply or transplant models of how school lunchrooms operate from other countries or from one culture to another; instead, each school must clearly grasp the cultural pattern conveyed in its lunchroom. The aforementioned authors note several changes that have occurred in eating habits since the second half of the 20th century, namely: the subordinating of family meals to the timetables of the different family members, called desynchronization (hours of work, school, outside work,

extracurricular activities and free time); a kind of individualisation or simplification of meals because many people eat alone, or what they call de-implantation; and finally dislocation, since the places where meals are eaten, both inside and outside the home, has expanded and diversified.

Here, anthropological studies note that staying at school for lunch means an increase in the cost of raising children, changes in the children's expectations, changes in parent and child relationships (where we see a more autonomous and less authoritarian relationship) and a transference of many lessons from the family nucleus to the schools.

If meals play such an important role in the process of acculturating people, it is justified and worthwhile to analyse what it is we are encouraging during lunchtime at school.

We should bear in mind several of the contributions from psychology, such as the ones by Vendrell (in Anguera, Geis, Vendrell, Iglésias & Cuenca, 2013),[2] when she notes that bearing in mind the needs of each child, the younger ages is when we must ensure that we establish a strong affective bond and emotional stability and ensure that children acquire healthy, stable behaviour patterns grounded upon communication and peaceful coexistence. Therefore, not just any place or any way or any company works well at lunchtime. In this field, too, Di Scala[3] stresses the cultural and intersubjective dimension of human meals and our practices: she analyses how the processes of symbolisation and cultural transmission are carried out among preschool children and their teachers during mealtimes (in this case, breakfast).

Within the field of pedagogy and school organisation, some authors (Díez de Andino & Cusachs, 2011; Escola Municipal Arc Iris, 2001; Martínez & Matamala, 1992) note the need to establish recommendations for the optimal functioning of the school lunchroom in the respective lunchroom plans that are devised in conjunction with the school's administrative team and the coordination of the team of lunchroom monitors. Within these recommendations, what we find interesting is the authors' note of how it is important to ensure suitable ratios, the conditions that determine the atmosphere (noise, lighting, ventilation, size of the furniture), the dealings with the staff, the rules that make it possible to manage lunchtime and how to encourage children's autonomy (Antón (coord.), 2007; Falk (ed.), 2004; Heras, 1997; Tinajas, 2002).

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[2] The author spends an entire chapter of the book *Com han de menjar els infants i els adolescents. Aspectes psicosocials i nutricionals de l'alimentació* on analysing and discussing the importance of mealtimes in establishing bonds and in socialising children.

[3] Maria di Scala is an educational psychologist with a PhD in Psychology from the University of Buenos Aires. Her thesis, *Procesos de simbolización y prácticas alimentarias en la escuela*, stresses the socialising and communicative potential offered by *merienda* time (morning snack in the classroom) in preschool. We had the chance to meet with her and share research materials on the 22nd of April 2013, when she came to Barcelona on invitation to deliver a lecture at the FPCEE Blanquerna.

Within the sphere of pedagogy, we can find publications that show the desire to include the content on school meals within the school's overall objectives or the reference objectives of the cycle (Quer, 2000; Villaescusa, 2002). Likewise, some of them note the need to bear diversity in mind in the lunchroom as well (Geis, Miret & Pavón, 2001). If we focus specifically on preschool education, few authors speak holistically about the meal times, that is, considering all of the aforementioned factors bearing in mind a vision of the child's growth that encompasses nutritional, social, cognitive, motor and affective aspects. Despite this, we have found that educators like Goldschmied (1998), Falk (ed.) (2001), Martínez & Matamala (1992), Ritscher (2011) and Ritscher & Staccioli (2006) respond to what this time should be like and what we can do at school to improve it. Specifically, Ritscher and Saccioli talk about reviving the culture of the table, and they list a few items to take into account when organising the school lunchroom.

- *First of all, we must be convinced that mealtime at school is an important time that requires our full professional attention.*
- *Soundproofing. This is expensive, but it is an investment in mental health.*
- *Subdivide the children into manageable and self-manageable units. If they cannot eat in the classrooms, at least subdivide the lunchroom into sub-spaces. Subdivide classes into groups of seven children per table at most.*
- *Take advantage of the presence of teachers so that there is an adult eating with the children at each table.*
- *Set the table properly. Cloth serviettes also help with acoustics. Real cloth serviettes should be used, not throwaway paper ones.*
- *Serve the food on the dishes directly at the table to try to satisfy different preferences. If this is not possible, it is good to leave at least a little margin for personal choice (bread, water, condiments, fruit)*. Ritscher and Saccioli (2006, p. 51)

A Quality lunchroom for children aged 2 to 3

Nursery schools should be offered as places full of educational intentionality, especially because they are framed as places of everyday life where children experience the different times of the day together, and where adults attribute meaning not only to activities that are somehow structured but to other times such as lunch, breaks and other routines. These are the times that make the school day predictable for children and allow for special relationships of intimacy, friendship and coexistence, helping to keep children feeling safe and assured, which they need in order to feel good and to express an interest in new experiences.

Anna Lia Galardini (2010, p. 25)

Lunchtime should be a pleasant, calm time for everyone (diners and monitors), and we believe that for this to happen certain conditions are needed, as explained above. We shall now outline these conditions with the desire of their becoming a vantage point or horizon towards which we should channel our efforts to improve. The requirements[4] that should be considered are varied in nature: some of them refer to the place where children eat, the furniture or the eating utensils used, or to the atmosphere (noise, light or ventilation). Others refer to the way the diners are treated, that is, how their requests are dealt with, how their pace or communicative needs are respected. And the third group refers to the possibilities that the lunch break offers children to grow by developing their autonomy, how they are allowed to participate or make decisions about whom they eat with or how much food they want. These indicators, organised into three categories, have served as the basis from which we have organised and designed the instruments in the protocol to evaluate and improve the educational quality of preschool lunchrooms: the category of communication with adults and between children, the category of children's autonomy during mealtimes and the category of the characteristics of the physical and material spaces of the lunchroom.

- **The lunchroom: Place and time of communication**

One does not age at the table because time stops there.

Penny Ritscher (2011, p. 121)

Children take advantage of downtime with their classmates to share experiences. We believe that during lunchtime children must have room to interact with whomever they want and therefore to decide with whom to talk and with whom to sit to eat, to play games or to share experiences. Surprisingly, this does not happen in all schools, where the place and the classmate with whom children sit during their lunchtime is decided by the adult. The lunch hour, even for a child, is best experienced in company, with calmness, with the assurance that the adult(s) with them will help meet their needs, speaking with whomever they want, cordially and without the need to yell, and receiving encouraging messages from adults or classmates. Lunchtime is preceded by an explanation and *bon appétit*; it is a time when adults became the touchstones of good tone of voice and polite behaviour,[5] and where no one is humiliated for eating at a different pace. It should be a pleasant time with no uproar. These are the requirements needed to ensure that the school lunchroom fosters good communication among peers and with adults. According to Goldschmied (1998), we can

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[4] You can check the guidelines for schools at Anguera, Geis, Vendrell, Iglésias & Cuenca (2009).

[5] We are referring to the concept of good tone of voice and polite behaviour which Van Manen (1998, 2003) defines as the virtues of good teachers in that they know how and when to draw closer to children, they know how to express wonder, and most importantly they know the importance of their presence (gestures, looks, tone of voice).

protest or leave if we are not pleased with our meal somewhere, but children do not have this choice.

Whether or not the communication during lunchtime is positively educational depends large on the role of the adult – in our case, the monitors. As Palou (2004) explains, adults have to know how to listen empathetically, establishing dialogues that make affective relationships possible, dialogues that should be accompanied by attentive eye contact, taking advantage of the importance of meal times as times to draw closer. Nor should we forget that the way we deal with children, our body language, can either help us to establish even better bonds with children or create distance. The educator's role or style is key, especially their communicative style. This is also asserted by Palacios and Paniagua: "This is an aspect that not only influences the relationship with the children and the classroom atmosphere but also serves as a model at key ages in language development" (2005, p. 179). When analysing the factors that influence communicative style, both authors say that the following must be borne in mind: voice expressiveness or appropriate modulation, the time given to the child so that he or she is the one speaking, the stimulation of expression over correction, and the kind of messages conveyed (greetings, descriptions, orders, punishments, encouragement, etc.). For this reason, the items that we include the observation guideline refer to the kinds of explanations offered by the adults, how they address the children, how they place limits or react to disruptive situations, what kind of messages they use to speak to children and the kind of non-verbal communication in which they engage.

Regarding peer communication, we believe that the conditions must be in place for children to be able to talk to each other. First of all, they must be allowed to do so, but they must also be next to a peer with whom they want to talk, which translates into being able to choose where to sit and with whom they sit, as mentioned above. Ultimately, the noise level must also allow conversation to take place. This communication is essential to the development of all children. Malaguzzi reminds us of this when he says:

Interaction among children has a fundamental value in the experience in the first few years of life. It is a demand that springs from a desire, from a need that all children have which they want to meet in suitable situations that foster this interaction. Malaguzzi (2001, p. 58)

Thus, the lunchroom becomes a space of interactions, a time that "can become an optimal situation for sharing and speaking with others in brief conversations between two or more children or more in groups" (Ferrer, 2012). Communication is not possible without the other, but nor is it possible without time. Day-to-day life at school should have a well-structured pace designed around the needs of children, not adults. It is also important to be flexible enough so that children can gather with their classmates without rushing, a daily routine that allows them to experience their childhood time.

During lunchtime, adults must respect children's pace without this in any way meaning unnecessarily extending the amount of time allocated for lunch. Properly regulating the paces also requires adults to avoid unnecessary wait times for children, either because they have to wait for the food, or because they have to wait until all or almost all their peers have finished eating. In their analysis of the organisation of a preschool, Bondiloi, Nigito and Abbo (2011) and Hoyuelos (2004) stress that adults are the ones that should organise children's social experience, an adult who serves as a mediator and who organises spaces and times. The adult becomes a stable emotional point of reference, while also providing each child with the safety they need. We could say that these authors follow Malaguzzi's line (2001), which he calls relational pedagogy, a kind of pedagogy that starts with the principle that regardless of where they are, children ask about and develop thinking strategies and that they weave emotions and construct their own principles.

Therefore, lunchtime must make dialogue and communication possible; it should become a place where adults listen, explain whatever is needed, follow models of good manners (greetings, *bon appétit*, asking for things politely, etc.) and ensure an organisation that allows – albeit not necessarily every day – children to be able to choose with whom they sit. It should be a lunchtime without yelling, a time that helps children get to know themselves, become secure in their environment, establish strong ties with adults and peers, a lunch room where they can experience and practise respect for others. In short a time for living with wellbeing and enjoyment.

- **Educating for the child's autonomy in the lunchroom**

To become autonomous, children at preschools must meet both affective and physical needs. But they must also fulfil the epistemological need to understand, because only constructing and sharing an understanding of ourselves and the world around us makes us active members of the culture into which we were born.

Carlos Gallego Lázaro (2001, p. 87)

Gallego taught us that the school should become a space of culture, of challenges that make it possible for children to grow, and that we must trust children and give them autonomy so that they can construct their own cognitive processes. This process has no timetables, nor can it be limited to interest centres or specific topics; instead, children gradually develop them through experiences, challenges and everyday actions.

We have referred to authors who, as we have said, view mealtimes as spaces of learning and especially as spaces of child autonomy, such as Alzola and Otaño (2007), Goldschmied (1998), Martínez and Matamala (1992), Molina (2007), Ritscher and Staccioli (2006), Tardos and Szanto-

Feder (2007) and Wettich (2007). In concurrence with these authors, we believe that mealtimes and the washing-up times just before and after lunch should be times of child participation. This means being able to help in placing the serviettes, dishes, glasses, cutlery and other items, such as water pitchers or the bread, on the table. It also includes actions like soaping, rinsing and drying their hands or going to the bathroom. When lunch is over, each child should be able to put their own dishes, cutlery, serviettes and glasses into the bins, as well as to place any rubbish in the right place. It is clear that the equipment should make it possible to do whatever they are capable of doing to the extent possible.

By this we mean that all children should feel useful, but more importantly they should know that there are everyday actions that they have to do on their own because they can and because they are learning that they have to be responsible for the things that they use. These actions – setting and clearing the table or taking care of their own washing-up – not only trains children to be more autonomous but also helps them to grow in their self-esteem. Obviously, enabling this kind of participation requires organisation of the space, requirements of certain materials or equipment, and organisation of time and tasks. Clearly it is important to think about in what strategic place the rubbish bins for equipment should be placed, what kind of supervision the adult must provide in each situation and how the table setting should be organised.

In the process of growing and acquiring autonomy, mealtimes are also times when each child gets to know themselves, learns about their tastes, whether they like to eat a lot or a little, and what they need to care for their bodies. This learning is intrinsically associated with adults' respect for children, which translates into the fact that each child eats as much as they want and that each can serve their own food or, if this is impossible, some additional item such as bread, water, salad or dessert.

In order for the lunchroom to become a place that educates children in the acquisition of autonomy, the children must be allowed to participate in the different tasks, to ask about them and to be dealt with according to their needs, and to have adults who are capable of listening, observing and respecting the children's paces.

- **The lunchroom: Educational space and materials**

Eating well is not only a question of food; it is also a question of the setting.

Penny Ritscher and Gianfranco Staccioli (2006, p. 51)

In our culture, meals, and especially lunch, have certain connotations and rituals which are easily identifiable: we like to set the table with a cloth tablecloth; give each diner dishes, cutlery and cups; have the drink, bread and condiments on the table; use cloth serviettes; and eat with others. What is

more, all celebrations revolve around the table, including birthdays, weddings, gatherings of friends or Christmas. Still, the act of eating is nonetheless a private time. In contrast, at school it becomes an act that takes place publicly, in a space designed for this purpose.

We have already explained the changes in eating habits that can be seen today as the result of changes in lifestyle and new work situations. These changes are the main reason why children remain at school for lunch. We have also mentioned that the fact that eating habits vary does not prevent the school from doing everything possible to ensure that lunchtime is a comfortable place, with age-appropriate furniture and equipment that make the break pleasant and encourage autonomy. The place where children eat is important; the conditions of the place, the furniture and the table settings express the specific culture of the lunchroom and, in short, a specific culture of the school and childhood.

The school is also a place of encounters and relationships in which children have to find pleasant spaces with engaging materials and documentation that show how things are done at school and to understand the spaces, learning and life that occurs there. The spaces should act as generators of good relations and friendliness; it should be a place that, as Cabanellas and Eslava (coord., 2005) say, is liveable and open to the multiple possibilities of the actions of those who coexist there. We believe that all spaces, specifically the lunchroom or the place where the children eat, should not only meet physiological needs but also make the overall development of those who use it possible; they should convey the culture of the milieu and provide affective security. In regards to the place where lunch is eaten, Goldschmied (1998) comments that we all want it to smell pleasant, for the food to be attractively presented, for people to pay attention to us and for the atmosphere to be relaxed, with neither pressure nor noise. Ultimately, it should have a *familiar* feel.[6] We have also mentioned in the previous sections the lines Ritscher and Staccioli (2006) that defend, which should be borne in mind when organising the lunchroom, many of which refer to spatial issues.

But in addition to thinking about what is being eaten, we must also pay attention to how it is being eaten… and with whom one is eating!

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[6] Claus Jensen, a Danish pedagogue, explains that the school space becomes *familiar* if it incorporates elements like those found at home. For the lunchroom, this would include serviettes, tablecloths, dishes, cups, etc. This information was gathered at the lecture entitled "Les relacions i l'ambient físic" (Relationships and the Physical Environment), delivered by the pedagogue on the 2nd of March 2013 at the Teatre Municipal in Sant Feliu de Guíxols.

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Audit tool

The audit (observation) tool below is an instrument for collecting data regarding how lunchtime develops at the setting. Assessment is made based on an estimate scale which can be used for direct observation technique.

Q3.Look at the audit tool and identify the main categories.

Q4.Watch the video and assess it using the audit tool. Discuss.

Categories	Items	Degree of acceptability			
		Very acceptable	Acceptable	Somewhat unacceptable	Unacceptable
INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN	Verbal communication	- The children are told about the menu and what is going to happen, anticipating all the actions, even the smallest children who do not yet express themselves verbally.	- The children are told what is going to happen. The menu is not explained.	- Some adult provides the children with prior explanations.	- No adult provides the children with prior explanations.
		- When dealing with any difficulty, an adult always provides dialogue and understanding.	- When dealing with any difficulty, one of the adults always provides dialogue and understanding.	- One of the adults occasionally talks with some child and shows understanding.	- Dialogue or understanding of children is not shown.
		- All adults constantly show an attitude of listening to all children. All children's requests are heard and the adults participate in the conversations that the children start.	- Some adults constantly show an attitude of listening to all children	- Attention to children is occasional, only if there is a request.	- Children's demands are not listened to or paid attention to.
		- Most messages from the adults are positive (providing encouragement, reinforcing an action, etc.).	- Messages of encouragement alternate with instructions (Very good! How's it going? Almost finished? It's good, isn't it?).	- Most messages involve getting children to hurry or pushing them (Come on, finish already! Who'll finish first? Come on, swallow!).	- The messages are clearly rule-oriented, encouraging children to hurry or pushing them (You can't get up if you don't finish! You have to try everything! Hurry up!).
		- The messages from the adults are clear and coherent. The adults respond to questions and requests.	- The messages from the adults are clear but sometimes incoherent with each other.	- The messages from the adults are not very clear and sometimes incoherent with each other.	- There are no messages from the adults.

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INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN	Communication	- Lunchtime is a time of communication, when children can talk about whatever they want or whatever topic arises. There is dialogue among children and between children and adults.	- Sporadically or only some children talk about what they feel or whatever topic arises during the meal. Children talk to each other but the adult doesn't pay attention to this dialogue.	- The dialogue with children is rules-driven, not about what they feel or whatever topic arises during the meal. Adults do not attach importance to dialogues that might arise among children.	- There is no dialogue or listening from the adults to the children. Adults do not attach importance to dialogues that might arise among children.
	Attention to needs	- Children's requests are met and the adults are attentive to them.	- Children's requests are met but not all the adults are attentive to them.	- Children's requests are not always met and the adults are distracted or talking with each other.	- None of the children's requests are met and the adults are talking with each other or distracted.
		- All the adults seek contact with all the children, even with those who do not make a specific request.	- There is only one adult who seeks contact with all the children, even with those who do not make a specific request.	- No contact is sought with the children; attention is only paid to them when they make a specific request.	- No contact is sought with the children and attention is not paid to their demands.
		- Children are gently encouraged to eat with physical interaction from the adult that helps them if the child needs or requests it, always encouraging actions that allow the children to act autonomously.	- Children are gently encouraged to eat and are given physical assistance by helping them to start the motion to scrape off their plate, even if the child does not request it. The child does most of the action.	- Almost all the children are helped as they scrape off their plate with insistent actions by the adult without giving the children the option of doing it themselves.	- The children are helped mechanically, without prior warning and brusquely (grabbing their head, pushing them from behind, etc.).

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INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN	Nonverbal communication	- Calm attitude (posture) among the adults.	- Not all the adults have a calm attitude.	- Excessive movement by the adults, entering and leaving or walking back and forth.	- Nervousness among the adults (excessive rushing, a lot of movement around the room, not paying attention to the children, etc.).
		- Proximity to the children; all the adults are seated at the tables where the children eat.	- Only one of the adults remains seated near the children.	- Only one of the adults remains seated near the children at times, but at their level and sometimes with their back to the group in order to prepare the food to be served.	- None of the adults sits with the children during lunchtime.

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INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN	Nonverbal communication	- Looks and gestures of complicity or understanding from all the adults.	- Looks of complicity by one of the adults.	- Little eye contact with the children.	- Eye contact is used to ask for respect or to punish.
	Regulation of time	- Each child's pace is respected. There is a set time to finish, but the children are politely asked to continue or stop eating.	- Each child's pace is respected, but at a given time all the dishes are collected, without punishing those children who did not finish.	- Each child's pace is respected until a given time, when those who have not finished are somehow punished or receive a punitive verbal comment.	- There is a set time to finish and the children are pressed to hurry from the start. The slowest ones are punished.
		- The time after lunch is quiet, so children can go wash up and rest a bit before taking a nap. One of the adults tends to the children who have finished and the other tends to those who have not finished. The children do not have to wait any longer than needed until they have all finished eating.	- The time after lunch is quiet, so children can go wash up and rest a bit before taking a nap but there is not good coordination among the adults when tending to the children who have finished their meal and those who have not finished yet. Some children have to wait longer than needed until they have all finished eating.	- The time after lunch is rushed so children can go wash up and go to sleep, although there might be good coordination among the adults when tending to the children who have finished and those who haven't finished yet. Some children have to wait longer than needed until they have all finished eating.	- The time after lunch is rushed so children can go wash up and go to sleep, without coordination among the adults when tending to the children who have finished and who haven't finished yet. The children have to wait longer than needed until they have all finished eating.

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INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN	Punishment	- When faced with a difficulty or with disruptive behaviour, understanding, dialogue and consensus can be seen among all the adults.	- When faced with a difficulty or with disruptive behaviour, understanding, dialogue and consensus can be seen from some adults.	- When faced with a difficulty or with disruptive behaviour, there is a tendency to yell or punish the children (keeping a dish from them or ridiculing them).	- When faced with a difficulty or with disruptive behaviour, the children are punished in front of the others or drastic measures are taken (they are punished outside the lunchroom, their lunch is saved for afternoon snack).

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PEER COMMUNICATION (child – child)	Verbal communication	- There is a quiet atmosphere which allows children to express their opinions.	- There is a quiet atmosphere which allows children to express their opinions, even if the adult voice is heard more.	- There is not a quiet atmosphere which allows children to express their opinions and the adult voice is heard more. Children are often asked to be quiet or speak more softly.	- There is not a quiet atmosphere which allows children to express their opinions and the adult voice is heard more. The children are not allowed to speak with each other.
	Grouping possibilities	- When the children use cutlery and eat solid food (after approximately 18 months old), they sit at tables of 4 to 6 children.	- When the children use cutlery and eat solid food (after approximately 18 months old), they sit at tables of 7 to 8 children.	- When the children use cutlery and eat solid food (after approximately 18 months old), they sit at tables of 9 to 10 children.	- When the children use cutlery and eat solid food (after approximately 18 months old), they sit at tables of more than 10 children.

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DEGREE OF COOPERATION AMONG CHILDREN	Cleanliness habits	- The adult ensures that all the children wash their hands before and after eating. This action is assisted or supervised by the adult, who is located nearby, at the same height, and is accessible. - The children's autonomy in this action is encouraged (providing access to soap, the faucet, paper or a towel to dry their hands), bearing in mind each child's developmental stage. - The older children express the need to wash their hands when they are dirty and can do so by themselves.	- The adult ensures that all the children wash their hands before and after eating. This action is assisted or supervised by the adult. - The children's autonomy in this action is encouraged (soap, the faucet, paper or a towel to dry their hands) only at some times before or after eating, but the adult provides access or not to water, turns on the faucet and gives out the soap. -Each child's developmental stage is not taken into account.	- The adult does not check whether all the children wash their hands before and after eating. The action is assisted or heavily directed by the adult. - The children's autonomy in this action is encouraged (soap, the faucet, paper or a towel to dry their hands) only at some times before or after eating. - Each child's developmental stage is not taken into account.	- The adult does not check whether all the children wash their hands before and after eating. The action is assisted or heavily directed by the adult. - The children's autonomy in this action is not encouraged (soap, the faucet, paper or a towel to dry their hands) at any time before or after eating. - Each child's developmental stage is not taken into account.

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DEGREE OF COOPERATION AMONG CHILDREN	Cleanliness habits	- Care is taken to ensure that children have a clean nappy at lunchtime and that those who can already walk can actively participate in removing their own nappy. - The children who no longer wear a nappy can tend to their own needs when they have to and the adult supervises them.	- Care is taken to ensure that children have a clean nappy at lunchtime. - The children who no longer wear a nappy can tend to their own needs when they have to and the adult supervises them.	- Care is not taken to ensure that children have a clean nappy at lunchtime. - The children who no longer wear a nappy can tend to their own needs but they have to wait until an adult can supervise them.	- Care is not taken to ensure that children have a clean nappy at lunchtime. - The children who no longer wear a nappy cannot tend to their own needs when they want but have to wait until an adult tells them they can, or there is no adult supervision.
	Cooperation in setting and clearing the table	- The children's capacities are borne in mind when participating daily in setting and clearing the table.	- Only the groups of older children (over age 2) can participate daily in setting and clearing the table.	- Only the groups of older children (over age 2) can participate occasionally in setting and clearing the table.	- There is no chance for children to participate in setting and clearing the table.

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DEGREE OF COOPERATION AMONG CHILDREN	Spatial location during mealtime	- Each child chooses where they sit.	- Each child chooses where they sit at an assigned table.	- The places are assigned but occasionally children can decide or choose where they sit.	- The places are assigned and the adults assign them.
	Use of cutlery	- The use of the spoon is introduced as soon as the child can hold it. - When the menu includes little bits of food, the use of the fork is introduced.	- The use of the spoon is introduced as soon as the child can hold it. - When the menu includes little bits of food, the use of the fork is introduced.	- The use of the spoon is introduced as soon as the child can hold it. - When the menu includes little bits of food, the use of the fork is introduced.	- The use of the spoon is introduced as soon as the child can hold it. - When the menu includes little bits of food, children continue to only use spoons.
		- Children can begin to use cutlery to serve themselves food when they have the motor skills to do so. - Children are given plenty of help to use cutlery properly.	- Children cannot use cutlery to serve food. - Children are given plenty of help to use cutlery properly.	- Children cannot use cutlery to serve food. - Children are not given enough help to use cutlery properly.	- Children cannot use cutlery to serve food. - Children are not given enough help to use cutlery properly.

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DEGREE OF COOPERATION AMONG CHILDREN	Serving their own food	- Adults respect the amount of food that each child needs, either through knowledge of the child or because the child requests it.	- The adult respects the amount of food that each child needs depending on the need that the adult thinks the child has, although they do no ask the child.	- The adult serves the same amount of food to each child, but respects the child if they do not want more.	- The adult serves the same amount of food to each child. The children are pressured to finish the food they have been served.
		- The children, who already have good motor coordination or ==comprehension==, making it possible to serve themselves, are allowed to serve themselves one of the side or main dishes.	- The children, who already have good motor coordination or ==comprehension,== making it possible to serve themselves, are allowed to hold their plates which have already been served.	- Occasionally the children who already have good motor coordination or ==comprehension==, making it possible to serve themselves, are allowed to serve themselves one of the side dishes	- The adult performs all actions and does not allow children to serve themselves any side or main dish.

Categories	Items	Degree of acceptability			
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PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS	Lunchroom	- The groups of children aged 2-3 eat in the classroom or a nearby place which is easy to reach from the classroom and near the wash-up area.	- The groups of children aged 2-3 eat in the classroom or a nearby place which is easy to reach from the classroom.	- The group of children aged 1-2 and those aged 2-3 eat in the same room, either the classroom or a nearby place which is easy to reach from the classroom.	- The group of children aged 1-2 and those aged 2-3 eat together in the same room, either in the classroom or a nearby place, but one that is not easily accessible from the classroom.
		- Space with 8-12 children eating.	- Space with 13-20 children eating.	- Space with 21-30 children eating.	- Space with more than 30 children of all ages and class groups eating at the same time.
	Ratios	- There are two adults per group or class. The ratio is between 4 and 6 children per adult in all age groups.	- There is one adult per group or class and one support assistant shared between two classrooms. The ratio is around 4 children for the classroom of children aged 0 to 1 and between 7 and 10 children per adult in the other age groups.	- There is one adult per group or class. The ratio is around 4 children for the classroom of children aged 0 to 1 and between 10 and 15 children per adult in the other age groups.	- There is one adult for each group or class. The ratio is around 6 children for the classroom of children aged 0 to 1 and more than 15 children per adult in the other age groups.

Categories	Items	Degree of acceptability			
		Very acceptable	Acceptable	Somewhat unacceptable	Unacceptable
PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS	Furniture and equipment in the meal room	- Tables, chairs and auxiliary furniture of different sizes depending on the age or size and needs of the children.	- Tables and chairs suitable for the age or size and needs of the children.	- Not all the tables and chairs are suitable for the age or size and needs of the children.	- None of the furniture respects the size of the children.
		- All the adults have chairs with wheels so they can easily reach all the children.	- Only one of the adults has a chair with wheels so they can easily reach all the children.	- There are chairs for adults, but they do not have wheels. Some adults sit in child-sized chairs.	- There are no chairs for adults or, if there are at school, they are stored away and unused.
		- Sinks, soap dispensers and hand towels are easily accessible from the meal room and can be reached by all the children.	- Sinks, soap dispensers and hand towels are easily accessible from the meal room, but not all the children can reach them.	- There is a sink near the meal room but it is adult-sized.	- There is no sink near the meal room.
		- In the classrooms or rooms where children eat, the food and equipment come on a kitchen cart that has everything needed. Everything is accessible and therefore no adult has to get up.	- In the classrooms or rooms where children eat, there is a piece of furniture or shelf at least 1.2 m tall specifically used to leave the trays or food that does not have to be served yet.	- In the classrooms or rooms where children eat, there is a piece of furniture or shelf at least 1.2 m tall where the trays or food that does not have to be served yet can be left.	- In the classrooms or rooms where children eat there is no furniture or shelf at least 1.2 m tall where the trays or food that does not have to be served yet can be left.

Categories	Items	Degree of acceptability			
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PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS	Ventilation and lighting	- Windows facing outdoors which allow air to flow, along with automatic ventilation devices (adjustable grilles incorporated into the window).	- Windows facing outdoors which allow for good ventilation, or artificial ventilation that provides fresh air.	- The windows are small or face interior spaces and the atmosphere is noticeably not ventilated. - There is artificial ventilation but the air is clearly not fresh.	- There is no exterior ventilation, nor any artificial ventilation device, and the air is clearly not fresh.
		- There are curtains, blinds or awnings that allow the space to be properly lit with natural light, and they are used to regulate the light.	- There are curtains, blinds or awnings that allow the space to be properly lit with natural light, but they are not used.	- Even though there is natural light, artificial illumination is used.	- There is no natural light, and artificial illumination is always needed.
	Equipment	- The shelves or tables where the food is left or where the children eat are covered with cloth or plastic protectors used specifically for meals. - There are guarantees that the tablecloths do not slip from the table to prevent dishes from falling unnecessarily. The tables are cleaned before eating.	- The shelves or tables where the food is left or where the children eat are covered with cloth or plastic protectors used specifically for meals. - Tablecloths are only used with larger groups and there are attempts to secure them to prevent dishes from falling unnecessarily The tables are cleaned before eating.	- The shelves or tables where the food is left or where the children eat are not covered with cloth or plastic protectors. - Tablecloths are not used in any group. The tables are cleaned before eating.	- The shelves or tables where the food is left or where the children eat are not covered with cloth or plastic protectors. - The tables do not seem to be cleaned before eating.

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PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS	Equipment	- Cloth bibs are used and changed for each meal. For children that do not bring bibs, the school attempts to provide them with a spare one.	- Cloth bibs are changed for each meal. Children that do not bring bibs are given a piece of paper towel or similar.	- Not all groups use bibs. Paper towels are used.	- Bibs are not used at any age.
		- There is cutlery adapted to the children's age (3 sizes). Each child uses the right size cutlery depending on their skills.	- There is cutlery adapted to the children's age (2 sizes). Each child uses the right size cutlery depending on their skills.	- There is cutlery adapted to the children's age (2 sizes). The children are assigned the cutlery size by class group, not depending on each child's skills.	- The cutlery size is the same for all ages.
		- Different kinds of cups are used depending on the age or the children's motor skills.	- Different kinds of cups are used depending on the children's age.	- Each age group is assigned a kind of cup regardless of the children's needs.	- There is no criterion on which kind of cup to use.
		- There are porcelain or plastic dishes, and the dish is changed for each course (first, second or dessert).	- There are plastic dishes, and the dish is only changed for dessert.	- Plastic dishes and, the dish are not changed. The dessert is eaten without a dish.	- Use of dishes or trays to hold the food.

Categories	Items	Degree of acceptability			
		Very acceptable	Acceptable	Somewhat unacceptable	Unacceptable
PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS	Furniture in the changing table or clean-up area	- There is a soap dispenser within children's reach and it is easy to use.	- There is a soap dispenser within children's reach but they cannot use it on their own.	- There is a soap dispenser but it is not within children's reach.	- There is no soap dispenser.
		- The flush mechanism on the toilet is accessible to the children.	- The flush mechanism on the toilet is accessible to the children, but at the time of observation is it broken.	- The flush mechanism on the toilet is at adult height.	- The flush mechanism on the toilet is at adult height and in poor condition.
		- The faucets for the children are easy for all of them to use.	- The faucets for the children are easy to use only for the groups aged 2 or 3.	- Some faucets need adult help to be used.	- All of faucets need adult help to be used.
		- The hand dryer (air or paper dispenser) is within children's reach and filled with paper.	- The hand dryer (air or paper dispenser) is within children's reach but some of them don't work or do not have enough paper.	- The hand dryer (air or paper dispenser) is not within children's reach even though they work or have enough paper.	- Nor air or paper towel hand dryer can be seen, or there is a single towel for all children to use.
		- The changing table fulfils the legal measures on risk prevention (edge to prevent falling, depth of between 50 and 60 cm and sink and changing table 80 or 70 cm tall) and the children who can move by themselves can reach it independently.	- The changing table fulfils the legal measures on risk prevention (edge to prevent falling, depth of between 50 and 60 cm and sink and changing table 80 or 70 cm tall) but only the groups from two to three years old can reach it independently.	- The changing table fulfils the legal measures on risk prevention (edge to prevent falling, depth of between 50 and 60 cm and sink and changing table 80 or 70 cm tall) but no child can reach it independently	- The changing table does not fulfil the legal measures on risk prevention (edge to prevent falling, depth of between 50 and 60 cm and sink and changing table 80 or 70 cm tall) and no child can reach it independently

		- The number of toilets accessible in the lunchroom is 2 per at most 20 children.	- The number of toilets accessible in the lunchroom is 1 per 20 children.	- The number of toilets accessible in the lunchroom is lower than 2 per 31 to 40 or children.	- The number of toilets accessible in the lunchroom is lower than 2 per 41 or more children.

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PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ASPECTS	Furniture in the changing table or washing-up area	- The bathroom furniture (sink and toilets) is adapted to the different sizes or ages of the children. The washing-up area is accessible and visible from the classroom.	- The bathroom furniture (sink and toilets) is adapted to the size of the children, but potties are used for the smallest ones. The washing-up area is accessible and visible from the classroom.	- Of the bathroom furniture only the sink is adapted; there are potties for the smallest children. The washing-up area is accessible but not visible from the classroom.	- No bathroom furniture is adapted to the size of the children. The washing-up area is neither from the classroom.
	Appearance and maintenance of the space	- Clean walls in good condition.	- Clean walls.	- The walls are dirty.	- The walls are dirty and in poor condition.
		- Clean floor. There is constant attention if there is a spill.	- Clean floor. If there is a spill it takes a while to clean up.	- Floor dirty from morning use. It is only cleaned once a day.	- Floor dirty and appears not to have been cleaned for days.
		- Windows and furniture are clean and well-maintained.	- Windows and furniture are clean but look old.	- Windows and furniture are clean but not well-maintained.	- Windows and furniture are dirty and not well-maintained.
	Noise level during lunchtime	- No racket.	- Occasional racket (when clearing the tables, etc.).	- Constant racket.	- Excessive racket the entire time.
		- The adults do not raise their voices.	- An adult occasionally raises their voice.	- The adults can be heard raising their voices.	- The adults are constantly raising their voices.