

THE QUALITÀ & SERVIZI CASE | BETWEEN LEGUMES AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES

CANTEENS AS LOCAL AREA POLICY TOOLS

Over the last decade, on account of the complexity inherent in a service that requires nutritional, managerial, and legal skills as well as the ability to converse with users, local administrations have seen school canteens more as a management problem than as an opportunity. In most cases, this complexity has caused municipalities to delegate the service to market operators specialized in collective catering, often losing control of it.

Taking back the reins of a service with enormous potential in terms of local policies requires great commitment on the administrations side, an ability to see beyond mere numbers, and the building of know-how. The key points to build on embrace diverse ambits and require different languages for constant conversation with all the stakeholders in school canteens. These directives make it possible to take a fresh look at the canteen and measure its benefits with new indicators that assess its social and environmental value.



GOVERNANCE

→→ The lowest common denominator that unites the best practices is the **governance of the service**: what ensures the quality and sustainability of canteens is **direct and competent control by the municipality**, with constant monitoring of the quality and consumption of meals. Systematic control by local administrations allows to gain awareness of the real quality of the service, parametrizing it to specification requirements and, if necessary, making continuous adjustments and correctives to keep a high standard of service.



TERRITORY

→→ It is essential to **connect the canteen with the agricultural production of the territory** that can be planned in tune with the school calendar. This means guaranteeing more wealth to the local community, more jobs, more economic security, more development (also in a sustainable way), in a relationship of mutual exchange with the educational institutions and the reference community.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

→→ Administrations must **ensure constant paths of education and training**, by considering the canteen as a place where to promote health with healthy food and tasty dishes. The training of cooks and teachers is the link in a chain that allows you to build value around the catering service. Through education, which involves all the actors that revolve around the canteen, the culture of food is created that encourages health and sustainability projects capable of rooting values within the community.



CONSENSUS

→→ The quality of the food and the variety of the recipes allow to obtain good consumption and a great appreciation by the users, raising the level of reputation of the service, on which the **credibility of the Municipality** is often at stake. "Feeding" schoolchildren is a political act which has a **positive fallout in terms of consensus if the quality of the canteen is high**. The fame of "excellent canteen" has become a source of pride for those administrations that have invested in this service. Gratification can spark a virtuous circle that feeds a continuous growth of ideas and projects, amplifying the impact of the canteen on the territory.



LEGISLATION

→→ Local administrations operate in contexts characterized by the **need to pursue the 2030 Agenda goals (SDGs), to respond to the Farm to Fork strategy and Green Public Procurement**. The achievement of these objectives also involves strengthening the skills and know-how of officials and all those involved in the school catering service. In the absence of a competence, we risk looking at the canteen by limiting the aims of the service to the mere consumption of the meal during school time, losing the opportunities for development of the territory and the impact on the community of reference.



SUSTAINABLE VALUE INDICATORS

→→ To relieve school catering from the mere goal of satiating children at school, it is appropriate to find new parameters that show their value and on which rewarding policies could be developed. In this way, the canteen is no longer considered only a cost in the budget of the Municipality, but rather an investment in the territory and the future of the new generations. For example:

- Use of more human resources in the kitchen or on suppliers' farms
- Incentive to convert land into sustainable crops for products to be supplied in the canteen (e.g., more organic, ancient grains, millet, legumes)
- Incentive to insert local products into the menu
- Elimination of the use of plastic materials and packaging
- Reduction of meat consumption and introduction of food with low environmental impact
- Waste reduction and re-targeting of waste to deprived communities
- Use of renewable energy and reduction of water and energy consumption



[To learn more about the Quality & Services case study, see the full report here](#)

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