


THE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE CEMEI'S OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PARANAGUÁ IN THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The present work aimed to analyze the participation of parents in the pedagogical management of schools that offer Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Paranaguá, and its implications before and during the pandemic period caused by Covid-19. The research sought to know the pedagogical management practices in the Early Childhood Education Centers of the municipality of Paranaguá-PR, observing the management instruments created to meet the demand during the pandemic. The intention is to understand how the subjects of the schools reacted to them. This is a qualitative research. The data were collected through an open questionnaire and indicate that in the view of the researched subjects, the concept of participation appears mystified, in which actions such as attending parents at the school door, meetings to pass on administrative information, and participation in social media groups are considered as participation. It was found that there is a pseudo-participation in schools that contributes to emptying the political content of democratic management.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education. Democratic Management. Pandemic. Parent Participation.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding that the world faced, between 2020 and 2021, one of the greatest catastrophes in world health, caused by the contagion of COVID-19. Although this scenario has affected the health of millions of people around the world, it has manifested itself in all fields of human relations. According to Paludo (2020, p 45), in Brazil, the impact took place in several "areas and aspects of social life. From the health crisis to the economic crisis, in Brazil and the world, it is difficult to point out spaces and social relations that have not undergone some change with the pandemic". To the detriment of these statements, the importance of family participation in the teaching-learning process and the development of students was questioned, asking to what extent the participation of parents/guardians met the principles of democratic management. The question that guided the study was to understand to what extent the pandemic demanded more attention from parents about school content in their children's lives, this experience contributed to changing the concept of participation as a principle of democratic management in schools. For this, other questions emerged seeking to understand how and if the mechanisms of democratic management institutionalized in schools were present in management practices and to what extent they contributed to minimizing the difficulties presented by social distancing. It was important to know which management instruments were created to ensure the mediation between the school and parents, as well as the view of the subjects, researched about the forms of participation elaborated in this period. The conceptions presented by the research subjects were compared with the principles of democratic and emancipatory management.

Understanding that the reflections on the experiences that occurred in the Cmeis during the pandemic period are still being built and analyzed due to the temporal proximity of the facts. To contribute to this task, the study was used as an instrument to collect data from the open questionnaire, which, according to Mattar (1994), stimulates the cooperation of the respondents, has less influence on the subjects surveyed, and has less power to influence the questions with previously established alternatives, as they present significant comments, explanations, and clarifications to interpret and analyze the questions with closed answers. The data collection instrument sought to contemplate the subjects' view of the participation of parents and/or guardians in two moments, namely: before and during, to confront these manifestations with the pandemic reality. The choice of educational institutions can be characterized as from distant realities since the indicators of the Ideb

(Basic Education Development Index) were considered, as well as their territorial context. For this study, understanding the principles of democratic management is essential for comparison with the management practices in the CMEI's (Early Childhood Education Centers) exhibited before and during the pandemic.

DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Lima (2001) states that democratic management can be understood as "a participation in the decision-making process, an act of 'interference', and not the attitude of the spectator who limits himself to watching or, from more or less distance to contemplating" (Lima, 2001, p. 33). Democratic management can be seen as man's action on his reality is the essential condition for his humanization and takes place from his relations with nature, in a process that allows him to authorship creation, recreation, and decisions that dynamize his world and give him the awareness of incompleteness³.

For Freire, the condition for the humanization of man lies in the intransigent defense of freedom and the free and critical participation of subjects in the world. Therefore, according to Freire (2002, p. 20), "it is in the domain of decision, evaluation, freedom, rupture, and option that the ethical need [of the human being] is established". Democratic management is, in this sense, the field of concrete experiences in which these experiences can take place (Lima, 2002). Thus, participation cannot be discussed without understanding it from a critical and citizen perspective, as a constitutive concept of democratic management; in turn, it is placed in the opposite camp of bureaucratic regulation, which aims to produce a contented, timid, and depoliticized participation in the school (Arroyo, 2008).

In this way, the consideration of management in Brazilian schools must go not only through a type of representative democracy that distances parents from decisions about the education of their children but also brings with the objective of participation as a daily exercise, in which the school community has the autonomy to be able to act from its worldviews to share the elements of its culture.

³According to Paulo Freire (1999), only between men and women can the incompleteness exist, which leads them to transcend the domain of pure necessity, or of the merely biological (animal), temporalizing geographical spaces. In other words, by transforming his reality, man produces his culture, understood as everything that is not natural. In this process, he ascends as a situated and dated being.

THE SHARING OF YOUNG CHILDREN AS A PRESUPPOSITION OF DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT

Understanding that Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the first stage of basic education, offered in daycare centers and preschools, which are characterized as public or private institutional spaces that aim to educate and care for children from 0 to 5 years of age. The child must be recognized as a historical subject with rights who, "in the interactions, relationships and daily practices he experiences, builds his personal and collective identity, plays, imagines, fantasizes, desires, learns, observes, experiments, narrates, questions and constructs meanings about nature and society, producing culture." (Brazil, 2012) Thus, the curricular guidelines for ECE brought new principles to compose this stage:

1) the Ethical Principles of Autonomy, Responsibility, Solidarity, and Respect for the Common Good, 2) the Political Principles of the Rights and Duties of Citizenship, the Exercise of Criticality and Respect for the Democratic Order, 3) the Aesthetic Principles of Sensitivity, Creativity, Playfulness, Quality, and Diversity of Artistic and Cultural Manifestations. (Brasil, 2012, p. 16).

These principles contribute to guiding pedagogical practices, establishing a new conception of childhood in which the young child is understood as an ethical subject and as such may be able to make choices.

However, Bujes (2001) warns that the concept of childhood is closely linked to the forms of work organization that began to aggregate the female workforce. From the inclusion of women in the world of work, a new family configuration emerges, considering the role of women as workers. However, "for reasons that are identified with a set of new ideas about childhood, about the role of the child in society and how to make him, through education, a productive individual and adjusted to the demands of this social group". (Bujes, 2001, p. 15)

Thus, it can be observed that childhood education has its first steps in the welfare mode, that is, it arises to care, feed, take care of hygiene and physical care, The educational institutions had the objective only of taking care of the child and meeting their basic needs at the beginning and these institutions were seen as the right of the parents and not of the child. (Oliveira, 2011).

The conception of childhood has historically been linked to the conditions of the way of life in capitalist societies in which the child is considered, at an early age, as non-productive and therefore without social rights. This conception of childhood in Brazil

loses strength with the Federal Constitution of 1988, which alters this condition by constituting the subjects of rights, in the specific case of education, which is treated as a subjective right. (Oliveira, 2011).

From this achievement, social policies began to contemplate children, considering them as subjects of rights. In the educational field, these advances in the education of young children are permeated by democratic principles, as ensured by the Curriculum Guidelines. Thus, based on the assumption of the displacement of democracy in the school environment, the interaction between the family and the CEMI's should aim at sharing the education of the young child about its specificities. In a research carried out, Monção (2013) found that this is a long way to go. For the author, the sharing of the CMEIs with the family takes place from a welfare perspective about the aspects of health, defrauding, and food. Care is not understood as something necessary for learning, even if pedagogical practices are presented in different ways. The author warns that from the observation of the existence of different pedagogical postures observed in the same institution, makes it impossible to organize collective work, as a principle of democratic management, a fact that causes fragmentation in the education of children and demonstrates, ultimately, that there is a long way to go.

Regarding the participation of families in the education of their children, according to Monção (2013), the contradictions are assumed in different contours. That is:

Participation in decision-making emerges as a central dimension of the democratic management of schools, not only because of the phenomena of active participation that are typical of the processes of democratic organization and mobilization but also because true participation requires much more than access to information and the right to be informed, the democratic publicity of acts, the proposals and suggestions, the consultations and other processes that may be deprived of decision-making power, which Mauricio Tragtenberg (1989) called "participation" (Lima, 2014, p. 1072)

There are practical manifestations on the part of the teachers to prevent the participation of the family in decision-making, to this extent the values and perceptions of those responsible for the children in the educational process of their children are not given importance. An example of this can be observed in the prescriptive meetings with this segment, which are reduced to repetitive reports that do not prioritize the voice of parents. The data presented by the author denounce that the lack of participation of parents in school makes it unfeasible for the child to develop within democratic principles, as recommended by law when decisions about children's education are unilateral.

Unlike the practice of authoritarian management, democratic management presupposes a collaborative environment in which subjects can share their worldviews. Affirming the education of young children as a right presupposes understanding this education by the principles of democratic management in which the participation of the family is fundamental. (Monção, 2013) But what kind of participation is being talked about? This issue refers to some levels, as highlighted by Resende and Silva (2016, p. 34):

The first level is that of "mere reception of information". At this level, parents are limited to receiving and responding to communications, phone calls, and notes from the school, being able to accompany their children also at home, but keeping away from the school and visiting it only when requested or on festive occasions. The second level is characterized by the "presence in the school's management bodies", with parents understood as "minor partners in the administration of the school institution" (Lima, 2002, p. 147). On the third level, parents have a direct involvement in classroom life, being "seen as active partners (sic), participants in the conception, planning, execution, and evaluation of important areas of the curriculum" (Lima, 2002, p. 148).

It is understood that participation is a theme with a wide range of understandings in the educational space, and it is important, when researching this field, to seek to understand which of these meanings apply to the speech of the deponents. Participation that receives messages on the part of teachers differs from participation with the power of choice based on the dialogue between the institution and the parents. In this sense, the authors contribute to the understanding of how the subjects of the CMEI's complement participation as a principle of democratic management.

THE PANDEMIC AND THE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN THE CMEIS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PARANAGUÁ-PR

It is understood that the impact promoted by the pandemic has generally affected the entire social sphere. In education, parents had to mediate their children's learning due

to the social distancing caused by the pandemic. This fact impacted the tasks of these subjects either due to the lack of time or the precariousness of the training necessary to support their children in the learning process, in addition to access to the technological resources required for this period. (INEP, 2022) Thus, it is considered that the pandemic imposed on these subjects important attributions about the appropriation of their children's knowledge.

Given the above, it is important to note that dealing with young children requires specificities that need to be understood. Making clear what is meant by democratic management, the objective goes on to examine the educational context that has befallen education, due to the pandemic in the municipality of Paranaguá-PR.

After three months since the first record in China in March 2020, the WHO declared a state of pandemic of the new coronavirus, based on the worldwide spread of the coronavirus-Covid-19. From this alert, in March 2020, states and municipalities began to adopt isolation and social distancing measures and policies to contain and reduce contagion rates, a situation that impacted the lives of the population. In August 2020, the Carlos Chagas Foundation, in partnership with other research centers, published the document "Portraits of Education in the Context of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Perspectives in Dialogue"⁴ which presented the results of studies to gather information about the Brazilian educational situation, based on data collected from the 27 state secretariats (100% of the universe) and 3,978 municipal secretariats (71% of the universe). The results showed that.

[...] In the week of March 24, 20, of the 21 state departments of education (78% of the universe) had issued regulations on the closure of schools due to the pandemic. In the same condition were 84% of the 3,011 municipalities that responded to the survey, corresponding to just over half 55% of the 5,570 municipalities in the country. Among the 20 state networks that responded to the survey and had issued regulations: 40% implemented the suspension of classes, and 40% promoted the advance of vacations/recess periods. 20% had made non-face-to-face activities available to fulfill the teaching workload. As for the 2,520 municipal networks participating in the study that had issued regulations: 63% implemented the suspension of classes, and 27% promoted the advance of vacations/recess periods. 8% had made non-face-to-face activities available to fulfill the teaching workload. 1% had other situations. (Carlos Chagas Foundation, 2020, p. 12-13).

⁴ As part of the research, the Carlos Chagas Foundation published the report: **Portraits of education in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic: a look at multiple inequalities**. 2020. Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nhP9Bdde-uJTgC0AQpXGUb7vQ2UAu2Rc/view>. The complete research is available in and *Portraits of Education in the Context of the Coronavirus Pandemic – Perspectives in Dialogue*, consolidating 5 studies carried out between March and May 2020, can be consulted at: <https://bit.ly/Relatorio-RetratosDaEducacao>. Accessed in June 2023.

Among these municipalities, Paranaguá-PR also had to deal with the impacts of the pandemic. The municipality is located on the coast of Paraná, has approximately 157,378 inhabitants, has 14,116 students enrolled in basic education, and 1153 teachers distributed in 73 teaching units. Based on the legislation produced at the national level, the municipality of Paranaguá-PR, by the National Contingency Plan, issued Decree No. 1,909/2020, which provides for measures to prevent contagion by the Coronavirus - COVID-19 in the municipality. Among the measures taken by the city hall was the suspension of classes in the Municipal Education Network for 15 days, being extended indefinitely through Decree No. 1954/2020. (Paranaguá, 2020).

According to Xavier (2023), after the suspension of classes in the municipality, in March Normative Instruction No. 04/2020 was published, which provides for the exceptional rules of the school calendar for the 2020 school year. This instruction had the character of resuming pedagogical activities remotely in Elementary School and EJA. In early childhood education, the resumption of classes in remote mode took place in July 2020, signed by Normative Instruction No. 05/2020, (Paranaguá, 2020). With the consent of the Municipal Council of Education of Paranaguá, Resolution No. 01/2020 was issued, which regulates exceptional rules on non-face-to-face pedagogical activities for the reorganization and compliance with the calendar of the 2020 school year of Early Childhood Education and Early Years of Elementary Education, for the Municipal Education System of Paranaguá, as a result of the specific legislation on the pandemic. (COMED, 2020).

To comply with the legislation, the Municipal Secretariat of Integral Education (SEMEDI) issued normative instruction No. 06/2020, guiding municipal educational institutions and teaching professionals, with measures for the monitoring of the proposed non-face-to-face pedagogical activities. The schools were instructed to organize the active search procedure⁵ foreseeing the possibility that students could abandon their studies. (Xavier, 2023). The standards established for the evaluation contemplated "feedback from fathers, mothers or guardians should be measured to record the performance achieved by students throughout exceptionality" (Xavier, 2023, p 41). It is observed here that the intention was to consult the families about the performance of the students.

It can be observed that the municipality had to deal, no different from other Brazilian municipalities, with the impacts of the pandemic on its education system. In this sense, it is

⁵Considering the probability of school dropout, an effort should be made to actively search for students.

sought to observe the subjects' vision in the field of research.

The field research covered three Early Childhood Education Centers in the municipality. Cmei I is located in the central region of Paranaguá, The Cmei has an adequate structure: It serves 127 children in both shifts. (PPP School I, 2022) who live in the surroundings and children of mothers who work in the central region of the municipality. The institution's Pedagogical Political Project ensures the participation of parents and aims at democratic management in the action plan of the institution, with strategies such as the strengthening of the APMF (Association of Parents, Teachers, and Employees) and quarterly meetings with parents in which the children's work is presented for the pedagogical monitoring of families. (PPP, School I)

CMEI II is located in a peripheral region of the city of Paranaguá. It serves the five nearby neighborhoods, and most of the children come from families, with a family income of up to one minimum wage on average. In its Pedagogical Political Project, Cmei points out the need to provide the participation of parents and the community because it understands the importance of this, for the institution and in the child's education. The Cmei project emphasizes that it works to raise awareness among the family and community about everyone's responsibility for the school life of children and also mentions that participation is an act of democracy. (PPP, School II)

The CMEI III is located in a region far from the city center. The structure of the school is broad. The Cmei is located among the poorest neighborhoods in the municipality and serves children from 5 different neighborhoods. The matriculated children are from families of workers in the region, with an average income of up to two minimum wages. The Pedagogical Political Project portrays the principles of democratic management as a point of arrival for management, according to the document the management always defends an open dialogue with the community. (PPP, School III). Thus, the subjects of the research are described.

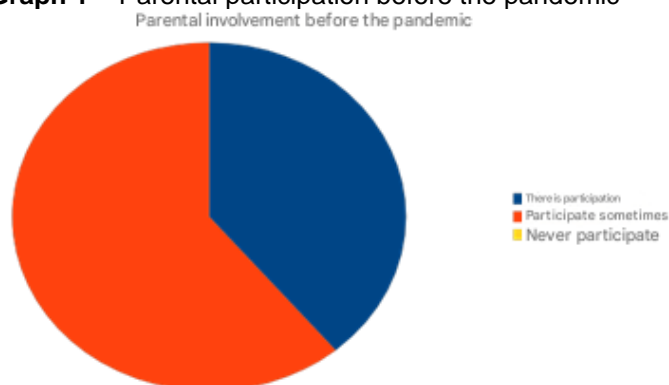
THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

These are 18 subjects, all women between 27 and 61 years of age, self-declared being 50% brown, 33% brown, and 16% white, with schooling between elementary school and master's degree. We now present the view of these subjects **about** the participation of parents in the CMEIs.

The subjects' view of participation before the pandemic.

Considering that, as previously announced, for this purpose the research aimed to confront the subjects' perception of participation in schools, thus graph 1 demonstrates that there are no manifestations of non-participation:

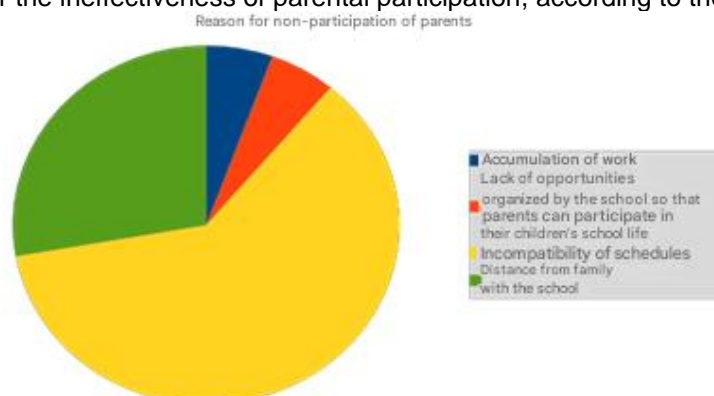
Graph 1 – Parental participation before the pandemic



Source: Graph prepared for this study, 2023.

The subjects stated that there is participation, however, they mostly recognize that this participation occurs in a fragmented way, a fact that leads to believe that there is no effective participation of the parents. When asked about the ineffectiveness of the subjects' participation, the reasons vary, as can be seen in **Graph 3**, below:

Graph 3 – Reason for the ineffectiveness of parental participation, according to the school subjects.



Source: Chart prepared for this study, 2023

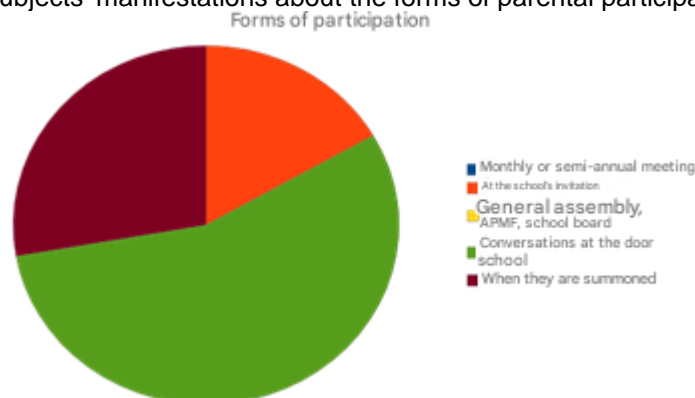
It was observed that 61% of the subjects pointed out that the incompatibility of the proposed schedules makes participation unfeasible since most of the parents who are workers do not have access to alternative schedules to participate, since the CMEI generally work between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., which makes participation unfeasible. However, observing the PPPs of the schools, it is seen in the statement that schools will not make efforts to expand the participation of parents in schools, especially when it comes to young children. (Monção, 2013) Other findings can be made when it is observed that there are no actions in the school's management practices that prioritize the effective participation of parents. It was observed that 27% of the subjects stated that there was distance between their parents and the school.

As can be seen in the statements of CMEI I, about the distance of parents from the school, this option had not been given, but the option for the distance of the school from the family, this exchange was made by the research subjects themselves and suggests that they do not have control over their PPP, or that ultimately, Democratic management reaches schools only in the formal aspect, as this document expresses the guarantee of participation, as well as the commitment of the institution's management to offer opportunities for parents to contribute to school management.

However, one of the mothers interviewed says that in this CMEI there are no opportunities for them to participate. Monção (2013) observes that there is an idea on the part of the school that parents do not have the necessary skills to contribute to the education of their children. However, the PPP of Cmei I states that it allows the participation of parents through various strategies. Another factor pointed out was the accumulation of work by parents. In the view of 5.5% of the subjects, it is an impetus for participation. It is understood that for parents, teachers, and administrators, there is a naturalization of the impact of work on the participation of parents in schools. However, the accumulation of work by parents is conditioned by the relationship of labor exploitation in capitalist society, which enters the school space about the monitoring of their children's school life.

Although the school recognizes the accumulation of work that is a fact, managers lack the clarity to develop proposals that dialogue with this fact to rethink the ways to bring this portion of the community into the school. So much so that when asked how the interviewees conceive the forms of participation, they were shown as follows, as shown in graph 3 below:

Graph 3 – The subjects' manifestations about the forms of parental participation in schools



Source: chart prepared for this study, 2023.

This graph shows that the conception of the subjects, about participation, varies, leading to the belief that in the forms presented, none of the answers considered the mechanisms of democratic management provided for institutionally. This leads to the belief that there is a replacement of collective management spaces with individualized spaces that do not meet democratic principles. (Paro, 2005, Lima, 2001) The participation of parents is reduced to a simple conversation "at the school door" about how the child's day was is considered by most subjects as participation, demonstrating the welfare character of the education of young children.

It was observed that among the questions presented, one referred to the instruments of democratic management (APMF, Assembly, School Council, PPP), however, this question was not answered by any of the subjects questioned, which leads to believe that there is in these Cemei's a total lack of knowledge about the management instruments instituted as spaces of collective construction. participation is not a principle of democracy in which the power of joint decision between family and school on the education of children comes.

It is noted that in the percentages 55% of the subjects indicated that conversations at the school door would be ways to participate. Another 28% say they take place through the institutional act of convocation. 16% of the subjects make it clear that they understand what participation is given at the invitation of the school. However, it can be observed that the management's recommendations for parental participation are directed at the individual level. This can be observed in the statements of the mother of Cemei I, who stated that the recommendations received to participate in her son's school life would be given by "private conversations with the parents, both on the phone and at the school door". The Cmei II teacher follows the same line, stating that Cemei guides parents "conversations in

WhatsApp groups and when necessary the management calls the responsible person to the school to talk in person". The manager of Cemei II, on the other hand, considers that guidance on participation should be given through "meetings of the pedagogical team with family members". It can be observed that practices that reduce the involvement of parents in the collective management of the school predominate in the CMEIs. According to Lima (2014, p. 1069), democratic management:

It runs the risk of crystallization as an allegedly democratic and legitimizing category, already relatively disconnected from possible effectively democratic achievements in terms of school governance, becoming a *slogan*, a commonplace that everyone invokes without major consequences, even when the dominant definition of democratic management may reveal its eventual devitalization or erosion.

In what is observed, there is a majority view in which participation does not imply the improvement of the quality of the development of young children. The view of the Manager of CMEI I stands out, in which participation is configured by the simple participation of parents in meetings about issues about children's lives, revealing here its mere welfare character (Monção, 2013), "because only the power to decide gives full meaning to the practices of the democratic government of schools, breaking with participatory staging, with rituals, processes, and methods that are formally democratic, but which lack democratic substantivity". (Lima, 2014, p 1072)

It was not observed in the interviewees the understanding of the deliberative character of the parents about the educational process of their children. The recommendations on the effectiveness of participation are based on instrumental guidelines in which "going to school" or "talking at the school door" are considered forms of participation.

According to Monção (2013), the understanding of the importance of democratic management in the school induces the manifestations of the school. Practices that prevent the participation of the family in decision-making as they do not give importance to the values and perceptions of those responsible for the children. It is observed that for the research subjects these forms are not valid for participation in the CMEIs. The management practices observed in the CMEIS are confronted with the exercise of participation as a radicalization of democracy (Arroyo, 2008).

The subjects of the CMEIs present a vision in which participation prevails in which the parents are merely a channel that receives messages from the school, which is

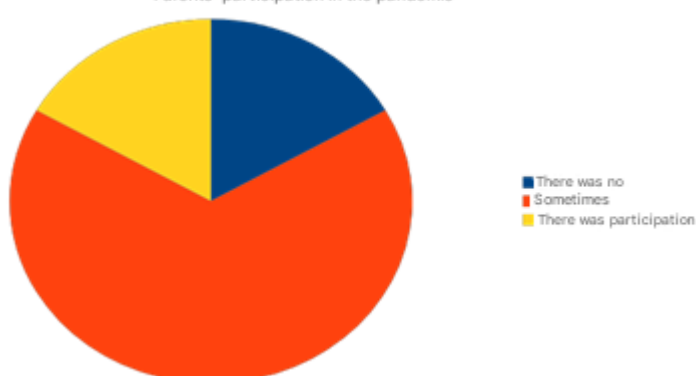
opposed to participation as a sharing of decisions based on the dialogue between the institution and the parents, which was constituted in the sharing of power over the constitution of the child's life. (Paro, 2016; Resende e Silva 2016)

It was also observed that the lack of a precise concept about democratic management contributes to the mystification of the participation that the subjects in the school present and when in conflict with the PPPs of these institutions, it can be observed that formally, they are present in this instrument. In this sense, it can be inferred that the PPPs of schools lose their function as an instrument of democratic management. In an idealized way, participation as a primordial act to decide together is relegated to the forms of contact between family and school. Like this

It is possible to list several divergent meanings of the category "democratic management of schools", not only marked by the miscegenation of distinct theoretical and conceptual elements, but also by historical and political-educational concretions that are closer to, or more distant, the democratic-participatory ideals, often referring to situations of marked hybridism and even to scenarios of possible rupture with the values of democracy. (Lima, 2014)

It can be observed that before the pandemic, the subjects of the Cemeis elaborated their management practices in a way that was alien to the principles of democratic management, this hybridism that constitutes the practices of democratic management deepened in the pandemic, in which participation took place in a dramatic way, which can be observed in the following data:

Graph 4 – The participation of parents in the pandemic.
Parents' participation in the pandemic



Source: Chart prepared for this study, 2023

Understanding this moment in which the approach of parents to the scoundrels is required as mediators of knowledge, it can be observed that non-participation in the pandemic moment was observed 16.5% stated that parents did not participate in their

children's school life. 67% of those surveyed said that participation was explicit and 16.5% that there was participation. By observing these data, we can infer that in the view of the subjects, there is a "pseudo-participation⁶" that relativizes the concept of participation in a critical perspective. However, the pandemic reveals that the distance of parents from school is clear, because.

Schools [...] have not been able to teach. Not only because of the lack of objective conditions but because without the face-to-face mediation of teachers, many students did not have someone close to help them with the activities when they managed to access them, in addition to this condition the pandemic period made the problems already existing in the school more evident. (Cardoso, et all, 2022., p)

One of the problems presented by the Cmeis was marked by the lack of participation of parents in the school life of their children during the pandemic. However, it can be observed that the non-involvement of parents in their children's learning about the previous observed period changed little. Knowing that participation is of fundamental importance in children's learning about caring and educating as a principle of educational practice in early childhood education. When asked if the participation of parents increased during the pandemic since they were the possible form of mediation between the school and the students. The subjects presented the following views:

Manager, I stated that the participation *No, increased*. It was asked about the reasons in her view due to *work and lack of theoretical knowledge of the parents to help with homework*. Mother 1 stated that *it did not increase, because in this capitalist society, parents were no longer participating, and with the pandemic, it only got worse. My niece is living proof of this, the duties he was told, who did the chores were his parents*. The Cmei II Teacher stated that the participation was *"reasonable because many still only attend to expose problems and not to know how their child's development is going"*. The manager of Cmei III stated the participation *"Increased, for families, in the pandemic period, the intention of participation was "assistance" due to food (delivery of basic food baskets at the institution)"*.

When referring to the increase in parental participation in the pandemic, it was observed that none of the Cmeis showed manifestations that indicated dialogue relationships with parents to decide how to proceed in this pandemic time. It was noted that the teachers and managers of Cmeis developed practices that they thought were possible

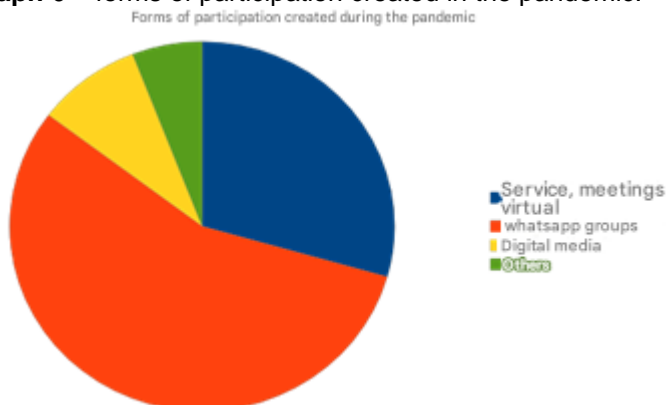
⁶ Lima (2014, p. 1072)

in the absence of the participation of the families. However, in most of the statements of teachers and administrators, it was identified that the problem of parental participation was imputed only to them, as can be observed in the statement of Teacher 1 of CMEI I when she stated that "The lack of parental participation in the affective and cognitive aspects of children is clear". It was inferred that these statements seek, ultimately, to blame the parents as if all the absence of the family in the school occurs without taking into account that for participation to occur the institution must organize the forms of participation, considering it as a political act. Because:

From the perspective of parents, teachers, and attendants, opinions about the demands, expectations, and responsibilities of each one seem to be distant, not characterizing a tendency towards active involvement and partnership. Inattention and unpreparedness (both from the daycare center and the parents) and communication failures make it difficult to share information, especially about the child. There is no division of responsibilities and the relationship between daycare and family oscillates between the defensive conduct of the parents and the offensive conduct of the daycare. (Bhering and De Nez, 2002, p.67)

In the following graph, it is evident that the view of the subjects of the CMEI tolerates the pseudo-participation of the parents, aimed exclusively at a type of stereo participationism that refers to welfare practices. Differently in this way, participation in a critical perspective requires much more than mere access to information about children. These statements can be seen in graph 6, below, when questioning the forms for parental participation organized during the pandemic.

Graph 6 – forms of participation created in the pandemic.



Source: Graph prepared for this study, 2023.

The Graph reveals that 55.9% took place in WhatsApp groups, 29.4% for service, and virtual meetings, 8.8% for digital media (such as platforms and Facebook), and 5.8%

for others appears the parents' trips to the institution to pick up basic food baskets⁷, according to the Manager of Cmei III.

In the case of families without internet access, we made contact via call to schedule the delivery of printed proposals and to do the active search. Initially, the delivery of the proposals was all done at home, we took the proposals and food kits to the children's homes. Later, we continued to deliver to homes only to those we had no contact with by call. The others we called to go to Cmei to pick up/deliver. (Cmei II Manager, 2023)

According to the subjects researched, this was a form considered by the parents of Cmei I as going to school, as a synonym for participation. However, most of them said that it was enough, due to the moment experienced by the pandemic. Among the means proposed for the participation of parents in their children's learning, according to the statements of the respondents, they booted between the delivery of basic food baskets, picking up material, phone calls and requests for participation, virtual meetings, active search, text messages, video calls.

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A fact that draws a lot of attention to the delivery of basic food baskets is the contact of the family with the school, delivery of basic food baskets picking up the printed activities, and being aware of the guidelines passed on. These ways found by the school to make contact with the parents would not have happened otherwise, due to the distance already constituted between school and family.

It was noted that the parents were not invited at any time to discuss the referrals given by the CMEIs. The meetings had a merely administrative and verticalized character and did not involve the decisions of these subjects. Finally, the subjects' view of the non-involvement of parents in the school during the pandemic was questioned, according to managers and teachers:

Parents maintain the mentality that the function of education is only of the CMEI; The school is always open to receive the parents, but on the part of the family there is no interest. Parents lack interest in participating in their children's school life, school institutions are doing their best to make parents more interested and more

⁷ Students started to receive basic food baskets distributed to enrolled students in relation to the degree of vulnerability of families, exhibited in the pandemic.

available; we lack willpower. When it is in their interest (injured child) they find time to come to school, but when it is the other way around they are not interested; This participation and willingness and availability of parents to be in school needs to come from the parents; Interest, stop complaining and only see problems, but also get involved with the children. (Questionnaire for teachers and managers prepared for this 2023)

These statements suggest that both CMEI and family understand the importance of working together, of having good communication, and that this positively influences the child. However, it is considered that this constitutes a one-way street, it seems that parents are blamed for non-participation although the school does not offer the means and organization for this. The school:

Understood as democratic self-government, the democratic management of schools takes on a political aspect, in search of its autonomy, in a regime of co-decision and interdependence with other public authorities, legitimizing the decentralization of the school system and the transfer of powers, from the center to the peripheries, through the democratic participation of school actors and the public in contact with the school, from a socio-community perspective. (Lima, 2014, p. 1073)

Therefore, the concerns demonstrated here assume importance to the extent that it is known that participation is a policy that defines the inclusion of subjects in a process of autonomy for the power to decide jointly and not simply an act of "going to school" This dimension is emptied of political content for the transformation of the school into a powerful instrument of population control over State policies. (Arroyo, 2008). It is necessary to rethink democratic management as a political practice necessary for human emancipation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research showed that the welfare issue of early childhood education, that is, the dichotomy between caring and educating, pointed out that it remains in the management practices of the CMEIs, this perception contaminates teachers, parents, and managers who start to manage their daily management actions from this perspective in which only child care is important in dealing with families. It was evidenced that the non-participation of parents and families in the CMEI during the pandemic was not only due to the conditions of social distancing, as the distance between these institutions was already present before it. The pandemic revealed that the school had to deal with all the decisions about conducting the education of children without the support of parents. This scenario contributed to the difficulties pointed out in the reports, previously presented, which indicate the difficulties in children's learning. This is because the school, by not having a concept of

the political dimension of democratic management, establishes with the parents merely administrative management practices that do not consider the family as a fundamental axis in the education of boys and girls.

It was found that the view of the subjects demonstrates an emptying of the political practice that involves democratic management, These pedagogical management practices are evidenced by common sense, which does not allow a democratic environment in which boys and girls can develop as critical citizens. As much as the pedagogical projects of the schools are permeated by objectives aimed at democratic management, it is not established in the institutions researched.

Thus, the concept of participation, as far as can be observed, is detrimental to its political content in the pedagogical management of the CMEIs, which leads to the non-participation of the family. Therefore, the findings of this research allowed us to understand that democratic management is established in these institutions in a merely formal way, through their PPPs. Therefore, there is a huge gap between what is said and what is done in these institutions about democratic management.

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