

School meals in Portugal: governing children's food practices

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Comida escolares en Portugal: gobernabilidad de las prácticas alimentarias de los niños

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Abstract

Drawing on a post-Foucauldian conceptual framework we look at the rationalities that inform the organization of the Portuguese school meals and the implementation of these rationalities to transform and normalize children eating habits. The empirical material is drawn from a thematic documental analysis of the school meals regulatory framework from the 1970s up until nowadays. The objectives are threefold: 1) to describe the continuities and discontinuities of official discourses on school meals institutional practices; 2) to look at the ways children, health and food are placed and interpreted in those documents; 3) to describe and explain trajectories of school meals governmentalities and its plural arrangements. It was possible to identify five types of school meals governmental regimes: the "Authoritarian"; the "Democratic", the "Modern", the "Consumer" and the "Obesity and Risk". These regimes are intertwined and organize in multiple ways the contexts that govern children's eating practices in schools.

Keywords: School meals; Governmentality; Children; Food

Resumen

Sobre la base de un marco conceptual post-foucaultiana nos fijamos en las racionalidades que informan a la organización de las comidas de los escolares

portugueses y la aplicación de estas racionalidades para transformar y normalizan los hábitos alimenticios de los niños. El material empírico se extrae de un análisis documental del marco temático regulador de las comidas escolares desde la década de 1970 hasta la actualidad. Los objetivos son tres: 1) describir las continuidades y discontinuidades de los discursos oficiales sobre las comidas escolares; 2) ver de qué forma los niños, su salud y los alimentos aparecen y son interpretados en esos documentos; 3) describir y explicar las trayectorias de las gubernamentalidades y su pluralidad de acuerdos relativos a las comidas escolares. Fue posible identificar cinco tipos de regímenes gubernamentales de comidas escolares: la "autoritaria"; la "demócrata", la "moderna", el "consumidor" y la de "Obesidad y Riesgo". Estos regímenes se entrelazan y organizan en múltiples formas los contextos que rigen las prácticas de alimentación de los niños en las escuelas.

Palabras claves: Comidas escolares; Gubernamentalidad; Infancia; Alimentos

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays a strong moralization of children's food practices in many countries in the world is witnessed and endeavoured in sites as diverse as food shopping outlets, media, TV adverts, food packaging, schools, education and health policies, and even family households. Children's eating and physical exercise practices have become problematic as young people are generally portrayed as carriers of nutritiously inadequate food practices (energy dense diets rich in fat and sugar and low in vitamins, minerals and fibre (Markovic and Natoli, 2009)) and lacking regular physical exercise. Thus, children's 'bad' diets and lifestyles (and their families') are often taken to task by health experts that make of improving the health profile of their targeted young populations nothing short of a *tour de force*. The aim is to turn the undesirable health statistics around, comply with internationally and nationally thresholds for curbing childhood overweight and obesity rates, and reach an appropriate health profile of the overall population. A nutritional scientific rationale often backs up a discourse based on metrics, measurements and calculations, all necessary to circumscribe the 'problem' and devise adequate ways to remedy it (Miller and Rose, 2008).

Knowledge, surveillance and metric systems, regulatory frameworks, organizational and institutional practices are, thus, aligned in particular ways and reveal common discourses. After a Foucauldian perspective, they show a particular regime of 'governmentality' of children's food practices that is implemented by means of

‘rationalities’ or ‘programmes’ of government and a set of ‘technologies’ (Miller and Rose, 2008: 15). The distinction between ‘rationalities’ and ‘technologies’ indicates “the intrinsic links between a way of representing and knowing a phenomenon, on the one hand, and a way of acting upon it so as to transform it, on the other” (Miller and Rose, 2008: 15).

This paper is focused on the ‘rationalities’ that inform the organization of the Portuguese school meals and the technologies that help implementing these ‘rationalities’ to transform and normalize children eating habits. One general question drives our main concern: what do public policies on school meals, designed and implemented by multiple governance actors (state, market and civil society), reveal about the place of children, health and food in Portugal?

The paper is structured into four parts, which disclose the rationalities that pertain to different types of governmentalities that organize school meals. First, the theoretical and conceptual tools are addressed by drawing on an informed Foucault’s perspective and children’s food consumption studies. Second, a description of the empirical materials based on documentary methods and archive data, is offered. Third, an historical analysis of the regulatory framework on school meals is presented by paying special attention to the decades encompassed by the Portuguese democratic state (1974-2011). The objective of this analysis is threefold: 1) to describe the continuities and discontinuities of discourses on school meals; 2) to look at the ways children, health and food have been placed and interpreted in those documents; 3) to describe and explain the main shifts in the trajectories of school meals governmental regimes, looking for combinations, singularities and plural arrangements in the images of food, health and children. Finally, we discuss the results of the documental analyses and foreground some reflections about the plural and enmeshed school meals governmental regimes.

2. SCHOOL MEALS, GOVERNMENTALITY AND BIOPEDAGOGIES

School meals have conquered central stage in popular culture, media and policy regulatory frameworks. As Pike (2010) acknowledges, school dinners have become increasingly politicised spaces. Policy attention has gradually been strengthened in schools as important foci to discipline and regulate children’s unruly eating practices in a plurality of sites, both in school and its immediate surroundings (e.g. classrooms, canteens, school outdoor spaces and commercial food outlets sited in immediate proximity of the school). And yet, despite the school has long been placed as a site of responsibility regarding the intellectual development and the social and physical wellbeing of children (McIntosh et al, 2010: 289), the attention it has received by the media and public policy to ‘intervene’ in children’s food practices is clearly unprecedented (Leahy, 2010: 2). Such interventions also impact on the relations between children and parents, and family life more widely (Curtis, James,

Ellis, 2010). This trend is observed not only in the UK (with Jamie Oliver's famous school food odyssey) but also in many other European countries, including Portugal. These food interventions in schools towards healthy eating are made more explicit given current concerns with childhood obesity prevention, as this problem prevails in several countries¹.

In this paper we will make use of two main concepts; one lodged within Foucault's writings – "governmentality" – and the other – "biopedagogies" – is an extension of another chief Foucault's concept – "biopower" –, it being developed by Wright (2009). Foucault's notion of "governmentality" appears for the first time in a course on "Security, Territory and Population" offered in 1978. Foucault understood the term to mean, "an ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power" (Foucault, 1991: 102). Governmentality is both a matter of 'representation' and "intervention", that is, it encapsulates both 'rationalities' or 'programmes' of government, and a set of "technologies" (Miller and Rose, 2008: 15). The way the term is sketched unveils a departure from traditional definitions of political power as being reduced to the actions of the state. Instead, power is decentred across a plurality of heterogeneous forces and groups, techniques and practices through which individuals' lives and bodies are regulated (Pike, 2008; Miller and Rose, 2008).

The governmentality concept can help the understanding of "rationalities" and "technologies" used to make the actions of individuals and populations self-disciplined and self-regulated in particular regimes of government. In her study on British school dining rooms, Pike (2008) found out competing rationalities in the regulatory framework for school meals, which then were enacted in the school dining room. One encompassed the nutritional elements of food practices and the other emphasised the importance of eating together as a way of teaching table manners, socializing and sharing food taste. However, in her ethnographic fieldwork in the school canteens, Pike concluded that the nutritional discourse was privileged over the discourse that enhanced the commensality and the social aspects of eating. By focusing on nutrition, children's food experiences were underpinned by concerns with choice (making good or bad choices, eating healthy or unhealthy food), instilling a character of risk and anxiety, self-monitoring and self-surveillance to children relations with food. It was observed that food practices were fit into a particular 'frame' or 'rationality', which singled out nutrition (and risk avoidance) as the

¹ For instance, in 2004 Portuguese childhood obesity figures indicated that together with Greece, Italy and Spain, there were more than 30% of overweight children between 7 and 9 years old, and around 11% of obese children within the same age range (Padez et al, 2004). These figures were updated in a recent representative survey of Portuguese children between the ages of 6 and 8 years old wherein according to the WHO's BMI cutting point criteria, 38% of children were overweight and 15% were obese (COSI report, 2011), showing a considerable increase of these rates.

privileged way of engaging children with food. And thus, excluding other alternative food engagements that privilege pleasure and sociality, instead of risk and anxiety.

A recent study comparing the organization of school meals in the UK and in Italy concluded that British children were constantly being positioned as consumers who had to make food choices in school (seen as a proxy for the marketplace), while the Italian children were engaged in food practices by means of learning to become local, that is, to familiarize themselves with the local food tastes and cultures of their region (Miele and Truninger, in preparation).

Following from this last note about children's food education and the different ways of making children engage with food by cultivating certain dispositions and not others, the second concept deployed in this study – 'biopedagogies' – is especially useful. Extended from Foucault's concept of 'biopower' (1984), "biopedagogy then, is the art and practice of teaching 'life', of *bios* in this 'biopower mode'" (Wright, 2009: 21). Thus, biopedagogies act as instruments to teach individuals and populations to *normalise* and *regulate* their bodies and their food practices in schools (and also more widely across society). In short, this concept seeks to enhance the productive dimension of 'biopower' through acknowledging the 'biopedagogy' as a cultural experience where knowledge and subjectivities, despite potentially resistant and contradictory, are negotiated in order to legitimate a particular regime of governmentality. However, power is enacted at different levels depending on 'techniques' and 'technologies' mobilized. Foucault argues that this multi-level scenario is defined by two 'poles' (Wright, 2009: 17): the 'regulatory', focused on regulating and normalising populations (i.e. integrating 'authority' in discourses on the body), and the 'disciplinary', where the individual is a vigilante self-disciplinary agent. Through this distinction we are able to perceive the place of school meals' public policies in the spectrum of power relations (or 'biopedagogies') subjectifying and subjugating the individuals to 'biopower'. As a set of policies that aim to regulate children's bodies according to a 'vital' programme of management foregrounded in a systematic knowledge of 'life' and 'living beings', the school meals regulatory framework is, therefore, constitutive of the 'biopolitical' field. By producing 'truth' discourses about the 'vital' and 'life', and through developing collective strategies for 'normalising populations' (Wright, 2009: 23), 'biopolitics' is a specific form of regulatory power, composed of instruments of governance that mobilize specific rationalities to define 'being', and of technologies that contribute to the 'art of governing'.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on research conducted under the project "Between School and Family: Children's Food Knowledge and Eating Practices"². The empirical

2 The project was supported by national science funds through FCT, the Portuguese national

data is drawn on two main sources. Firstly, the Portuguese school meals regulatory framework and policy initiatives were exhaustively compiled and coded since the early 1970s until 2011. Some international regulatory documents were also analysed, mainly European norms and recommendations. In total fifty one documents were collected and analysed in a systematic way followed by a thematic documentary analysis, which sought to group the official discourses in the legal documents around three main themes: food, children and health meanings. Secondly, this documental analysis of policy texts was also applied to an historical archive collection of twenty-one documents, food education campaigns, health education leaflets and guides of the Ministry of Education's archive. The documents collected were introduced into the qualitative analysis software (NVivo 10) for thematic analysis. Whenever pertinent these historical documents illustrate particular arguments in the text. The results of this thematic analysis are described in the following section.

4. THE PUBLIC PLATE PALETTE AND ITS SHIFTING 'RATIONALITIES' AND 'TECHNOLOGIES'

The following analysis of school meals policies encompasses mainly the present Portuguese democratic regime (1974-2012). However, it is important to mention the previous socio-political period that paved the way to a revolution and political transition, greatly affecting the organization of school meals service. In the period of the New State regime (1933-1974), characterized by an authoritarian state, the school meal system was not central in state action³. The meals in the few existing public school canteens were managed by two organizations – Organização Nacional Mocidade Portuguesa (National Organization of Portuguese Youth) and Obra das Mães pela Educação Nacional (The Work of Mothers for National Education – WMNE henceforth)⁴. Both were created in 1936 under the auspices of the Ministry for National Education. Whilst the former was created in order to socialize children on the values of the authoritarian regime (*God, Fatherland and Family*); the latter,

funding agency for science, research and technology (PTDC/CS-SOC/111214/2009 and PEst-OE/SADG/LA0013/2013).

3 During the New State regime, in particular up to 1956, the Portuguese educational system was organized according to three levels of education: primary, secondary and higher education. In 1940, only 33% of children attended school and 50% of the adult population were illiterate (Mendonça, 2007; Nunes de Almeida, 2011). In 1956 compulsory education was extended to four years, but only for boys. In the early 1960s girls were entitled to the same rights. Only in 1964, compulsory education was extended to six years in official regulations. These new schooling practices were only implemented more thoroughly after the change of political regime and the advent of democracy in the country, i.e., after the Carnation Revolution in 1974.

4 The lack of systematic records regarding the number of public school canteens makes it difficult to have an idea of the overall number. Nevertheless, according to the figures of Obra das Mães pela Educação Nacional (The Work of Mothers for National Education), until 1948, 113 canteens had been created by this organization (Pimentel, 2001; Truninger et al, 2012).

mostly comprising the elite women of the New State regime, aimed at targeting low-income families. Faced with high levels of childhood mortality and widespread poverty, the objectives of the WMNE were to provide the social conditions to ensure women with children could dedicate themselves to their families and household domestic practices whilst their offspring attended school.

School meals were composed of a hot main meal where soup was included, bread and a spoon of codfish liver's oil at the end of the meal. This food supplement was given to ensure good physical health, a balanced nutritional diet and energy throughout the school day. School meals served to alleviate poverty effects (food shortage, bad physical condition and hygiene habits), together with educating on the values of fraternity, obedience, discipline and good manners at the table. However, the supplied school meals did not cover the totality of children suffering from malnutrition. Despite the management of the canteens was under the auspices of these two organizations, it was the school staff that acted more closely and directly in ensuring the regularity of the school meal service. This closer relationship of the school staff with its local community in providing a nutritious and energetic diet to malnourished children is illustrated by the following quotes:

Today I really liked to go to school mummy! The teacher was very happy because the new canteen was open, where poor kids can eat for free. If you could only see that! The table very clean, white plates, flowers in jars and everything so joyful! The soup really smelled well and we were so happy to see the poor killing hunger (...) I asked the teacher who has done so much good to the school and she replied: 'It was the New State that likes children very much' (Official Reading Book of Year 3 of Primary School, 1958, own translation).

We secretly arranged with the well-off children to bring goodies to give to the canteen: they seized my classroom key and at lunch time without me noticing it, they covered my desk with delicious foodstuffs for the canteen: cakes, candies, sweets, bread, codfish, meat, eggs, fruit, etc.; on the following day the joyfulness in the canteen was infectious because the menu was improved with more treats and niceties (Teacher Clotilde Mateus, "School Canteens", in *Escola Portuguesa*, 2nd January 1953).

School meals were organized in such a way to allow for educating children on the values of the New State, but without undermining the family as a privileged site for such value inculcation (Nunes de Almeida, 2011). Thus, the technology of the school meal was central in building up well-mannered and disciplined children (Mónica, 1973: 492). It was also an important propaganda instrument of the regime to ensure that the younger generation continued enacting the authoritarian's state values in the future, which the sentence 'It was the New State that likes children very much' well depicts.

Only when the dictatorial regime was close to its end (by early 70s) new governmental bodies and regulations integrating more comprehensive state responsibilities and competences in social work emerged. This was the case of the Institute for School Social Services (IASE) created in 1971 (Decree-Law 178/71 of 30th April 1971).

The new institute was entitled to manage several school social services, from the organization of school transport, to food provisioning in canteens. However, its action and regulatory framework came only into full force after the military coup of 25th April 1974 and the shift to the democratic state⁵. One of the first actions by IASE was the introduction of the school milk scheme by mid-70s in primary schools (following on the European School Milk Programme already in place in some European countries). In one of the first campaigns launched by IASE to encourage children to drink milk in schools, a text in a poster of 1976 read as follows:

“We children have the right to health, sports and life. At school our teacher taught us that in order to be healthy and learn the lectures well we have to eat everyday a ‘minimum protein dose’ and she explained that: a glass of milk and a cheese sandwich, or meat or fish matched that ‘minimum protein dose’. She also told us that in many schools like ours, children drink milk and eat a sandwich and they call this food supplement. We agree with it and we also want the food supplement in our school.”

The democratic flare so present at the time engulfs the text with a language about children's *rights to health, sports and life*, noticeably giving children more *agency* capacities than the previous political regime where they were meant to be passive, obedient and like adults (‘adult-children’) (Nunes de Almeida, 2011). Another point in the text is the appeal to *health* and *life* as children's rights, an aspect very much aligned with the concept of biopower – whose objectives are the preservation of life through healthy bodies. Moreover, the reference to the ‘minimum protein dose’ also alludes to the importance given to calculative and nutritional requirements to optimise children's cognitive and learning capacities. Moreover, children were encouraged to take meat protein. Although, lack of space prevents developing this idea, the political economy of milk production and distribution to schools co-evolved with these regulatory initiatives. Children were very much stimulated (and with state

5 During the 1970s, the education system underwent a series of transformations in order to comply with the new economic demands, in particular those arising from the accession of Portugal to the OECD in 1948 (Stoer, 1983). This decade is mostly characterized by the democratization of education and, in particular, by the extension of compulsory education to eight years, and among other things, the implementation of a set of services that enabled the democratization of compulsory education (e.g. free tuition fees, transportation, accommodation, school meals). After the military coup, the transformations in the education system were confined to the organization of school years and the curricula. In the 1980s, a complementary course was created (consisting of three more years) and compulsory education expanded to nine years.

compliance) to develop a taste for dairy products, and ultimately, a taste for animals in opposition to a taste for plants (a controversial aspect nowadays, not only for the health impacts of their *excessive* consumption but also the sustainability and animal welfare impacts of their *intensive* production).

In 1979, the regulations of the school social services were approved, wherein IASE was the management body of the school meal system comprising the canteens (serving the main meal) and the buffets (providing light meals). The objectives of both food services were to ensure “pupils have a rational diet” (Portaria 703/79 of 26th December 1979: 3338).

A regulation launched in 1984 (Decree-Law 399-A/84 of 28th December of 1984), transferred some of the school social services’ competences from central government to the municipalities. In a broader sense, all these processes are integrated in a set of governmental driven decentralized administrative logics and can be seen as the first signals of a neoliberal shift in a (recent) and still fragile welfare state. Despite an emergent neoliberal feature in the organization and management of school canteens – only fully implemented in 2008 when the municipalities gained overall competences and responsibilities for the school meals system of primary schools and nurseries –, social welfare concerns were paramount. Children’s protection from social inequalities in school food access was accounted for, and showed continuity with the democratic tone apparent in the 1970s. If in that decade the school meals system served as a technology for enacting a democratic rationality of government, in the 1980s, the school meals worked as technologies for the configuration of healthy and nutritiously balanced bodies that fitted the project of modernizing the country through the market economy, which would become more consolidated in the upcoming years.

By early 1990’s, despite the centrality of equal access to school meals as a tool for schooling success, it is noticeable another shift in the policy discourse over food issues:

Indeed, the major efforts made to date in education and social services within the school have not been sufficient to reverse the cases of school failure that are still an obvious cause of social injustice and breach of the principle of equal opportunities (...) It is therefore important to embark on the legislative consecration of some of the vectors whose implementation depends on the promotion of educational success in the coming years (...) Thus the whole system of social and school services to students and their families is reinforced as well as the medical and food services in order to promote the more favourable physical and socio-environmental conditions to the full development of students. (...) The support provided at the food level includes: a) The distribution of daily free milk; b) the allocation of free or subsidized meals; and c) the promotion of activities in the field of education and food hygiene (Decree-Law n. 35/90 of 25th January 1990, Ministry of Education, own translation).

In tandem with other structural changes in the education system (i.e. the extension of compulsory education to the 9th grade in 1986⁶), this policy reinforced the importance of the on-going school milk program by ascribing both educational and health objectives. The meal to be offered in the canteen aimed at improving the nutritional levels of children, and was sensitive to regional food differences; the school activities aimed at promoting a healthy food diet with the active participation of pupils; and the canteens were spaces where the meals served complied with sound safe and hygiene conditions. Thus, the healthy agenda of school food was not being based solely on what children ate (the food supplements or the 'balanced' meals in the canteen), but was going beyond the canteen onto the school environment perceived as a health promoting space. This increasing concern is made ever more visible through the strong partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health in regulating and designing school meals policies. In 1994, Portugal became part of the European Network for Health Promoting Schools and the discourses around health, nutrition, food hygiene and safety became stronger.

Until the beginning of the 21st century no major changes occurred in school meals policies apart from directions on public procurement. In the Decree-Law 197/99 of 8th June 1999, it was specified that bidding contracts should be selected according to the proposal's 'good value for money'. Although the management of canteens was under the remit of municipalities since 1984, the food supplied could either be contracted out to catering firms or directly to food retailers or producers. The council could also assign the organization of the school meals to the school managing board. However, according to this policy, school meals were subject to financial pressure, and contracts established with catering firms or directly with retailers or producers would often see the economic terms of the proposal overriding other criteria (e.g. sustainability, quality of ingredients, taste, and nutrition). This would be intensified with the consolidation of a consumer society and the changing nature of the food supply chain in Portugal. Since the mid-80s, processed, convenience and fast foods have been available in the national market⁷; increasingly enticing women with children who had to juggle demanding work schedules and continuing domestic obligations⁸. Thus, convenience foods (e.g. ready-made burgers, frozen pizzas, pre-prepared deep-fried fish, frozen chips, tinned sausages, and rissoles) would become some of the products easily accessed in schools. The cafeterias were also supplying ever more nutritiously poor foods, such as deep-fried savoury snacks (e.g. rissoles), chocolates, cakes, biscuits, deep-fried beef sandwiches (e.g. *panados*), and salted peanuts; whilst vending machines monopolized by large

6 Since 2009 children and youth have 12 years of compulsory school.

7 In 1991, McDonalds opened its first restaurant in Portugal at Cascaishopping – a shopping centre in the surroundings of Lisbon - on the 23rd May. Two months later the same company opened another at Saldanha, in the centre of Lisbon.

8 Portuguese women have one of the highest rates of full-time employment in Europe, with about 62% of women in the labour market (Truninger, 2011).

multinational food companies were supplying fizzy drinks, snacks and sweets, and were especially located in secondary schools. Despite the official discourse focus on healthy foods, the encroachment towards market economy and freedom of choice driven by a neoliberal ideology resulted in a slackening of the quality of school dinners according to nutritional criteria.

The first efforts to tackle the increasing poor quality of food in schools came from the Autonomous Region of Madeira. Madeira's 'Healthy Buffet Network' was established in 2001 and constituted a pioneering initiative in the country, it being a reference amongst Mainland Portugal's nutritional and medical experts on the design of healthy school meals. This initiative was part of the regional food education program and aimed at increasing the consumption of healthy food in the buffets of primary schools following the criteria of quality and variety (instead of price), and also aiming at promoting knowledge sharing and the spin-off of biopedagogical activities across the school network. It has been steadily increasing and enveloping more primary schools.

In 2002, the European Authority for Food Safety was created to regulate food production, transformation and distribution in the European market, and thus, was concerned with health and consumer protection by providing safe and quality certified products⁹. In Portugal, on the same year, regulations on commercial spaces in school surrounding areas were being produced. The acknowledgment of the importance of promoting health issues in school took the policy makers to recognize the need to regulate the school's surrounding environment, especially regarding the sale of alcoholic drinks¹⁰.

The year of 2006 marked a key transition moment in school meals policies in Portugal, characterized by the increasing of regulatory activities, governmental and non-governmental initiatives and new institutional bodies dedicated to fight a 'war against obesity' in schools. The policy discourse envisaged the school as a space in which knowledge is transmitted with the aim of guiding children to certain values. Those values act as the moral and normative support for children's health practices. Following a rational actor model of behaviour change (Turner, 2013), citizenship and knowledge empowerment frames the ability of children to rationalize their food behaviours and take responsible food choices. The language most common to these policies revolves around 'risk', 'protecting children of risk behaviours', 'individual choice', 'lifestyles', 'control and surveillance'. This discursive frame underpins the first National Programme for Healthy Schools, which is launched by the Ministry of Health in June 2006. The objectives of this programme were:

9 In 2004 the European Union produced new rules related to food hygiene through the Rectification to the Regulation n. 852/2004 of 29th April 2004 from the European Parliament and the Council.

10 This was established through the Decree-Law n. 9/2002 of 24th January of 2002, Ministers' Council.

To promote and protect health and disease prevention in the educational community; to support the educational inclusion of children with health needs and special education; to promote a safe and healthy school environment; to strengthen protective factors related to healthy lifestyles; to contribute to the development of the principles of health promoting schools (National Programme for Healthy Schools, 2006: 7).

The concept of 'healthy lifestyles' is introduced in the document, precluding the idea that individuals (in this case children) have discretion and freedom in choosing healthy food products and pursuing healthy lifestyles. There is a visible stress on protecting children from illnesses (namely obesity, although in the National Programme for Healthy Schools the word was still absent) and also giving information in order to ensure ability to make responsible individual food choices, so that healthy lifestyles are encouraged. It is visible a mixture between a welfare protection agenda and neoliberal ideals.

On the same year, three months after the launch of the National Programme for Healthy Schools, the Ministry of Education (with the contribution of the General Directorate of the Ministry of Health) releases a set of guidelines and recommendations on food in schools through the document – *Food Education in Schools: benchmark for healthy food provisioning*.

As much efficient health services are, disease prevention and health maintenance will always be dependent on a large extent on the adoption of healthy lifestyles by people. Lifestyles in turn, are not, as sometimes we can judge, the product of innate talents or natural inclinations of each individual's personality. Rather, they are primarily the result of the fight against risk behaviour and the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the adoption of healthy habits and routines (Ministry of Education, 2006: 6).

The document maintains the language around lifestyles, risk prevention, and individual behaviour. This is consonant with a change in social policy that underscores individual responsibility and proactivity given the constraints on government from a globalized and post-industrial order (Taylor-Gooby, 2011). There is great emphasis given to the diffusion of information and knowledge, perceived as central to change children's food behaviours. It is assumed that families and children are ill informed, and to change their food diets, information *per se* is the solution, an aspect reminiscent of the deficit knowledge model (Irwin and Wynne, 1996; Hansen et al, 2003). It is also noticeable the growing importance given to the development of new strategies to deal with the prevalence of health risk factors. Therefore, health issues cut across a broader set of school meals related interventions. It is also made more explicit the 'fight against obesity', a word that becomes ever more visible in the definition and consolidation of further policies and institutional objectives. The aim of these recommendations is fourfold:

- 1) To improve the overall health of the young population;
- 2) To reverse the growing trend of disease profiles that result in increased incidence and prevalence of diseases such as obesity, diabetes type II, tooth decay, cardiovascular and other diseases;
- 3) Addressing nutritional needs of the student populations most in need, providing them with nutrients and energy necessary for good cognitive performance;
- 4) Promoting young people's health through health education, specifically in the areas of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. (Ministry of Education, 2006: 7).

As we can observe, some of the objectives of the school meals service laid out in previous decades continue, namely the provision of school meals to low income children. The health and nutritional concerns persist as well, however they are worded in a different way, one that stresses risk factors and prevention. Moreover, the name of diseases is specified in detail, and not left open to generalization. This is a fight against food-related diseases, especially the ones regarding the excesses of food diet of a recent affluent society. Thus, these policies show the increasing atomization of health related problems, and its reduction to a specific feature: risk. As poignantly observed by James et al. (2009: 1): "(...) ideas of risk predominate as the main way in which children's relationship with food is constructed and as such this constitutes a largely problematic 'child' identity".

In 2007, these recommendations are consolidated in the regulatory framework through two *circular letters* by the Ministry of Education that, notwithstanding, fail to have the legal strength of a Decree-Law. One circular letter (Circular letter n. 14/DGIDC/2007) offered an exceedingly detailed technical list of authorized products that should compose of the school menus in both primary and secondary schools. The other (Circular letter n. 11/DGIDC/2007) made reference to the foods to be promoted and restricted in the buffets, following the guidelines of the document *Food Education in Schools*. The authorized list is composed of 32 items that specify the types and cuts of meat to be used on the school menu's dishes; the type of oil for deep frying (no other oil is allowed but peanut oil as it withstands high temperatures for a longer period of time); fruit and vegetables should be fresh, of good quality and preferably from integrated pest management systems, *alheira* (a type of Portuguese smoked sausage) should be made with Trás-os-Montes PDO certified olive oil – an inland region in the North of the country¹¹.

11 The fact that the *alheira* to be supplied in school meals should be composed of this specific olive oil and not any other PDO olive oil from other regions in Portugal is to encourage the consumption of three types of *alheiras* with Protected Geographical Indication status: *alheira de Mirandela*, *alheira de Vinhais* and *alheira Barroso-Montalegre*. Here we see how the national school meal system can be also a channel for regional and local food political dynamics.

It is visible on the authorized list of products the importance given to food safety where it is promoted nutritiously rich, safe meals, clean and hygiene working conditions (in line with the burgeoning of the European Commission food hygiene-bureaucratic apparatus enacted through the European food policy framework, the HACCP¹² principles and the CODEX Alimentarius). Moreover, the nutritional aspects of the dishes are laid out with great technical detail. It is mentioned the use of specific local products – e.g. the PDO olive oil from a particular region of Portugal in the composition of a sausage, and yet, interestingly, nothing of the same detail is specified in terms of the origin of production for olive oil to be used more widely in cooking and seasoning. Moreover, whilst fruit and vegetables from sustainable agriculture systems are privileged (namely integrated pest management systems), the use of organic farming products is left amiss. The proposed dishes capture an international flavour, with a combination of national and global food fare (e.g. Italian, American, Mexican). Instructions on the composition of the menus are painstaking. These are single menus, similar to the Italian school meal system, and in clear contrast with the British menus, composed of multiple menu choices in line with a ‘governmentality’ of the ‘consumer’ (Morgan and Sonnino, 2007; Miele and Truninger, in preparation).

Table 1 – The One Choice Menu (Circular letter n. 14/2007)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 fresh vegetable soup (with potatoes, legumes or beans). Fish soup and chicken broth are allowed no more than 2 times per month, and served according to prescribed quantities;• 1 meat or fish dish, in alternate days, and the sides should be composed of starch foods and compulsory cooked or raw legumes (the type of legumes should be adequate to the dish being prepared). The raw legumes should be served on a separate plate and following the prescribed quantities (at least composed of three varieties daily);• 1 brown bread, paper packed and composed of the following ingredients: 15% of rye; 35% of flour 65; 35% of flour 150; Water; 0,4% of salt; yeast.• 1 dessert composed of seasonal fruit, offered on a daily basis. Together with the fruit it is allowed a pudding, jelly, ice cream, yoghurt or cooked or baked fruit, two times a week, preferably on the days the main dish is fish.• Water (the only drink allowed).

Source: Circular letter n° 14/DGIDC/2007 of 25th of May of 2007, p. 10.

12 HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points Management System.

Another element is visible on the menu: meticulous attention is given to the composition and ordering of food on the plate (e.g. legumes should be carefully chosen to comply with the appropriateness of the main dish), as well as the sequencing of dishes (e.g. when the main dish is fish it is recommended that a dessert other than fruit is offered, but only twice a week). As to the frequency of changing the menus, they vary on a weekly basis, and are made visible to the school community every week. A technical file stored in a separate folder, which can be requested for consultation, is also prepared detailing all aspects about the dishes to be served during the week: the ingredients and its quantities, the cooking procedures and techniques, and whenever possible, the calories of the dishes. On the same policy document, detailed instructions follow, for example, on how to ensure variety and diversity of the meals (e.g. salted dried cod fish based dishes are only allowed twice per month; an egg based dish should replace a meat or fish dish at least once per month); on how dinner ladies should encourage the take up of soup and vegetables, namely through subtle nudging techniques (by refraining from asking children if they want those foods and shoving them on the tray); on the frequency of deep fried foods (only allowed once in a fortnight and cooked in regularly tested peanut oil); on exception regimes to these rules (alternative dishes can only be provided under medical prescription or religious reasons); and on the frequency of fresh foods provisioning, storage, kitchen equipment and utensils to be used for food preparation (e.g. the knife that cuts meat cannot be the same that cuts vegetables or fish to avoid cross-contamination). Both the authorized list of products and the menu composition lend themselves to stressing a technocratic, disciplined and calculative feature. The menus clearly represent a “rational and reasoned approach to eating”, very much dictated by the nutritional and medical expertise and food safety standards (Coveney, 2000: xii).

However, this ‘rationality of government’ encapsulated in this particular technology – the school menu – is interwoven with other rationality logics that can be observed. In the discursive frame of the *circular letter* concerning the school buffets, alongside health, nutritional and social welfare concerns, there is also a focus on the cultural and socializing aspects of eating in schools. The school buffet is envisaged as a space where social relations are organized and experiences are shared. Thus, the school buffet is represented as a food culture beacon that fosters an important role not only by conveying health and nutritional information that should be coherent with the foods it sells (it being a complement to the food education taught in the curricula), but also aiming at reinforcing regional food cultures:

The school should seek to turn the buffet a pleasant and attractive space. It is suggested the promotion of activities linked to food education, namely regional products and the celebration of traditional food festivities, by both engaging the parents and the local community (Circular letter n. 11/DGIDC, 2007: 3).

Apart from these two circular letters sent out to the primary and secondary schools management boards by the Ministry of Education in 2007 (and made

mandatory in 2009 through the Decree-Law n. 55/2009 of 2nd March), relevant institutional bodies were also created at this time¹³. Many of these initiatives bring a type of 'rationality' associated with technologies of the body. Metric systems, which can be understood as part of "some more or less rationalized set of techniques and instruments" (Miller and Rose, 2008: 15), are crucial to make children's food practices amenable to intervention. Hence, these techniques contribute to implement and reinforce the current *modus operandi* of measuring bodies' sizes and shapes, which are then made fit into fat indexes, e.g. the Body Mass Index. As argued by Evans and Colls (2009: 1054-1055), the "BMI constitutes a mechanism of biopower (...) fundamental to the governance of fatness". In tandem with the sophistication and enlargement of metric systems of children's bodies to the whole territory, other initiatives acted on the information and knowledge front, but with a hands-on approach targeting the family, the school and the private sector¹⁴.

The most recent policy added to what is becoming a robust school meal regulatory framework in Portugal, is the European Fruit Distribution Regime¹⁵. It was launched in 2009, soon adapted to the national legal system and implemented in the school year of 2010-2011 through the National Strategy of School Fruit Regime 2010-2013 (a joint initiative by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture). The implementation of this strategy aims to increase children's health protection by improving their intake and knowledge of fruits. In order to make it effective and attractive, the free fruits provided must be diverse and sourced from quality certified agro-food production systems. Following the principles of quality and variety, the Strategy pushes forward an agenda that supports current food sovereignty concerns, by encouraging local food systems of production, distribution and consumption to boost the economy in a time of political austerity measures.

In August 2013, a new circular letter was launched (Circular letter n. 3/DSEEAS/DGE/2013) that revoked the previous ones (n. 14/DGIDC/2007 and 15/DGIDC/2007 on school meals and n. 25/92 and 28/92 of former IASE). The main changes regarded more detailed instructions on authorized foods; on meals composition; menu components; a reference to the importance of monitoring children in the canteen and the update of the quantities of some foods, giving more precise instructions for primary and nursery school children (Table 2).

13 The Platform Against Obesity was created in 2007. It is under the remit of the General Health Directorate and aims at implementing initiatives to encourage the Portuguese population to eat healthy food and pursue healthy lifestyles, so that obesity levels decrease.

14 Some initiatives were public-private partnerships or solely implemented by the private sector. The program 100% is an initiative by Unilever and the programme Apetece-me ('I fancy') is a Nestlé initiative. All these programmes aim at encouraging healthy lifestyles and eating in schools and are part of the social responsibility actions of big food corporations.

15 Regulation (CE) n. 288/2009, European Commission.

Table 2 – The One Choice Menu (Circular letter n. 3/2013)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 fresh vegetable soup (with potatoes, legumes or beans). Fish soup and chicken broth are allowed once per month max;• 1 meat or fish/seafood dish, in alternate days, and the sides should be composed of rice, pasta or potatoes, changing the cooking process. In parallel, legumes (beans, peas, lentils) can be served. Raw vegetables should be served on a separate plate and following the prescribed quantities (at least composed of three varieties daily);• 1 brown bread, paper packed and composed of the following ingredients: 15% of rye; 35% of flour 65; 35% of flour 150; Water; 0,4% of salt; yeast.• 1 dessert composed of seasonal fruit, offered on a daily basis. Together with the fruit it is allowed cooked or baked fruit without adding sugar, once a week max. Together with the fruit, on a different day from the cooked or baked fruit, it is allowed a pudding, jelly, ice cream, yoghurt, once a week max.• Water (the only drink allowed).• For seasoning: olive oil (extra virgin), vinegar, balsamic vinegar, onions, lemon, coriander, parsley, and oregano, all in a proper package.
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Source: Circular letter n° 3/DSEEAS/DGE/2013 of 2nd August 2013, p. 5-6.

5. DISCUSSION

In this article, different school meals governmentalities were described and analysed. The following table sums up the main regimes found and how food, health and children were portrayed in each regime (Table 3).

The analysis of the policies launched by Portuguese health and education governing bodies reveals that the implementation of the democratic state in 1974 represents a significant turning point in the organization of the school meals system. Before this period, and despite the introduction of more canteens, ‘food provision’ in schools was a ‘technique’ for improving the efficiency of school’s ‘technological’ purpose of alleviating food poverty and normatively guiding children towards the values of the regime (based on the trilogy *God, Fatherland and Family*). The regulatory framework underpinning this trilogy was probably more concerned with managing political turmoil than providing the conditions for ‘preserving’ children’s bodies. The lack of a strong State investment in the setting up of new canteens and on public food procurement was a clear signal of the importance given to the private sphere (notably the family, and within it, the mother), that should be in charge of children’s food education (teaching table manners, complying with a patriarchal order at the dinner table and ensuring good hygiene and cleanliness food practices).

Table 3 - School Meals Governmentalities in Portugal

	Food	Health	Children
<i>Authoritarian</i> (1933-1970)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philanthropic, food security and poverty alleviation; - Regime ideology (Good, Fatherland and Family) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good hygiene practices; - Good physical health conditions to endure the school day with energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passive, disciplined, obedient, voiceless and respectful of regime values and ideology.
<i>Democratic</i> (1971-1983)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universality and equality of access to school meals. - Seasonality/regional dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Right to health, through a 'balanced' and 'rational' food diet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children with rights: right to health and to food. - Some agency and voice is attributed to children (even if virtually).
<i>Modern</i> (1984-1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social welfare actions in schools is decentralized to the municipalities; - Principles of rational, diversified and balanced diets; - Seasonality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of healthy and balanced bodies (success in school in success in the job market). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some agency and voice is attributed to children (even if virtually)
<i>Consumer</i> (1994-2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer choices are multiplied and diverse; - Food as nutrition; - Seasonality and all year round (local/global) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is seen as a health promoting space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children are clients or consumers.
<i>Obesity and Risk</i> (2006-present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School meals are normative, ordered, standardized and disciplined (nutrition, food safety and hygiene, seasonality and all year round foods); - Some concern with regional and local food traditions, with food sharing and commensality (national and international dishes on the menu). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk and disease prevention (focus on obesity); - Promotion of healthy lifestyles; - Normalization of bodies becomes a priority (BMI indexes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children are perceived as problematical; - Surveyed, controlled, disciplined; - Individual responsibility (and its transfer to parents).

Note: The periodization on this table follows the dates of publication of the main policies on school meals and not the main social, economic, cultural or political shifts occurred in Portugal.

Yet, with the creation of IASE in 1971 and the implementation of the national school milk distribution programme in 1976, the 'governmentality' underpinning the organization of the school meals system shifted considerably. The 'school milk' was symbolically shaped by a growing concern with children's nutritional levels and, therefore, with their 'vitality', greatly pushed by public health and biomedical expertise. Thus, the full consolidation of a 'biopower' process within the school meals governmentality seems to be more associated with the democratic regime. As a result of the emergence of democratic and biomedical rationalities, children that were once conceived as 'passive' agents under the family and school control, are now children with rights, entitled to 'balanced' and 'healthy' school meals under universal and equal access prerogatives. The 'Authoritarian' regime portrayed school dinners as a 'technology' for poverty alleviation, nutritional security and alignment with the regime's values, whereas the 'Democratic' regime that emerged after the collapse of the New State conveys school meals as a 'technology' for regulating the 'bios' of the whole school population, and thus, preserving children's bodies.

By mid-80's, the 'Democratic' school meals regime was encroached by a new form of organization, wherein the process of creating the 'modern individual' was paramount. During this period, school meals became a technology that contributed to the process of modernizing the country, but still maintaining both State's social protection logic and 'biopower' practice. The 'vitality' embedded in the system was associated with the 'universalization' and 'equality' of access to school meals, based on the principles of social care for all without discrimination. But apart from social care, the school meals served the purpose of feeding children with balanced and nutritious foods. Such diets allowed children to improve their learning capacities and get the skills to become professionals to contribute to the project of national modernization. It was also during this time that the system co-evolved with the integration of some of the premises aligned with a neo-liberal agenda, with the decentralization of the school meals management from central government to the municipalities.

In the 90s, the introduction of private catering firms and the diversification of food choices led to the shaping up of the 'Consumer' school meals regime. However, the permeation of the school meals system to a recently formed consumer society flagged up by the principles of freedom of choice was about to challenge the logic of preserving children's bodies. Countless new products available in the domestic market were increasingly alluring children (from sweets to chocolates, from frying to fast foods). During this period, the organization of the school meals system became characterized by the prominence of neo-liberal economic interests. By adopting 'free-market' rationalities, the vital ideology and biomedical power faced new challenges. In the forthcoming years a compromise between the pressures of a neo-liberal agenda (economic instrumentalization) and the biopower would be witnessed. The emergence of discourses around children's food risks and the force

of biometric and bio-surveillance systems was the compromise found. By measuring and quantifying bodies (e.g. BMI systems, surveys on eating habits) based on biomedical and nutritional knowledge it became easier to calculate cost-benefit logics in the health economy.

And yet, the compromise between different rationalities was invariably a contingent and open process, which meant that in the 90's the school meals regime became embedded in a more complex set of knowledges guided by new power-relations. Its inherent dimension of 'risk' unwrapped new modes of perceiving 'childhood'. The biomedical and nutritional sciences' developments on the harmful effects of consuming certain foods produced new concerns for the government of children's bodies. Facing this 'productive' dilemma, the state developed a hybrid strategy where new forms of knowledge (such as social, educational, biomedical and nutritional sciences) enmeshed with market rationalities were responsible for constructing new regulatory 'technologies' and 'techniques' in order to produce 'disciplined' and 'normalized' children. This approach underscores educational initiatives for regulating children's subjectivities, conducive to self-disciplinary food practices ('technologies of the self'). These biopedagogies are focused on individual practices and lifestyles, and seek to foster self-accountability.

In the first decade of the 21st century, food and bodily practices are portrayed in the regulatory framework by a set of key aspects: a proclivity to frame children and food relations as risky; the construction and implementation of a sophisticated metric system that becomes legitimized in both international and national public health policies (e.g. BMI); and a focus on nutritional scientific knowledge that invites thinking in binary normative terms ('bad'/ 'good' food habits and lifestyle, 'healthy'/ 'unhealthy' foods, 'good quality food' against 'junk' food; 'fit'/'flabby' bodies). In the new millennium, child obesity became a social problem. Perceived as an intractable and imminent 'economic' and 'public health' issue, a new regime of governmentality of school meals became apparent. This regime is characterized by a more holistic approach wherein innovative 'technologies' are developed in a disciplinary form. This regime perceives children as problematic individuals that should be, on one hand, surveyed in order to 'self-regulate' the 'biopolitical' field, and on the other, disciplined and controlled through monitored menus. More recently, initiatives and programmes are marked by concerns with the experience of eating in the canteen, making those spaces joyful and appealing, so that processes of negotiating children's subjectivities produce less resistance from children's bodies (Truninger, Horta e Teixeira, 2014; Truninger et al, 2013; Horta et al, 2013).

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper contributed to the debates on school meals from a post-Foucauldian perspective, and importantly, was shaped by an historical trajectory of the school

meals governmentality regimes in Portugal. It is however important to call attention for three shortcomings that can be picked up by future research on this topic.

Firstly, the empirical analysis was mainly focused on the formal and official discourses of school meals policies. It would be more enriching to analyse the practices themselves, the doings and un-doings of assembling school meals policies in the daily life of ministerial cabinets, school canteens and buffets, municipalities and catering firms. Moreover, future studies should pay more attention to the embodied children's food politics of accommodation and resistance regarding school dinners.

Secondly, this study revealed the plurality and overlapping of regimes across time, but further research could focus on the transition moments and regime overlapping more poignantly. One could ask whether it is in these transitory moments that tensions, contradictions, and compromises are made more apparent, or whether it is in everyday negotiations that school meals policies are enacted, it being difficult to disentangle turbulent from quieter times. The latter suggests that routines are continuously adjusted in subtle ways to disruption. Thus, this opens up the opportunity to scrutinise further the dialectics of routine and disruption in school meals policy making across time.

Thirdly, one could ask how useful is a post-Foucauldian perspective to capture this dialectics of routine and disruption. What happens to the practices during the transition periods from one regime to the other? It could be useful to zoom in onto these spots of transition to understand how some practices became redundant and others cropped up. What about the lived experiences and the mundane practices during these turbulent times of transition? The thematic documental analysis of central government policy is important to establish the rationalities of school meals governmentalities, however it does not seem to be sufficient to adequately respond to concerns regarding the engagement with real bodies and material practices. For that, it would be beneficial to explore the potential of recent practice-based sociological theories to illuminate further school meals governmentalities.

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