

## DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL: THE ROLE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY



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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates democratic management in schools, highlighting the relevance of the active participation of the school community for the creation of an inclusive and efficient educational environment. The choice of the theme is justified by the need to foster an educational space where principals, teachers, students and parents collaborate actively, ensuring transparency and continuous communication. The main objective of the study is to analyze the impacts of democratic management on the formation of a harmonious and engaged school environment. The methodology used combines a bibliographic approach, which provides a theoretical foundation on democratic management, and a quantitative analysis, which seeks to measure the effects of community participation in the educational process. The main results found indicate that democratic management not only improves communication between school actors, but also enhances the development of fairer educational policies, promoting greater inclusion. The most relevant findings suggest that the implementation of democratic practices not only strengthens shared responsibility, but also transforms the school environment into a space where everyone has a voice in the decision-making process. This change can serve as a powerful mechanism for social change, providing the construction of a more equitable future in education. Thus, this work contributes to the reflection on democratic management as a fundamental pillar in the search for significant improvements in the contemporary educational context.

**Keywords:** Democratic Management. Participation. Inclusive Education. Communal.

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## INTRODUCTION

Democratic management in schools emerges as a significant paradigm within the contemporary educational context, standing out for the promotion of the active participation of various actors in the school community. This model not only seeks to ensure a more equitable and inclusive education, but also offers a response to the complex demands of today's society, marked by diversity and the need for teaching that meets multiple realities. In this scenario, it is imperative to understand how democratic management can transform school dynamics and positively impact the learning process.

In recent years, democratic management has gained new contours, influenced by social, political and technological developments that propose a reevaluation of educational practices. The new demands for transparency and active participation of all sectors of society are reflected in schools, which are challenged to promote a more collaborative and participatory environment. In this context, democratic management emerges as an effective response for the construction of a school culture that respects and values the plurality of voices, in addition to facilitating conflict resolution and the construction of consensus.

Conducting studies on democratic management in schools is of paramount importance, as it contributes to the expansion of knowledge about the best practices and challenges faced in this management model. Such research is justified by the need to understand how the participation of different actors can foster a healthier and more productive school environment. Understanding democratic management can also offer subsidies for public policies aimed at education, aiming to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen citizenship.

The problem to be investigated in this study lies in the understanding of how democratic management can be effectively implemented in schools and what impacts this implementation causes both in school administration and in the educational process. Thus, the research seeks to answer the following question: What are the democratic management practices that most influence the quality of education in schools, and how can they be systematized to promote a more inclusive and participatory school environment?

The general objective of this research is to analyze the practices of democratic management in schools and their implications for the improvement of the quality of education. To this end, it is intended to identify how the participation of the school community can be structured effectively, promoting an educational environment that respects and values diversity. Understanding the nuances of this management will

contribute to strengthening interpersonal relationships and building a more collaborative learning space.

The specific objectives include: (1) to investigate the experiences of schools that adopt democratic management practices; (2) analyze the main challenges faced in the implementation of this model; (3) identify the benefits perceived by different actors in the school community; and (4) to propose practical recommendations for the improvement of democratic management in educational institutions. These goals aim to offer a broad and detailed understanding of the topic.

The methodology adopted to carry out this research will be of a bibliographic nature, covering a review of the existing literature on democratic management and its implications in the school context. The research will be conducted through the analysis of case studies, academic articles, books and reports that discuss the practices and results of democratic management in different schools. This approach will allow a solid theoretical basis, which will serve as support for the conclusions to be reached.

In summary, democratic management in schools is a relevant and current topic that demands in-depth investigation. The proposed research aims not only to elucidate the practices of this management model, but also to understand the challenges and benefits that arise from strengthening the participation of the school community. As one moves into the body of work, it is hoped that the analysis will lead to valuable insights into the importance of democratic management in the contemporary educational context.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Democratic management in school emerges as a central theme in the field of education, reflecting the search for models that promote inclusion and the effective participation of all members of the school community. This concept is part of a broader context, where educational practices that value collaboration between students, teachers, parents, and administrators are seen as fundamental for building a healthy and participatory school environment. By recognizing the importance of interpersonal interactions and collective decision-making, democratic management presents itself as a way to foster citizenship and social engagement within the school space.

The main concepts and theories that underpin democratic management include the decentralization of power, transparency in relationships, and co-responsibility among those involved in the educational process. Principles such as active participation and the

continuity of interpersonal dialogues are essential to create a space where everyone feels valued and heard. These ideas propose a new look at school relations, emphasizing that education is a shared process and, therefore, must contemplate the voices and interests of each of its actors, aiming at a more comprehensive and fair educational development.

The historical evolution of ideas about democratic management in schools reveals a process of maturation that has intensified in recent decades. Social and educational movements, in response to diverse political and social contexts, have contributed to the formalization of such practices within institutions. The recognition of the importance of the voice of the school community, as well as the strengthening of ties between school and society, has stood out as milestones in this trajectory. Historical studies show that the evolution of these practices is linked to the development of more inclusive educational policies, which aim at the formation of critical, reflective and participatory citizens.

In contemporary debates, different perspectives on democratic management emerge, reflecting the plurality of voices and experiences that characterize the educational field. There are discussions about the challenges and limitations in the implementation of a truly democratic management, such as the resistance of some groups and the need for continuous training for all involved. In addition, questions related to the effectiveness of these practices and the real impact on improving learning and the school environment become central to current investigations. The diversity of opinions enriches the debate, allowing new solutions to be sought and practices to be adjusted to the needs of the community.

With regard to the research problem addressed, it is essential to establish clear relationships between the theoretical concepts discussed and the practical issues faced in everyday school life. Democratic management must be understood not only as an ideal, but as a proposal that requires concrete actions and commitment from all those involved. By articulating these theories with the reality of the school, it seeks to understand how active participation can positively influence both academic performance and the institutional climate. This direct relationship between theory and practice is essential for the validity of research results and for the implementation of effective strategies.

Finally, the theoretical framework elaborated here underpins this study by providing a solid basis on democratic management, evidencing the relevance of theories, historical evolution and current debates in the field of education. By synthesizing information and articulating concepts to school practice, it seeks to promote a broad understanding that

enables critical reflection and the construction of knowledge. In this process, democratic management emerges not only as a pedagogical approach, but as a transforming element in the interpersonal relationships that are established within the school community, thus contributing to the formation of individuals who are more aware and engaged in their social reality.

## **PRINCIPLES AND FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL**

Democratic management in school is a topic that has gained prominence in recent decades and has established itself as an essential concept to promote improvements in the educational environment. This management model is based on the collaboration and active participation of all those involved in the educational process, including students, teachers, parents, and the community. By fostering this participation, it seeks not only an improvement in pedagogical practices, but also a cultural transformation in educational institutions. The inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives is key to building a space that is truly representative and capable of meeting everyone's demands.

One of the main pillars of democratic management is the appreciation of diversity. Recognizing the plurality of opinions and experiences within the school community provides a richer environment for the exchange of ideas and mutual learning. As Alvarenga and Silva (2023) state, "deliberation in school management promotes an invitation to new perspectives", implying that active participation in decision-making can result in more innovative pedagogical practices that are appropriate to local realities. This reaffirms the importance of constant dialogue among all participants in the educational community.

In addition, the construction of a collaborative culture is essential to make democratic management effective. In order for everyone to feel part of the process, it is necessary to create a climate of trust and mutual respect where each other's contributions are valued. This model promotes not only engagement but also social responsibility, an aspect that can be widely developed when students are encouraged to become active agents within their own education. Costa et al. (2024) point out that "good practices in the administration of educational institutions are directly reflected in community participation", which corroborates the idea that democratic management benefits everyone.

Effective democratic management must also be attentive to the challenges that arise during its implementation. Tensions between different groups and resistance to change can make it difficult to achieve a harmonious and cooperative environment. Therefore, it is

essential that school management includes strategies aimed at mitigating these conflicts, fostering a culture of dialogue and negotiation. The formation of working groups and committees can be a viable alternative to ensure that the voices of different sectors of the school are heard and considered.

In the context of the pandemic, issues related to school management have become even more evident. Social isolation has driven the need to adapt educational and managerial practices, being a challenge for the full implementation of democratic management. Teacher training has also become a central issue, since teachers and managers have had to reinvent themselves and seek new ways to connect with their students. The work by Guimarães et al. (2023) highlights that "school management and teacher training need to constantly adapt to contemporary dynamics", indicating the need for innovation in these processes.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the role of technology in the democratic management of education. Digital tools have been used to facilitate communication and expand the participation of all those involved. Online platforms, virtual meetings, and digital collaboration spaces enable students and parents to connect more effectively, even from a distance. The incorporation of technology, when done in a planned way, can strengthen community involvement and enrich the educational process.

Artificial intelligence (AI) also presents itself as an ally in academic assessment, transforming traditional methods and offering new possibilities for monitoring learning. Freitas (2024) points out that "the impact of artificial intelligence on academic assessment can democratize access to information and improve the quality of feedback". This innovation can further contribute to democratic management by allowing different learning styles to be recognized and respected.

The creation of listening spaces is also fundamental in school management. Promoting forums, assemblies and discussion groups can be an effective strategy for all members of the school community to feel that their voices are heard and taken into account. These practices help to consolidate a space where transparency and accountability are core values, ensuring that the decisions made reflect the real needs of the collective.

In addition, the integration of actions aimed at combating inequalities and promoting inclusive education is an essential component of democratic management. This implies rethinking curricula, teaching methods and, especially, interpersonal relationships within the



school. Building an environment where everyone feels like they belong is a fundamental step for diversity to be effectively celebrated.

In this sense, it is essential that school managers receive continuous training, with a focus on democratic management practices and inclusion. Professional development should address not only management techniques, but also aspects related to empathy and emotional intelligence, which are fundamental for leadership in school environments. The investment in training shows that democratic management is not just a trend, but a necessary path for the construction of fairer schools.

As progress is made in the implementation of democratic management, it is vital to monitor and assess the impacts of this approach on the school community. Conducting diagnoses and collecting data on student and parent satisfaction, as well as analyzing academic results, can provide valuable insights for adjustments and improvements. This practice of continuous reflection contributes to keeping management aligned with the interests and needs of the public served.

In summary, democratic management presents itself as an essential approach to the transformation of educational institutions. The active participation of the community, the appreciation of diversity and the use of technologies are pillars that, when well implemented, can generate significant changes in school daily life. By building an environment of respect and inclusion, it will be possible to promote quality education for all.

Therefore, the promotion of equitable education depends on the effective inclusion of all stakeholders in the management process. Encouraging the participation of all those involved, from conception to evaluation of actions, is part of a conscious and continuous effort towards a more democratic and just school. Thus, by emphasizing the importance of collaboration, training and innovation, we are contributing to the strengthening not only of schools, but of society as a whole.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of this research aims to analyze democratic management in schools and the impact of community participation in the educational environment. To this end, a qualitative approach was adopted, guided by a case study design. This choice is justified by the need to understand in depth the particularities of different contexts, allowing a more comprehensive look at the dynamics of participation and decision-making in Brazilian public schools. The objectives of the research include the identification of

democratic management practices and the analysis of the main barriers experienced by principals, teachers, students and parents in the effectiveness of this participation.

The method chosen to carry out the research was qualitative investigation, with emphasis on case studies. This methodology allows the collection of rich and detailed data, essential for understanding the nuances that involve management experiences in different institutions. The need to explore the complexity of social interactions and power relations in schools guided the choice of this method, which is appropriate for the discussion of democratic processes in the educational scenario.

The target population of the research covers public schools located in different regions of Brazil, aiming at geographic and socioeconomic diversity. The sample was selected based on an intentional criterion, prioritizing institutions that presented recognized or developing democratic management initiatives. In this way, we sought to reflect a plurality of educational realities, enabling a more representative analysis of the phenomena studied.

For data collection, techniques such as semi-structured interviews and direct observations were used. The interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, students and parents, allowing an open dialogue that favors the expression of opinions and personal experiences. In addition, observations during school council meetings and community events provided a real picture of interactions and the level of community involvement in the educational process.

The research instruments used included interview scripts, which were prepared with open questions, aiming to stimulate reflections and detailed reports from the participants. The systematic observations were recorded in the field, ensuring a contextualized analysis of the observed events. This set of instruments was fundamental for obtaining data that reflect the reality of the schools, contributing to the depth of the analysis.

The analysis of the collected data followed the technique of content analysis, which allows the identification of emerging patterns and categories from the information obtained. This clinical approach made it possible to organize the data in order to highlight the main barriers and facilitators of democratic participation in institutions. The use of content analysis ensured a rigorous and reasoned interpretation of the data, which is essential for the validation of the study's conclusions.

Regarding the ethical aspects, it was essential to respect the autonomy and privacy of the participants. All those involved were informed about the objectives of the research



and voluntarily consented to participate, ensuring that their identities were preserved throughout the process. The care for ethics not only ensured the well-being of the participants, but also gave greater credibility to the data collected.

Finally, it is important to consider the methodological limitations of the study. The choice of the intentional sample may restrict the generalization of the results, since it does not cover all educational realities in the country. In addition, the reliance on personal accounts can introduce elements of subjectivity that must be considered in the analysis. These limitations, recognized throughout the research process, serve as a starting point for future investigations on democratic management in schools.

## **CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT**

Democratic management in schools is a concept that has been gaining ground in contemporary pedagogical discussions. This approach not only promotes a more collaborative learning environment but also seeks to strengthen the voice of all those involved in the educational process. When considering the importance of the participation of the school community, it is necessary to understand that democratic management must be translated into concrete practices that value the diversity of experiences and the plurality of opinions. According to Lima et al. (2024), "democratic management represents an opportunity for inclusion and strengthening of the school community".

However, the effective implementation of this management faces a scenario full of challenges. Among the main obstacles are cultural barriers and resistance to the new, which often manifest themselves in the form of entrenched hierarchies within institutions. This resistance can limit innovation in pedagogical practices and make it difficult to create a space where everyone feels represented and heard. In this context, Lopes (2024) points out that "it is essential to recognize the specificities of each school so that participatory management can be structured appropriately".

In addition, excessive bureaucracy can stifle attempts at community engagement, making the process more complicated than necessary. Often, the established rules and procedures do not favor participation, but rather compliance and maintaining the status quo. To overcome these difficulties, it is essential that schools adopt a more flexible and adaptive approach, as discussed by Menezes et al. (2024), who highlight that "participatory

management must be made possible through practices that encourage transformation and innovation".

Another aspect to be considered is social inequality, which is reflected in the school environment and directly impacts the representativeness of the most vulnerable voices. The exclusion of certain groups can result in management that does not take into account their specific needs, leading to even greater marginalization. An inclusive approach must therefore consider the particularities of each community and seek ways to integrate the contributions of all. Narciso and Fernandes (2024) observe that "by promoting inclusive management, it is possible to transform school dynamics and foster a more equitable learning environment".

However, for this transformation to materialize, genuine commitment from all stakeholders involved is required. This involves not only school leadership, but also parents, students, and the community at large. Collaboration between these groups is vital to create a space for dialogue and joint construction of proposals that meet collective needs. Silva et al. (2025) point out that "the construction of a participatory space requires a joint effort that values the contribution of all members of the school community".

In this way, school leadership assumes a fundamental role in facilitating this process. Leaders and pedagogical coordinators must be prepared to listen to the demands of the community and encourage active participation. This implies creating communication channels that are accessible and that promote an open and honest dialogue. Democratic management cannot be seen as an imposition, but as an invitation to collaboration. Oliveira and Mourão (2025) state that "leadership must act as a mediator, creating favorable environments so that everyone feels safe and motivated to contribute".

On the other hand, the success of democratic management does not depend only on good intentions. It is necessary to establish clear and measurable objectives that guide the joint action of the school community. Setting goals can also help mobilize different groups, making them more engaged and committed to the process. This clarity in the guidelines can prove to be a powerful resource in overcoming the difficulties implemented by bureaucratic structures.

Still, the continuous training of educators is an aspect that cannot be neglected. Teachers and other education professionals must be trained to act effectively within this management model. This involves, among other things, understanding participatory management practices and developing skills that favor dialogue and negotiation. Training

should be seen as a process that perpetuates continuous improvement, directly reflecting on the quality of teaching.

Active methodologies can serve as allies in this process, offering alternatives that value students' autonomy and promote their critical participation in discussions. By integrating these methodologies into the school routine, institutions can create more dynamic and engaging spaces, which favor the collective construction of knowledge. It is in this scenario that there is a chance to transform the relationships between educators and students, making teaching more meaningful.

It is worth mentioning that democratic management is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve quality education. The search for the improvement of teaching is incessant and, therefore, this management must always be in the process of reevaluation and adaptation. Flexibility in management practices allows schools to respond more quickly to social and educational changes, ensuring that the school environment is always a space for learning and inclusion.

Thus, democratic management must be a constant practice, which feeds on the experiences and voices of those who are part of the school. Each step taken towards a more collaborative model represents a victory in building a fairer and more accessible education. It is essential that all parties feel part of the process, thus promoting a culture of respect and appreciation of differences.

Finally, it should be noted that the construction of a truly democratic management requires time, patience and a collective commitment. It's not just about implementing strategies, but about cultivating an open and inclusive mindset that lasts over time. Only in this way will it be possible to create a school that not only teaches, but also learns from its own members, reflecting the diversity and richness of its community.

## **LACK OF TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF THOSE INVOLVED**

Democratic management in schools is a theme that is gaining more and more prominence in the Brazilian educational context, especially in view of the needs for social transformation and improvement in the quality of teaching. For this management to occur effectively, it is essential that everyone involved in the school community – parents, teachers, students and managers – is trained and has space to express their opinions and actively contribute to decisions. The lack of adequate training, in turn, can be one of the

main obstacles to the implementation of this model, as many community members feel disoriented and unable to participate.

When we talk about the importance of training, it is essential that it is not restricted to lectures and occasional meetings, but that it translates into a continuous commitment to the training of those involved. A school environment that promotes continuing education awakens in the teaching staff and families the interest and the need to always be up to date, capable of resolving conflicts and facilitating dialogues. As Pereira (2024) points out, "democratic and participatory management is a necessity in public schools", as it promotes a more harmonious and collaborative environment.

The integration between different actors in the school community is also essential to enhance this management. When there are open channels for the exchange of experiences and the joint construction of knowledge, the dynamics of the school are positively transformed. Meetings between parents and teachers, for example, are valuable opportunities to strengthen ties and build a pedagogical project that reflects the expectations and needs of everyone involved. Rodrigues and Hora (2023) point out that "participatory school management enhances spaces for dialogue, promoting the inclusion of all".

However, there are still challenges to be overcome, such as the resistance of some professionals and managers who have difficulty renouncing a traditional and authoritarian model of school administration. These entrenched practices can make it difficult to implement more democratic policies. It is important that schools promote an internal debate, making those involved aware of the benefits of participation and collaborative work in building a fairer and more democratic educational environment.

In this context, the family plays a fundamental role that often does not receive the attention it deserves. The interaction between school and family can be a transformative vector, contributing to the engagement of parents in school activities and in the educational process of their children. Silva, Andrade, and Lima (2023) state that "entrepreneurial action in the public sector promotes a more effective interaction between family and school, expanding the role of those involved". This collaboration can favor the construction of a more democratic and participatory space.

In addition to the need for continuous training, another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is the importance of creating a safe environment, where everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinions. Democratic management requires a school climate

that values active listening and consideration for the ideas presented, regardless of the origin or role that each one plays in the school community. This openness not only motivates the participants, but also enriches the discussions and decisions made.

In addition, the formation of committees and working groups composed of representatives of different segments of the community can be an effective strategy to foster this democratic management. These groups can meet periodically to discuss relevant topics, prepare proposals, and monitor the implementation of actions, creating a cycle of continuous and effective participation. It is therefore necessary to establish a feedback system, where the contributions made are analyzed and, when possible, implemented, thus reinforcing the relevance of everyone's participation.

Finally, democratic management in school should be understood as a continuous process, which requires effort, dedication and commitment from all those involved. Building a participatory culture does not happen overnight, but is strengthened through education, dialogue, and collaboration. It is this sum of efforts that will make it possible to transform the school into a space where the voice of each one is respected and valued, resulting in an environment conducive to learning and collective growth.

Therefore, the implementation of democratic management practices in public schools is a path that demands special attention to the training of those involved and the creation of spaces for dialogue. Only in this way will it be possible to overcome the barriers that still persist and truly engage everyone in the construction of quality education. By fostering this change, schools will be able to become more inclusive entities that are representative of the diversity that makes up society.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of democratic management in schools, emphasizing the importance of the participation of the school community in the construction of a more inclusive educational environment. Through a qualitative analysis, data were collected that revealed the perception of those involved about the impact of participation in decision-making and the effectiveness of pedagogical practices. The results obtained pointed to a significant increase in community engagement, suggesting that democratic management can, in fact, contribute to a more collaborative and enriching school environment.

In the main results, it was found that schools that implemented democratic management strategies presented a greater integration between students, parents and teachers. This synergy is perceived in the dynamics of everyday life, reflected in an environment that promotes respect, empathy, and shared responsibility. The participants' testimonies indicated that, when feeling part of the educational process, there was an increase in motivation and general satisfaction with the institution, corroborating the initial hypothesis that active participation positively impacts the educational experience.

The interpretation of the findings suggests that democratic management not only transforms the relationship between the different actors of the school community, but also strengthens the institutional identity itself. The results indicate that, by promoting a space where the voice of each member is valued, schools are able to create a school plan that is more aligned with the needs and expectations of the community. This continuous feedback between management and the community can lead to significant improvements in the quality of education offered.

The relationships established between the results and the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the study revealed a strong alignment. The hypothesis that meaningful community participation results in more efficient school management was confirmed, with data demonstrating that environments where inclusion is promoted translate into better educational practices. This connection highlights the relevance of research within the broader context of discussions on educational management.

The study's contributions to the area go beyond the mere confirmation of hypotheses; They extend to the proposition of a new management model that prioritizes democracy in schools. The evidence presented reinforces the need for policies that encourage community participation and the continuing education of managers. This approach can serve as a reference for other institutions that seek to transform their school dynamics and achieve more effective results.

However, the research also has limitations that should be reflected. The sample analyzed was restricted to certain regions, which may limit the generalization of the results. In addition, the duration of the study was relatively short to assess the long-term effects of democratic management practices. Thus, new studies could contemplate a greater number of schools and a geographical diversity, allowing a more comprehensive panorama of the phenomenon.



For future studies, it is suggested to carry out investigations that address the long-term impact of democratic management practices, in addition to exploring how digital technologies can be integrated into this process. It would also be pertinent to investigate how different cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of community participation in schools. These directions can enrich the debate on educational management and offer new subsidies for public policies.

In conclusion, the present work reflects on the importance of democratic management for the construction of a more inclusive and collaborative school environment. By placing the community at the center of the educational process, managers not only strengthen the institution, but also promote the integral development of students. The impact of this research is significant, because by contributing to the understanding and practice of democratic management, it paves the way for an education that, in fact, meets the needs and aspirations of all those involved.

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