

First insights of Portuguese Primary schools' Fungal assessment – Is Indoor Air Quality legal framework suitable for this indoor setting?

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Introduction

The assessment of microbial indoor air quality in schools is vital for promoting student health. Portugal's regulations focus on commercial buildings (Ordinance nº 138-G/2021), neglecting standards for schools (1). Evidence suggests indoor/outdoor fungal ratio inadequacies in high-risk areas like schools (2).

Objective

To assess fungal threshold adequacy set by the Portuguese ordinance in different sites of schools located in the Lisbon area

Methods

10 primary schools

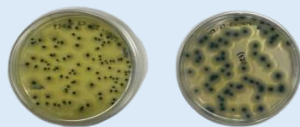
- Bathrooms (N=6)
- Canteen (N=9)
- Classrooms (N=10)
- Gymnasium (N=6)
- Library (N=8)
- Outdoor (N=10)



200L at
100 L/min

MEA

DG18



27 °C for 7 days



Fungal identification

Results

- 9 / 10 did not comply with the Portuguese legal framework (I/O ratio) (Figure 1):
 - 5 / 6 in the bathroom
 - 4 / 9 in the canteen
 - 8 / 10 in the classrooms
 - 3 / 8 in the library
 - 4 / 6 in the gymnasiums

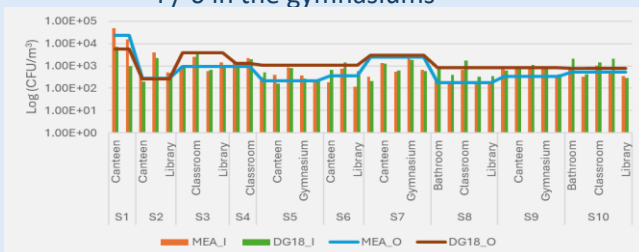


Figure 1: Fungal quantification in MEA and DG18 in all the settings in each school and outdoor concentration.

- 1 / 10 (S7) complies with the Portuguese IAQ legal framework (I/O ratio).
- *Aspergillus* sections identified in all the schools (Table 1), including the one that complied with the legal framework (S7 - sections *Circumdati* and *Fumigati*)

Table 1: *Aspergillus* sections identified in each media per school.

	MEA	DG18
<i>Circumdati</i>	4/10	9/10
<i>Flavi</i>	2/10	6/10
<i>Fumigati</i>	3/10	3/10
<i>Nidulantes</i>	3/10	7/10
<i>Nigri</i>	9/10	5/10

Discussion

Although the quantitative cut-off complies in at least one school (S7), it does not meet the toxigenic species quantitative cut-off (1). The presence of critical species such as *Aspergillus* sections *Circumdati*, *Flavi*, *Nidulantes*, *Nigri*, and *Fumigati* in every school environment jeopardizes students' health and hampers learning conditions (3). Regarding *Fumigati* section, being classified as critical by WHO, its presence should be 0 CFU due to its pathogenic potential (4).

Conclusions

- It is crucial to perform microbial air quality surveillance in Portuguese schools.
- The current IAQ Portuguese legal framework is not suitable to apply in schools.
- The risk of exposure to toxigenic and with clinical relevance fungal species poses a major public health threat impacting also students' learning conditions and outcomes.

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