

Food Per Capita Management and Waste Reduction in Early Childhood Education: Experience of Educandário Santa Catarina

Gestão da Per Capta Alimentar e Redução do Desperdício na Educação Infantil: Experiência do Educandário Santa Catarina

Gestión de la Per Capta Alimentaria y Reducción del Desperdicio en la Educación Infantil: Experiencia del Educandário Santa Catarina

RESUMO

Objetivo: Apresentar a experiência do Educandário Santa Catarina na gestão da per capita alimentar como estratégia para otimizar o consumo, reduzir o desperdício e fortalecer práticas de educação alimentar na infância. **Método:** Realizou-se o acompanhamento do consumo alimentar por meio do cálculo da per capita e da análise do índice de resto-ingesta. Os dados foram obtidos a partir de registros institucionais de preparo e sobras de alimentos, envolvendo crianças e funcionários. **Resultados:** O monitoramento possibilitou ajustar cardápios conforme as faixas etárias, reduzindo o resto-ingesta de 20% para 5,7% em dois meses. A integração entre equipe pedagógica e nutricional e o uso de materiais educativos fortaleceram a conscientização sobre o valor do alimento. **Conclusão:** A gestão da per capita alimentar mostrou-se uma ferramenta eficaz para promover sustentabilidade, fortalecer a educação alimentar e incentivar hábitos saudáveis e conscientes.

DESCRITORES: Estudo de Avaliação; Alimentação Escolar; Sistema Alimentar Sustentável; Educação Alimentar e Nutricional

ABSTRACT

Objective: To present the experience of Educandário Santa Catarina in food per capita management as a strategy to optimize consumption, reduce waste, and strengthen food education practices in early childhood. **Method:** Food consumption was monitored through per capita calculation and waste index analysis. Data were obtained from institutional records of food preparation and leftovers involving children and staff. **Results:** Monitoring enabled menu adjustments according to age groups, reducing waste from 20% to 5.7% in two months. The integration between pedagogical and nutritional teams and the use of educational materials increased awareness about the value of food. **Conclusion:** Food per capita management proved to be an effective tool to promote sustainability, strengthen food education, and encourage healthy and conscious eating habits.

DESCRIPTORS: Evaluation Study; School Feeding; Sustainable Food System; Food and Nutrition Education

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Presentar la experiencia del Educandário Santa Catarina en la gestión de la per cápita alimentaria como estrategia para optimizar el consumo, reducir el desperdicio y fortalecer la educación alimentaria en la infancia. **Método:** Se realizó el seguimiento del consumo mediante el cálculo de la per cápita y el análisis del índice de resto-ingesta. Los datos se obtuvieron de registros institucionales de preparación y sobras de alimentos, incluyendo a niños y empleados. **Resultados:** El monitoreo permitió ajustar los menús según las edades, reduciendo el resto-ingesta del 20% al 5,7% en dos meses. La integración entre los equipos pedagógico y nutricional y el uso de materiales educativos aumentaron la conciencia sobre el valor del alimento. **Conclusión:** La gestión de la per cápita alimentaria resultó una herramienta eficaz para promover la sostenibilidad, fortalecer la educación alimentaria y fomentar hábitos saludables y conscientes.

DESCRIPTORES: Estudio de Evaluación; Alimentación Escolar; Sistema Alimentario Sostenible; Educación Alimentaria y Nutricional

Experience Report

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INTRODUCTION

School meals are a guaranteed right and an essential tool for children's physical, cognitive, and social development. In addition to meeting nutritional needs, school meals play a formative role, contributing to the development of healthy and conscious eating habits.

At Educandário Santa Catarina, per capita food management was implemented as a strategy to optimize the use of resources, reduce waste, and promote food education. This practice involves monitoring consumption, recording leftovers, and planning menus appropriate for different age groups, in line with the guidelines of the National School Meals Program (PNAE).

The objective of this report is to present the process of controlling and monitoring food per capita at Educandário Santa Catarina, highlighting its pedagogical, environmental, and social impacts on the school routine.

METHOD

The study was based on the analysis of institutional records of food

preparation and consumption between August and October 2025. The quantities prepared, clean leftovers, and dirty leftovers were observed, allowing the calculation of actual consumption.

The formulas used were:

• **Amount consumed (kg)** = Amount prepared - (Clean leftovers + Dirty leftovers)

• **Per capita consumption (g/person)** = (Amount consumed ÷ Total number of diners) × 1000

Clean leftovers correspond to food that was prepared but not served; dirty leftovers refer to food that was served but not consumed. The monitoring was carried out by nutritionists and interns, with the support of the teaching staff.

The study did not involve direct research with humans.

RESULTS

The control of per capita food consumption enabled a comparative analysis between periods and the identification of significant advances in reducing food waste.

In August, the food waste index

was approximately 20% (75.46 g/person). In October, after adjustments to the menus and greater involvement of the team, the percentage dropped to 5.7% (20.36 g/person).

These results demonstrate the positive impact of constant monitoring and awareness-raising strategies among educators and children.

DISCUSSION

Reducing food waste in early childhood education is a challenge, as children's eating behavior is influenced by cultural, sensory, and learning factors. The involvement of teaching and nutrition teams is crucial to the success of these actions.

According to Ferreira et al. (2021), the continuous training of education professionals contributes to a significant reduction in food waste in school environments. Initiatives such as visual signage and monitoring in the cafeteria reinforce the importance of educational mediation in eating practices (SANTOS; RODRIGUES, 2020).

At Educandário, raising awareness among educators, pedagogical communication, and the use of visual

materials fostered collective engagement, resulting in optimized consumption and strengthened food and environmental awareness.

CONCLUSION

Controlling per capita food consumption proved to be an effective

tool for improving nutritional and pedagogical management in the school environment. The progressive reduction of waste demonstrated the educational potential of food, strengthening sustainability practices and food appreciation.

In addition to quantitative gains, the process promoted a cultural

change in the institution, stimulating dialogue between educators, nutritionists, and children. This experience reinforces the role of the school as a space for forming sustainable values and attitudes.

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