

A school based intervention to improve children's eating behaviours in Mexico

The problem

Mexico is one of the countries with the highest number of overweight children and adolescents in the world and, unfortunately, schools are an important cause of this problem. Although several attempts have been made to slow down the development of this disease by enforcing school food regulations, the implementation results inconsistent and hard to monitor. Therefore, there is a pressing need for innovative approaches that create new paths for potential solutions.

Approach

This study aims to understand children's interactions with food through their lens, since the goal of the intervention is to inspire healthier eating behaviours. To do so, tools that enable kids to express their concerns, goals or beliefs are crucial, and generative research methods like context-mapping offer designers such instruments. Yet, when talking about behaviour, children's perspectives alone are not sufficient. In this project, generative research combines with a theoretical framework —the Behaviour Change Wheel model— to analyze the context and identify the key determinants of children's poor eating behaviours.

Design criteria for an effective intervention

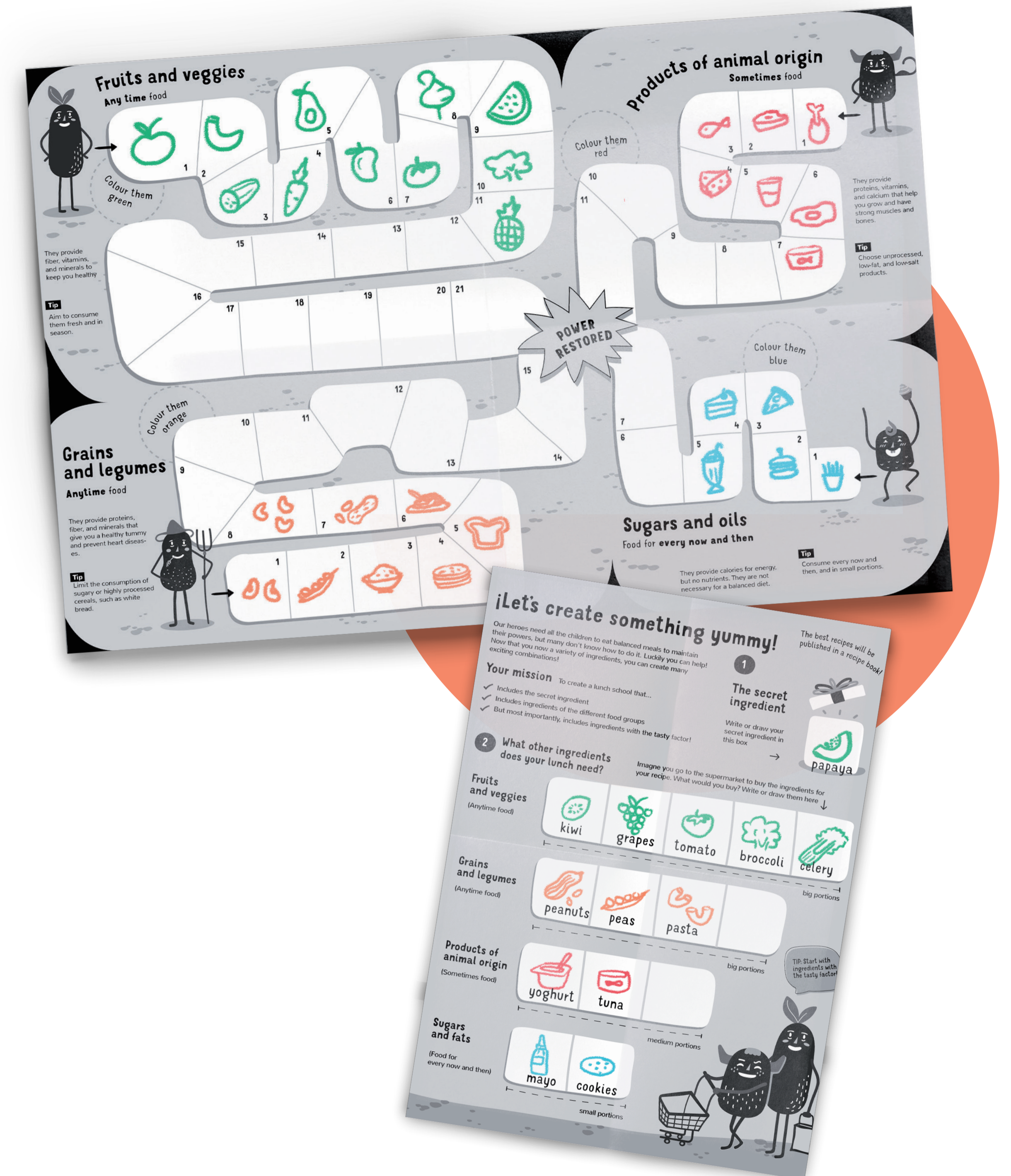
Insights from the research derived in a series of qualities and functions that can serve as a guideline when designing interventions with this purpose. The design criteria informs that an effective solution should comprehensively inform children about their food options, create opportunities for new positive associations with food, increase their self-efficacy in balancing their meals, and be cultural and context appropriate. This can be achieved by means of the specified intervention functions, which are education, modelling, incentivisation, enablement and environmental restructuring.

The design concept

The previous criteria was used to design a class activity. By means of storytelling a set of tools is presented to the children, which will allow them to a) explore their context in search of the ingredients that are available to them, and b) have practical experience configuring those ingredients in an appropriate proportion to achieved a balanced meal.

The solution:

- ✔ Promotes a non-restrictive language that fosters a healthier relationship with food.
- ✔ Indicates the portion that is recommended for each food group.
- ✔ Adapts to each of the children's context: what is available to one might not be available to the rest.
- ✔ Helps children gain knowledge and develop skills through play.



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