

THE SCHOOL MANAGER IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES



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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the school manager in the face of democratic management and aimed to understand how the school manager acts in the face of the proposal of democratic management and the contextualization of the current school reality in a municipal public school in the interior of Maranhão. The following problem was answered: How does the school manager develop democratic management at the Professor Antenor Bogéa Teaching Center? To achieve the objectives of the research, a qualitative approach was carried out using the semi-structured interview as an instrument of data collection, in addition to the bibliographic research in which we used the following authors in the area of

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education, such as: Araújo (2000), Lück (2006), Libâneo (2003), Madeira (2003), Queiroz (2011), among others. The research found that the school manager understands and knows what democratic management is, just as the school develops democratic management, where all subjects are involved in the decisions of the future of the school

Keywords: School Management. Democratic management. School.

INTRODUCTION

In the current panorama of education, we realize that School Management has evolved a lot with regard to the demystification of attributions proper to the manager, reaching a level that goes beyond a mere school administration in a techno-bureaucratized perspective.

According to Libâneo (2018), organization and management refer to the set of conditions and means that are mobilized to make the institution work and for educational objectives to be achieved. About these means and these conditions, Libâneo (2018, p.293) points out that:

[...] They refer to the set of norms, guidelines, organizational structure, actions and procedures that ensure the rationalization of the use of human, material, financial and intellectual resources as well as the coordination and monitoring of people's work.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that the activities carried out in the school should be the responsibility not only of those directly involved in the pedagogical process, but also of everyone in the community in favor of a citizen school through its pedagogical political project.

In this way, the organization and management of the school correspond to the needs of the school institutions to have the conditions and means to achieve and implement their specific objectives, in order to promote the conditions, means and all the resources necessary for the functioning of the school and the school work based on the involvement of the community in the school's activities.

Democratic management is instituted in the Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1988 with the objective of guiding public education (BRASIL, 2023). It is worth mentioning that the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education No. 9,394, of 1996-LDBEN in the same sense, in , article 3, recommends that education will be provided based, among other principles, on the "democratic management of public education, in the form of this Law and the legislation of the education systems" (BRASIL, 2017, p.1).

According to Libâneo (2018, p.66)

[...] The manager coordinates, mobilizes, motivates, leads, delegates to the members of the school team, according to their specific attributions, the responsibilities arising from the decisions, monitors the development of actions, renders accounts and submits to the team's evaluation the development of the decisions taken collectively.

Democratic management refers to the participation of all segments that are part of the educational process, which aims to define "the directions that the school should imprint on education and the way to implement these decisions, in a continuous process of evaluation of its actions" (Filho & Lira, 2017, p.37). From this perspective, democratic management brings at its core participation, autonomy, transparency and pluralism (Araújo, 2000).

From this perspective, the school manager is characterized as a pedagogical leader, facilitator of ideas, capable of suppressing conflicts and creator of a positive, participatory, coherent and healthy school climate. With this, we raise some questions for the development of the research: How can the school manager develop a democratic management in the researched school? How does the process of democratic management occur in the researched school? What understandings of democratic school management does the manager of the researched school have? The research was carried out in a municipality in the State of Maranhão, specifically in Matões do Norte.

The general objective of the research was to understand how the school manager acts in the face of the proposal of democratic management and the contextualization of the current school reality in the researched school in Matões do Norte/Maranhão.

The study showed the importance of democratic management in the school perspective for the school management of the researched school.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This study is part of an effort from the context of school management in a globalized world that requires changes and readjustments, seeking a rethinking of educational management from a proposal of analysis of the school understood as an organization. Understanding that they live in a class society, it can be seen that the interests of these classes are different and even antagonistic.

School management indicates the analysis of the organizational components of the school that refer to the awareness of educators and students for the implications of these components in behaviors, attitudes and results at the school level. According to Luck (2006, p.34) "the concept of management results from a new understanding of the conduct of the destinies of organizations, which takes into account the whole in relation to its parts and of these to each other, in order to promote greater effectiveness of the whole".

In this context, it is important to emphasize that the activities carried out in the school should be the responsibility not only of those directly involved in the pedagogical process, but also of everyone in the community in favor of a citizen school and its pedagogical political project.

Libâneo (2018) states that organization and management refer to the set of conditions and means that are mobilized to make the institution work and for educational objectives to be achieved. About these means and these conditions, the aforementioned author describes:

[...] refer to the set of norms, guidelines, organizational structure, actions, and procedures that ensure the rationalization of the use of human, material, financial, and intellectual resources, as well as the coordination and monitoring of people's work (Libâneo 2018, p.293).

The organization and management of the school correspond to the needs of the school institutions to have the conditions and means to achieve and implement their specific objectives in order to promote the conditions, means and all the resources necessary for the functioning of the school and the school work, based on the involvement of the community in the activities of the school. However, it is alerted to the fact that the school organization, despite traditionally presenting itself as a strongly bureaucratic structure, differs in its nature from a business organization, presenting itself as a relatively autonomous institution, however complex and contradictory, as is the society in which it is inserted.

It is worth mentioning that the school is an educational space, a place of learning in which everyone learns to participate in decision-making processes, but it is also the place where professionals develop their professionalism, that is, a space for training, transformation and learning built by its subjects, in a locus where professionals can decide about their work and continuously train themselves for the personal and professional development of the members of the school community.

It is also important to highlight that learning to listen is fundamental, that is, it is essential that educators are willing to listen to the other, whether they are co-workers, students, parents or guardians. It is these representations that construct the most sensitive images of the school reality.

THE WORK OF MANAGERS IN THE DEMOCRATIC-PARTICIPATORY SCHOOL

When dealing with the role and action of school managers, it is also necessary to highlight other aspects related to the principles, foundations and intentionalities, given their importance for the effectiveness of socio-inclusive management. Libâneo (2018, p. 207) says that:

[...] They need to recognize that their work has a genuinely interactive characteristic, that is, their work is at the service of people and the organization, requiring them to have specific training to seek solutions to problems, to know how to coordinate joint work, to discuss and evaluate practice, to advise and provide logistical support to teachers in the classroom.

The performance of managers in office needs to be permanent and based on principles, values, attitudes and practices that promote the construction of an autonomous and participatory step, encompassing a posture of involvement and decision-making of various social segments. It is a collective construction. Thus, the idea of school manager is closely related to the organization of pedagogical work.

School management must be exercised by an educator who has a pedagogical training and administrative vision based on the effective participation of all those involved in the educational act. Therefore, managing also means being open to reflections, discussions, continuous changes, teamwork, continuous training and constant improvement. According to Paro (2005, p. 81), "school administration, the analysis of its relations with social transformation must necessarily involve the examination of the conditions of possibility of school education itself as an element of social transformation".

In this context, the figure of the principal/manager is instigated to rethink his way of running the school in order to be able to keep up with the new demands of society, which includes changes in his education, his way of thinking, his way of making the school a reflective and learning space for all. Like this:

The democratic management of the school implies that the community, users of the school, are its directors and managers and not only the inspectors or even less, the mere recipients of educational services. In democratic management, fathers, mothers, students, teachers, and employees assume their share of responsibility for the school project (Gadotti, 2004, p.35).

Within this new management model, the school council has a decisive role in the democratization of education and the school to the extent that it must bring together principals, teachers, employees, students, parents and other representatives of the school community to discuss, define and monitor the development of the school's political-

pedagogical project, which must be seen, debated and analyzed within the context (Prais, 2003).

The School Council, in harmony with the school administration, aims to make collective decisions in the administrative, financial and political-pedagogical areas. It is, therefore, a collegiate form of democratic management. In the meantime, management in the school is no longer exercised by a single person – the principal or principal – and is now exercised by a collegiate body that brings together the various segments of the school and the local community.

Articulating managers must be able to share the power of decision and deliberation on school matters with teachers, school employees, parents of students, students from the local community, creating and encouraging the participation of all in the school's own instances as well as in its Council. Their leadership can be expressed by the students' school performance and the result of their learning (Paro, 2005).

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE

Throughout the history of Brazil, we have noticed the presence of an authoritarian and democratic social regime, where the school as a training institution has been transformed, it is no longer a plastered, authoritarian institution and has become a democratic space, in which professionals are participatory, responsible, apt for new challenges.

According to Lück (2006), education in the knowledge society plays a real role, as the subjects involved exercise an active position on the position of people as active, conscious and responsible subjects for the social processes and institutions in which they are inserted. It is worth mentioning that the actions developed are not neutral, much less isolated, none of them will be able to promote consistent and lasting advances in the school on their own.

The school manager has a fundamental role in the construction of new airs, as he enables a collective articulation between the subjects, where he has a collective positioning and commitment to the transformation of the school reality. From this perspective, the manager is a generator of ideas, thoughts, advisor and especially a leader, who seeks and inserts in the school new possibilities to organize the educational process. The manager has the power to break taboos and go beyond the traditional, as well as enabling educational agents to reflect on school improvement (Silva, 2017).

The school manager must leave the condition of absolute power, sharing decision-making collectively. Their discourse should be in favor of school improvement, that is, they should seek conflict solutions taking into account the context in which the community is inserted. Medeiros (2003, p.61) understands that the democratic management of education

it is associated with the establishment of legal and institutional mechanisms and the organization of actions that trigger social participation: in the formulation of educational policies; in planning; in decision-making; in the definition of the use of resources and investment needs; in the execution of collective resolutions; in the moments of evaluation of the school and the educational policy. Also the democratization of access and strategies that guarantee permanence in school, with the horizon of universalization of education for the entire population, as well as the debate on the social quality of this universalized education, are issues that are related to this debate.

The manager must broaden his vision of shared leadership "fulfilling the final role of the school, which is the formation of a critical subject, capable of interpreting and understanding his role in the society in which he is inserted" (Silva, 2017, p. 170). In this sense, we have to understand that democratic management is nothing more than a management of shared decision-making, in which everyone has a voice and action, so that a democratic process actually occurs within the school.

It is up to the educational communities, led by their respective managers together with their pedagogical team, to unite for the expansion of democracy in the school with priority to issues that favor quality and egalitarian education for all, so that it advances towards an institution that can actually move towards an education that forms citizens, critical and aware of their rights and duties within society.

The management of education and the school, which intends to be democratic, will only be possible if, in addition to legal support, material conditions are generated and if there have been changes in the attitudes of its managers and the school community, with regard to the production and circulation of goods and services and in the relations between their peers and different segments that make up educational organizations.

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education 9.394 of December 20, 1996, in its article 3, item VIII, indicates the participation of all not only in the management of the school, but also in the construction of the pedagogical project, in accordance with the regulations in municipal laws. (Brazil, 2017). Thus, the demand for the expansion of institutional spaces for participation and deliberation with government agencies that was part of the political struggles for the democratization of society is materialized in the

education systems with the organization of these collegiate spaces in the instances of power.

According to Luck (2006), it is essential to understand that collegiate bodies should function in schools as a mechanism for democratization and favor the collegiate management of all dimensions of the pedagogical process. In this sense, the basic principle should be the search for and promotion of autonomy and participation of the sectors that make up the school, that is, pedagogical, administrative and financial. In this sense, the School Council is a main structure of the collegiate bodies, given that it is the most important advisory and mobilizing body in the process of democratic management in the school (Libâneo, 2018). Its most important task is to monitor the development of educational practice and, in it, the teaching-learning process. Thus, the function of the School Council is fundamentally political-pedagogical.

One of the great advantages of the collective elaboration of the school's pedagogical project is to enable education professionals and students to experience the democratic process. This consists of the formation of the citizen capable of having critical social insertion. Therefore, everyone has the need to learn and live and work democratically. The joint formulation of a pedagogical project creates, therefore, a privileged space for democratic experience. According to Prais (2003, p. 82)

Collegiate administration, when it becomes a democratic practice of decisions, must be able to guarantee the participation of all members of the school community, so that they assume the role of co-responsible in the educational project of the school and, by extension, in the social community.

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in a public school in the Municipality of Matões do Norte/Maranhão, in 2021. The method of procedure used was a case study. According to Triviños (1995), it is a study of unity that is deeply analyzed. The data collection instruments we used were the interview, applied to the school manager. Semi-structured interviews were used, organized in previous scripts, so that they can be modified during the course (Gressler, 2003).

The form of data analysis was based on the answers of the research subjects, which were articulated with the researcher's interpretations according to the theoretical axes of the theme on school democratic management. To meet this methodological perspective, a qualitative approach to the social sciences was developed. In this sense, Goldenberg

(2004, p. 14) says that: "In qualitative research, the researcher's concern is not with the numerical representativeness of the researched group, but with the deepening of the understanding of a social group, an organization, an institution, a trajectory, etc." Thus, we used the entire methodological process described above to gather information and make considerations about the object of the research on the school manager in the face of democratic management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Democratic management is a principle that comprises several sectors, such as pedagogical, administrative, among others related to the school. However, it allows school institutions to exercise democratization and management while enabling improvements in the educational process.

Thus, the school manager has the responsibility to organize and manage the educational institution in a positive way, enabling the school's pedagogical political process to be carried out efficiently. Still from the perspective of the school manager and democratic management in the school, we found that according to the statements of the interviewed manager, he has a basic notion of what democratic management is. Here is his answer:

"Democratic management is when we open the space to discuss to align the teaching and learning of our students" (Gestor, 2021).

According to the interviewee's answers, there is a partial understanding of democratic management in the school. According to the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education

Article 14. The education systems shall define the norms of the democratic management of public education in basic education, according to their peculiarities and according to the following principles:

I - Participation of education professionals in the elaboration of the school's pedagogical project;

II - Participation of the school and local communities in school councils or equivalent (Brasil, 2017, p.5).

Thus, analyzing the manager's speech, we realize that he refers to democratic management as the moment to organize ideas among teachers to improve teaching and learning. However, democratic management is much more than organizing content to improve teaching in order to improve the learning of the student. Based on this idea, democratic management according to Silva (2017, p.169):

Democratic school management means promoting the redistribution of responsibilities, ideas of participation, teamwork, decision on the actions that will be developed, analysis of situations together. In addition to promoting the confrontation of ideas, thus seeking the success of its organization through the conscious action of those involved

The manager was asked how the process of democratic management occurs in the school. According to the interviewee: **"We work with the participation of the professionals of the school thus inserted and also with the opinion of the student class and the local community" (Manager, 2021).**

According to the interviewee's answer, we verified *in locus* that in the researched school there is a participatory management, that is, both education professionals, students and the community surrounding the school have a voice in the school's decisions. According to Jardúlio and Vasques (2020, p.4), "it is only possible to work in a democratic way if the work is collective, so it is important for the participation of all those involved". Thus, management enables the participation of all education agents and the community, and this management must be participatory, where everyone must be protagonists (manager, teacher, students, and the community around the school).

Regarding participatory democratic management, Araújo (2010, p.14) clarifies that:

Participatory management corresponds to a unity of principles and actions that enables and allows mediating the involvement of people in the decision-making necessary to promote goals for the good of all. In addition, it aims to improve relationships in the school environment, as it provides the participation of everyone giving opinions, deciding actions, programming goals, that is, valuing the ideas given by everyone regardless of the position or function they hold within it.

We add that the participation of the community in school issues is supported by item VI of article 12 of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN 9.394/96) where it states that: "... articulate with families and the community, creating processes of integration of society with the school" (Brasil, 2017, p.4)". In addition, in item VI of article 13, the role of teachers is reserved "to collaborate with the activities of articulation of the school with families and the community" (Brasil, 2017, p.5).

We asked the interviewee (manager) if the school community participates in decision-making about the future of the school. He replied: **"Yes. We are open to new ideas, our teachers and the school community, as well as parents or guardians of students always have a voice, our institution, we work in a democratic and**

participatory way, although few parents or guardians are present at our meetings, but our school has its doors open". (Manager, 2021).

According to the interviewee's answer, the school allows the participation of parents or guardians in the reality of the school, but their presence is scarce during the meetings, although the school is always available to add the community to the school reality. Libâneo (2018, p.89) highlights that "participation is the main means of ensuring the democratic management of the school, as it enables the involvement of the school community in the decision-making process and in the school organization". Thus, it is of paramount importance to promote the participation of all subjects who are part of the educational process.

Another important point addressed in the research concerns how the school enables the integration of the community in the school institution. We noticed that the manager answered with confidence about the inclusion of the community in the school's decisions. The assistant manager highlighted that: **"Calling to participate in the meetings to make the decision of the functioning of the school. We always do this, since it is the school's responsibility to provide the school community with effective participation in the school reality. A school management that does not include the community in the school's decisions cannot be considered democratic and much less participatory, we raise the flag that everyone should be present at our meetings and have a voice". (Manager, 2021).**

We believe that it is necessary for school institutions to always be open to receive the entire school community, as recommended by the guiding documents of democratic and participatory management. It is also worth mentioning that decision-making in the school environment must be in accordance with the laws and guidelines of national education, enabling commitment, responsibility and transparency in their acts, and it is up to the manager to provide this reality in favor of a harmonious social coexistence in the school space.

We can infer that democratic school management will only be effective with the participation of the entire community in a collective way. The association of parents, teachers and employees (APMF) is within the scope of participation, in which it must bring together parents of students, teachers, technical-administrative staff and the presence of students over 18 years of age, in addition to "usually functioning through an executive board and a deliberative council" (Libâneo, 2018, p.130).

Finally, we asked our interviewee what are the challenges of school management in the face of the reality in which the school is inserted. Thus, he replied: **"Today we are working to break down barriers, and so that our students do not drop out of school to work in other states. This is a great challenge that we find here in our institution, dropping out of school to look for a job outside our state". (Manager, 2021).**

We consider the answer of our interviewee important, since in many schools, especially in the interior of Maranhão, school dropout linked to economic and social issues is frequent. From this perspective, many students stop attending school to work, however, when they arrive at the workplace they are faced with a totally different reality from what they imagined, such as: unhealthy conditions, denied labor rights, or even become enslaved on farms. Azevedo (2011, p.05), reinforces the discussion when he states that:

The problem of school dropout and repetition in the country has been one of the biggest challenges faced by public education networks, as the causes and consequences are linked to many factors such as social, cultural, political and economic, as well as the school where teachers have contributed every day to the problem worsening, in the face of an outdated didactic practice.

These factors are preponderant in the school dropout process, which is not only a reality in schools in Maranhão. Queiroz (2011, p. 02) describes this assertion:

School dropout, which is not a problem restricted to only a few school units, but is a national issue that has been occupying a relevant role in educational discussions and research in the Brazilian scenario, as well as the issues of illiteracy and the lack of appreciation of education professionals, expressed in low pay and precarious working conditions.

We consider that it is of paramount importance that school management together with the school community articulate to curb student dropout in a joint work between school management, education departments, guardianship council and other responsible bodies to create effective strategies that prevent dropout so present in the Brazilian school reality.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We realized that throughout the discussion, democratic school management must happen with the effective participation of the entire school community, since it is the driving force of this management. Thus, it is of paramount importance that the school community participates in the school's decisions, and the school must cease to be a passive spectator,

becoming an active agent. However, we know that it is a challenge for managers to enable the insertion of the school community in the school's tasks, but it is necessary to use mechanisms to encourage this participation.

Democratic management is a participatory action of all, where the entire school community can share its functions and responsibilities in favor of a common goal that is the success of the student, making him or her a critical subject capable of understanding his or her role and functions within the context in which he or she is inserted.

The manager plays the role of leader, capable of creating democratic strategies, as well as proposing improvements in the school space, enabling good interpersonal relationship practices, creating an effective communication bridge with the subjects of the school community, in the perspective of proposing shared leadership.

It is worth mentioning that the manager must propose significant contributions to the progress of the quality of teaching and learning and the development of students, and this should be done with the effective participation of parents or guardians, the internal and external community of the school.

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