



Democratization of school management: challenges, contradictions and pedagogical training experiences

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ABSTRACT. From today's educational perspective, democratic management is increasingly gaining ground due to its importance in the search for a reality in which all the agents that make up the school actively participate in the construction of the school we want. With a focus on the challenges and contradictions of this system, we sought to reflect on the experiences of the Institutional Scholarship and Teaching Initiation Program (PIBID) and a non-mandatory internship in Management, both carried out in two state schools located in the municipality of Aracaju, in the state of Sergipe. To elucidate the relationship between Democratic Management and Pedagogical Training, we initially discussed the presuppositions of democratic management of public schools and then problematized democratic management, based on the experiences of pedagogical training, understood as a space for building the necessary knowledge for competent, qualified and socially referenced professional performance. The research sought to analyze elements of these narratives as a way of understanding the obstacles that make it impossible to guarantee democratic-participatory management. For democratic management to take place, it is necessary to disseminate this model of management, so that the school community understands its real importance within this context, and so that effective participation and mutual collaboration between its agents occur.

Keywords: school community; public education; pedagogical training; democratic management.

Democratização da gestão escolar: desafios, contradições e experiências de formação pedagógica

RESUMO. Na perspectiva educacional atual, a gestão democrática cada vez mais ganha espaço pela sua importância na busca de uma realidade em que todos os agentes que compõem a escola participem ativamente da construção da escola que se pretende. Com foco nos desafios e contradições desse sistema, buscamos refletir no âmbito da formação em Pedagogia da Universidade Federal de Sergipe, sobre experiências do Programa Institucional de Bolsas e Iniciação à Docência (PIBID) e Estágio não obrigatório na área de Gestão, ambos realizados em duas escolas estaduais situadas no município de Aracaju, no estado de Sergipe. Para a elucidação da relação entre Gestão Democrática e Formação Pedagógica, discutimos inicialmente os pressupostos da gestão democrática da escola pública e em seguida problematizamos a gestão democrática, a partir das experiências de formação pedagógica, entendidas como espaço de construção de conhecimentos necessários à atuação profissional competente, qualificada e socialmente referendada. A pesquisa buscou analisar elementos dessas narrativas como forma de compreender os entraves que impossibilitam a garantia de uma gestão democrático-participativa. Para que a gestão democrática aconteça, é necessária a disseminação desse modelo de gerir, a fim de que a comunidade escolar entenda sua real importância dentro desse contexto, e assim ocorram a participação efetiva e a colaboração mútua entre seus agentes.

Palavras-chave: comunidade escolar; educação pública; formação pedagógica; gestão democrática.

Democratización de la gestión escolar: desafíos, contradicciones y experiencias de la formación pedagógica

RESUMEN. En la perspectiva educativa actual, la gestión democrática gana cada vez más terreno por su importancia en la búsqueda de una realidad en la que todos los agentes que componen la escuela participen activamente en la construcción de la escuela pretendida. Con foco en los desafíos y contradicciones de este sistema, buscamos reflexionar, en el ámbito de la educación en Pedagogía de la Universidad Federal de Sergipe, sobre experiencias del Programa Institucional de Becas e Iniciación Docente (PIBID) y Pasantía no

obligatoria en la área de gestión, ambas realizadas en dos escuelas públicas ubicadas en el municipio de Aracaju, en el estado de Sergipe. Con el fin de dilucidar la relación entre Gestión Democrática y Formación Pedagógica, discutimos inicialmente los presupuestos de la gestión democrática en las escuelas públicas y luego problematizamos la gestión democrática, a partir de experiencias de formación pedagógica, entendida como espacio de construcción de los saberes necesarios para un desempeño profesional competente, cualificada y socialmente avalada. La investigación buscó analizar elementos de estas narrativas como una forma de comprender los obstáculos que imposibilitan garantizar una gestión democrático-participativa. Para que la gestión democrática se lleve a cabo es necesario difundir este modelo de gestión, para que la comunidad escolar comprenda su real importancia en este contexto, y así se produzca una efectiva participación y colaboración mutua entre sus agentes.

Palabras clave: comunidad escolar; educación pública; formación pedagógica; gestión democrática.

Received on September 27, 2023.

Accepted on January 17, 2024.

Published on August 19, 2025.

Introduction

In Brazilian public schools, the democratic management model is becoming increasingly visible. In this sense, the school seeks to play its role in the community, promoting integration between the community and the school environment. The process of democratization does not come easily, as it automatically depends on the participation of many agents, such as parents, students, teachers and other staff, but above all, on a management team that is willing to face the various challenges that arise when trying to bring the community closer to the school's actions and decisions.

School management, when carried out well, through the various forms of participation, provides satisfactory results for an entire system that must always be updated, but especially for the students, who need to live in an environment based on democratic and participatory relations, which helps them become citizens who are aware of their rights and duties in society. However, based on the dialog between the theories studied and the real experiences in schools, in our pedagogical training, we identified dilemmas and obstacles that make it difficult to establish effective management, which is where the central problem of this research came from.

In this perspective, as a methodological cutout for the research, we sought to reflect on the challenges and contradictions surrounding school management, based on the experiences lived in the Institutional Scholarship Program and Initiation to Teaching - PIBID, from 08/01/2018 to 10/31/2019 and Non-mandatory Internship, from 09/22/2019 to 09/22/2020, in two state elementary schools, both located in the municipality of Aracaju, in the state of Sergipe. These experiences took place as part of the Pedagogy course at the Federal University of Sergipe (Santos, 2021).

The analysis followed a qualitative, ethnographic approach, focusing on autobiographical narratives - recorded in a field diary - which are based on the experience and interpretation of a reality in a space/time; combined with bibliographical research, seeking to conceptualize democratic management as a necessary practice for the proper functioning of the school, in addition to establishing a relationship between what theories advocate about management and how it is carried out in the practical reality of the schools surveyed.

The pedagogical training experiences revealed the challenges and contradictions inherent in the process of democratizing school management. In order to analyze this relationship, we first present a discussion on the assumptions of democratic public school management. Subsequently, we problematize the discussion of democratic management, based on pedagogical training experiences, understood as a space for building the knowledge necessary for competent, qualified and socially referenced professional performance.

Assumptions of democratic public-school management

In Brazil, the democratic management of public schools has historical roots dating back to the 1980s, with the process of re-democratization. The promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988 established participatory management as a right and a fundamental principle of education.

The Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), Law No. 9.394 (1996), ensures that public institutions offering basic education must be run under the principle of democratic management. Based on this fundamental assumption, we must think of democratic management with a focus on the critical and social development of the student, so that during their schooling process, they can effectively exercise their duties and rights.

In this sense, democratic school management is exercised both as a condition for creating the qualifications necessary for the development of students' specific skills and abilities, and also for creating a participatory environment of democratic experience, through which students develop the spirit and experience of citizenship, characterized by the awareness of rights in association with duties (Lück, 2009, p. 71).

Although we are aware of the importance of the effective participation of students and the community in building a democratic school, we must not forget that, in order for there to be this engagement, school management teams need to be open to new forms of management, and principals need to be aware of their role in qualifying this participation and mobilizing the commitment of the school community within the process of democratic management of public schools.

The school is “[...] a place for conceiving, carrying out and evaluating its educational process, since it needs to organize its pedagogical work based on its students” (Veiga, 1998, p. 11). In order to accomplish this task, it is necessary to strengthen the system of collaboration between the school and society, which must actively participate in the actions carried out in the school, breaking the neoliberal paradigms that individualize subjects in society. From this perspective, it is essential that the school assumes its responsibility to provide quality education, and that through democratic-participatory management, actions are developed that bring the community closer to the school environment.

Even though we are aware of the importance of these aspects in the construction of democratic management, we are faced with the reality of public schools, where it is possible to see schools that do not fit these molds, as well as institutions that appear to be democratic in their Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP), but in practice do not have this attitude.

Thus, it is necessary to study the challenges and contradictions of democratic management and the consequences that these mishaps bring to its implementation in Brazilian public schools, as well as observing elements that characterize democratic management as a way of working based on the participation of all the sectors that make up the school community (management, pedagogical coordinators, teachers, students and the school community).

According to Souza (2019, p. 125), “[...] democratic management can be understood as a political process in which the people who work in the school identify problems, discuss and plan actions aimed at the development of the school itself in the search for a solution to those problems [...]”, and it is in this sense that management becomes challenging and conflicts with traditional practices that make democratization increasingly distant from our reality.

It is a fact that democratic management, despite being guaranteed by the Law of Guidelines and Bases (Law No. 9.394, 1996) and the 1988 Federal Constitution, is still not widely practiced in many schools. The lack of participation on the part of the school community means that the development of democratic actions in schools takes longer, if at all. Another problematic aspect is that many schools are still compartmentalized in a mechanical, standardized management system, where decision-making processes and the construction of pedagogical programs are still in the light of a communicative, non-dialogical reason. What's more, although some schools have a solid pedagogical project based on democratic potential, their agendas and objectives are not fully met.

Since the 1990s, the issue of democratic management has been widely discussed, as well as the basis for its implementation in Brazilian public schools, from a contextualized, dialogical, democratic-participatory perspective. However, the practical reality of many schools does not always accompany these advances with the same intensity, and obstacles and dilemmas are noticeable that prevent the materialization of the democratic ideal of management. Hence the need to discuss the prerogatives of quality management, as well as the role of the pedagogical political project as an ally in this process.

As society continues to advance in aspects related to the economy, culture, politics and technology, among others, schools are increasingly trying to adapt to these changes. However, it's a slow process that often ends up getting lost, depending on the mishaps encountered along the way. Nevertheless, the paradigm shift in schools is something that is gradually growing, and so their concepts and assumptions are increasingly being rethought in the search for the quality and equity necessary for their proper functioning. As a result, the commitment to providing quality education is reinforced, a concept that is gaining more and more strength in today's educational field.

Libâneo (2001) warns us about the growing change in the school paradigm, which leads management to rethink its role in the face of all the transformation that has been taking place in society. According to him,

these transformations “[...] occur on a global scale, resulting from the combination of a series of events and processes that end up characterizing new social, political, economic, cultural and geographical realities” (Libâneo, 2001, p. 44).

With these changes in mind, the modern school is proposing to rethink its concepts, taking into account the exercise of its role in the construction of social and political democracy, where five guiding objectives are proposed, which according to Libâneo (2001, p. 47) are:

1. Promote the development of students' cognitive, operational and social capacities (mental processes, learning strategies, thinking skills, critical thinking), through school content; 2. Promote the conditions for strengthening students' subjectivity and cultural identity, including the development of creativity, sensitivity and imagination; 3. Preparing for work and for the technological and communicational society, implying technological preparation (knowing how to make decisions, making globalizing analyses, interpreting information of all kinds, having a research attitude, knowing how to work together, etc.); 4. Training for critical citizenship, i.e. training a citizen-worker capable of critically interfering in reality in order to transform it, and not just training to be part of the job market; 5. Developing training in ethical values, i.e. training in moral qualities, character traits, attitudes, humanist and humanitarian convictions.

Thus, the author adds that one of the important functions of the school is to interact and articulate with social practices. Among these, some social movements stand out. Although traditional parties continue to exist and the forms of political representation typical of democracy and trade union representation are still in force, “[...] other forms of political action are emerging, such as feminist, ecological and pacifist movements, etc.” (Libâneo, 2001, p. 49).

Management, in this context, has the objective of promoting the necessary conditions for this change to actually take place, and although we understand management as a fundamental foundation in this construction, it doesn't do it alone, nor only in the educational space, but it needs the agents that enable management to fulfill its role, while at the same time creating spaces for this interaction to take place.

The principle of democratic management should not only be understood as a participatory practice and decentralization of power, but as a radicalization of democracy, as a strategy for overcoming authoritarianism, patrimonialism, individualism and social inequalities. Educational inequalities produce social inequalities (Gadotti, 2014, p. 6).

According to Riscal and Luiz (2016), democratic management is based on sharing decisions clearly and responsibly. In this way, quality education is established, with a view to integrated power-sharing between the administrative sphere and the pedagogical field. From this perspective, democratic management faces divergences, which are directly linked to a managerialist system of management, a system that arrived in Latin America a few decades ago, and which still predominates in most of the country's schools. Thus,

[...] the school has relative autonomy, since every institution interprets what is decreed, but it must also follow certain bureaucratic measures common to all institutions. [...] In this respect, there is an apparent atmosphere of democratic management in the school environment, but the tendency is to use managerialist logic (Riscal & Luiz, 2016, p. 16).

The authors strongly emphasize that the managerialist character that haunts the Brazilian educational administrative system means that society is increasingly distanced from genuinely educational interests, and that public schools become mere companies, where the administration plays its bureaucratic role as expected, and the public is a mere ‘receiver or client’, who has no duty to actively participate in educational actions.

This political character is evidenced by the fact that education is an essential right of every individual and a potentially appropriate means of acquiring knowledge of other rights, and is therefore an important step towards their realization. This notion is linked to another: the notion of human dignity, which, because it is inherent to all people, implies their equal rights and their inclusion in the legal system, without discrimination of any kind (Riscal, 2009, p. 31 *apud* Riscal & Luiz, 2016, p. 27).

Thus, the authors seek to relate the educational character as a political act, in an attempt to uncover the gaps that make democratic management a paper policy, and to contextualize pedagogical actions in such a way that the evaluation of management is not merely statistical, but seeks to overcome the barriers and challenges in proposing solutions for effective and quality democratic management.

In this sense, Cury (2007) points to the following as principles of democratic management: transparency and impersonality, autonomy and participation, leadership and collective work, representativeness and competence. In this author's analysis, the management of a shared authority presupposes equal opportunities and equal treatment for citizens. It is up to the Union, States, Municipalities and their leaders; educational

communities, managers; teachers and teachers' associations to raise awareness of the importance of this principle, for school management that is representative, participatory, in other words, effectively democratic.

Political-pedagogical project as a management tool

Based on the assumption that the school must train its public for citizenship, and that democratic management is a model that makes this educational stance possible, the political-pedagogical project (PPP) carries with it the responsibility of outlining the objectives and goals for building a management that aims to bring the entire school community closer together.

According to Gadotti (2000), the study of the Political-Pedagogical Project from the perspective of education for autonomy arises from the need to think of a different school project to the one currently in place, full of disagreements and problems that surround the school perspective of methods, but in which it is also necessary to discuss the ends.

The paradigmatic crisis is also affecting the school and it is asking itself questions about its role as an institution in a post-modern and post-industrial society, characterized by the 'globalization of the economy and communications', 'political pluralism' and the 'emergence of local power'. In this society, there is a growing demand for autonomy against all forms of standardization and a desire to affirm the uniqueness of each region, each language, etc. Multiculturalism' is the most significant mark of our time (Gadotti, 2000, p. 1, emphasis added).

As such, the author adds that "you can't build a project without a political direction, a north, a course. For this reason, every pedagogical school project is also political. "The school's pedagogical project is therefore always an unfinished process, a step towards a goal that remains the school's horizon" (Gadotti, 2000, p. 2).

The author argues that the lack of experience, our vertical educational structure, the authoritarianism employed in the educational axis, as well as the type of traditional leadership exercised in schools are factors that limit and hinder the establishment of a democratic process in the construction of the school's political-pedagogical project. Furthermore, there is no 100% efficient school model, "[...] each school is the result of its own contradictions. There are many paths, including the acquisition of elaborate knowledge. And the path that may be valid in a given situation, in a given place or context, may not be valid in another situation or context" (Gadotti, 2000, p. 6).

According to Veiga (1998), the political-pedagogical project aims to establish a way of organizing pedagogical work that overcomes conflicts, seeking to eliminate competitive, corporate and authoritarian relations, breaking with the routine of impersonal and rationalized bureaucratic command that permeates relations within the school. From this perspective, Veiga (1998, p. 12) points out that

[...] the political-pedagogical project has to do with the organization of pedagogical work on two levels: as the organization of the school as a whole and as the organization of the classroom, including its relationship with the immediate social context, seeking to preserve the vision of totality. On this journey, it is important to stress that the political-pedagogical project seeks to organize the school's pedagogical work as a whole. The main possibility for building the political-pedagogical project lies in the relative autonomy of the school, in its ability to define its own identity. This means reclaiming the school as a public space, a place for debate and dialog, based on collective reflection.

Thinking about building a political pedagogical project that meets all these needs requires a reorganization of the school's paradigm, where changes occur from the inside out, starting with the reflection of the entire teaching staff and management team on the importance of bringing the student's reality closer to the school context. It is necessary to understand the school's PPP as a reflection of everyday life, so the planning of these actions must be built gradually, looking for the necessary strategies for their implementation. Among the managerial competencies pointed out by Lück (2009) in the school planning process, we highlight that of promoting and leading the participatory elaboration of the School Development Plan and its Political-Pedagogical Project, based on a study and adequate understanding of the meaning of education, its purposes, the role of the school, an objective diagnosis of the social reality and the educational needs of the students and the educational conditions to meet them.

However, for the PPP to fulfill its purpose as a management tool, it is necessary to manage collective participation in the project's construction, implementation and evaluation processes. As Libâneo (2001) warns, the concept of democratic-participatory management presupposes: the explicit definition of the school's socio-political and pedagogical objectives by the school team; the articulation between management activity and the initiative and participation of the people in the school and those who relate to it; the management of participation; professional qualification and competence.

It is therefore up to school management to mobilize, raise awareness and qualify the school community for this participation, creating the necessary conditions for the democratization of the management process.

Problematizing democratic management through pedagogical training experiences

The reports presented in this item deal with the pedagogical training experiences lived in two state schools, between 2018 and 2019, during the Institutional Program for Teaching Initiation Scholarships (PIBID) and the Non-mandatory Internship, in the Pedagogy Course at the Federal University of Sergipe. The experiences described here are part of the learning and training process that took place during the active participation in the educational process of these two schools (Santos, 2021).

Talking about the experiences of the Pedagogy course is always a moment of great reflection, because these experiences, as well as providing the theoretical basis necessary for professional work, also offer a broader understanding of the world than the knowledge built up prior to entering university, giving students a much more refined view of the fields of teaching and management, in the correlation between the theoretical elements studied and practical experiences in the fields of professional work.

Entering university implies exploring a new educational scenario that is not just about getting to know the university space, but also unveiling possible areas of future professional activity, taking on academic responsibilities, unveiling the universe of the profession, based on the studies, research, methodological experiences and practical experiences provided within the scope of this training.

Thus, it is in the course of their academic career that students choose the steps they want to take during their degree. Some know from the outset exactly what they want to study, the areas in which they want to work, sharing dreams of being in the classroom or leading a work team, while other students take longer to identify affinities with possible fields of professional activity, which often leads to intimidation when it comes to conquering these spaces or even giving up on following that profession.

The experiences we've had during the Pedagogy course have shown us the importance of seeing our profession not only through loving eyes. But beyond that, the need for commitment and diligence in competent, conscientious and qualified professional practice. The first experiences in the school context, both inside and outside the classroom, are the beacons of the professional choices that will be embraced in the years following initial training, contributing to the constitution of a professional profile, posture and identity.

From the middle of the course, practice intensifies, broadening contact with a range of teaching possibilities. With each class, each new topic covered and each new experience in the training context, the students become more convinced about the paths to be taken within Pedagogy.

Through the readings made in the disciplines, the discussions in the classroom and the experiences in the educational institutions, I was able to realize how fragile management is in schools, and that despite having the term 'democratic' assured in the LDB, this is not the reality present in schools, on the contrary, throughout my career I have come across experiences in authoritarian school realities, without any commitment to the integration between school and school community, and from that moment my concern and object of research arose (Santos, 2021, p. 21, emphasis added).

It was against this backdrop that the initiative to research the subject of democratic management arose, based on the training experiences of the Teaching Initiation Program and the Non-Mandatory Internship, which are described below.

Experience in the Teaching Initiation Program

PIBID is part of the Ministry of Education's (MEC) National Teacher Training Policy, which aims to provide students in the first half of their degree course with a practical approach to everyday life in public basic education schools, under the guidance of the program's coordinators, pedagogical advisors and preceptors in the schools.

The state school where the PIBID was carried out is located in the south of Aracaju and is aimed at students from the 1st to the 9th grades of elementary school, distributed in the morning, afternoon and evening shifts, with the evening being reserved for Youth and Adult Education. Despite the range of grades the institution offers, it doesn't have a lot of space, so children and teenagers end up sharing the same space, especially during breaks.

This first contact with school reality as a pedagogy student gave me the opportunity to develop a critical eye for the whole school environment, especially management. It was a space where it was possible to delve

into and explore the most diverse educational possibilities, while at the same time encountering the complex challenges of everyday school life.

When it came to issues related to the management posture within that institution, the team's attitude towards its public was one of active participation in the day-to-day running of the school. Overcoming the challenges of building a truly democratic management system involved seemingly simple issues, from a notice that needed to be sent to parents, to the process of renewing or making new enrolments and ways of promoting greater community awareness of the need for effective participation in defining the direction of the school.

Libâneo (2001) discusses important elements of democratic management: the first of these lies in the construction of good planning, a process in which the actions that will be carried out are defined and explained, as well as being shared with everyone so that there is collective knowledge and participation, and the objectives are achieved. In addition to planning, another key element in this construction is organization, which will guide and continue the actions that have been planned. Another point is ongoing training, focused on the teaching public, which must be supported by the school in its quest to improve its pedagogical practices, as well as fostering the professional and personal development of its employees. The last element pointed out by the author consists of evaluation, the moment at which the results of the whole process are concluded, based on an analysis of how the process took place.

Something important to highlight in this passage is the relationship between the institution's teaching staff and management team. In the school context, ensuring that there is good communication between these axes is indeed challenging. However, at the school where PIBID was carried out, decisions were made collectively, and this partnership contributed significantly to the school's development. Every detail was scrutinized by the teachers, making it a space for collective construction.

Within this context, Libâneo (2004) points out the importance of educators playing and developing an active role in the decision-making process of a school institution, as long as this educator is familiar with educational policies, as well as the ways in which a school is organized and operates, so that this process is experienced in a way that is consistent with the democratic principle inherent in public school management.

Therrien and Souza (2000) address two fundamental aspects of the constitution of the teaching profession: firstly, professionalization implies knowledge with a specific connotation for the area, which constitutes the teaching professional's benchmark. Secondly, the concept of profession implies a relationship with knowledge that goes beyond its technical dimension of direct application, placing it at the level of a construction adapted to a complex situation. It is up to the teaching professional to constantly search for elements in their stock of formal knowledge and experiential knowledge in order to solve the problems they experience in their work. Every professional intervention that involves a relationship between subjects acquires an ethical dimension because it includes personal values or value premises. In addition to their technical-scientific goals, education professionals act in relation to ethical goals when they aim to train for life. These elements not only highlight the reflective dimension of teaching work and the subject's own culture, but also define the requirements of their actions as professionals.

The approach to teaching culture in its manifestations in the pedagogical management of the classroom as an activity based on practical rationality allows us to identify and characterize the teachers' justifications for conducting their educational praxis. Observing and listening to the reasons and motives behind the teachers' constant decisions in the complexity of conducting curricular activities, organizing time and space, and articulating the multiple interactions between the subjects involved provides important indicators of the epistemological universe that makes up the identity and competence of these professionals. Understanding teacher intentionality from the perspective of the premises or knowledge that support their decisions to act on the classroom floor is an essential element of initial and ongoing teacher training processes and of identifying the teaching culture in action (Therrien & Souza, 2000, p. 94).

With regard to the relationship between the management team and the students, there were numerous difficulties in engaging students to identify more with the school environment. When the management team is not really present in the classroom, this problem is exacerbated. The school, being the main source of knowledge, is a place where all forms of expression must be heard and respected, which is why openness to dialog is a fundamental characteristic of quality pedagogical work.

Another important aspect to highlight is the role of the principal in the school. Leading a school, being the model and example for an entire community is no easy task, and much of what you do directly affects the direction of that environment. Lück (2009, p. 84) warns that the posture of the "[...] principal must take into account various

aspects of people management, namely: motivation, team building and sharing responsibilities, professional training, communication, interpersonal relationships”.

Hence the fundamental importance of welcoming leadership, capable of building shared authority, based on mutual trust and collective dialog, as key tools for decision-making at school.

The non-mandatory internship experience

The non-compulsory internship is carried out from the second half of the course, at the students' voluntary option, with the aim of giving them practical experience in the profession.

The school where the non-compulsory internship was carried out is located in the south of the capital, and its target audience is students in the 6th to 9th grades of elementary school, in the morning and afternoon shifts. Like the previous school, it does not have the infrastructure to comfortably accommodate the number of students enrolled, and because it is a centralized school, it has students from three different neighborhoods.

Whenever we talk about the role of the principal in the search for a welcoming management, we think of a posture of willingness, acceptance, sensitivity and attentiveness towards all the agents that make up the school. During the course of my non-obligatory internship experiences, these behaviors were observed in the attitude of the school principal, who always encouraged her team, her students and also her community, in favor of everyone's complete participation and dedication, making this articulation fundamental to the school management process. Paro (2010) warns us about the habit of linking the figure of the school principal to a position of leadership, hierarchical demands, administrative requirements, and much of this figure is related to a vision of the school based on the capitalist concept of society, which shapes the school along business lines.

It seems that when treated generically, i.e. 'to the naked eye', the terms school administration and school management are confused; but when it comes to demanding rigor and specificity, school management imposes itself as something different from administration. And it doesn't seem unreasonable that this should be the case. When it comes to school management and the person in charge of it, we are looking for a broader scope of action and a very clear political ingredient that administration, which is much more technical, does not seem to contain: the principal is the person who occupies the highest hierarchy of power in the institution (Paro, 2010, p. 769).

To this merely technical-bureaucratic perspective, Paro (2010) counters the idea of shared authority as the foundation of effectively democratic school management. With reference to this active participation of the school community in the management process, one fact that caught the eye at the school where the internship took place was the clear communication between the principal and the students. As this is an institution whose public is mostly teenagers, a space was created for active listening, a place where these students could express themselves and really count on the support of the school staff. This only reinforces the concept of collectivity, a concept of management that goes beyond the administrative field, that embraces, understands and provides support so that students and families have a welcoming space within the school, and although there is still a long way to go before this is fully achieved, it is the small steps, the small attitudes that start this journey.

Something that was recurrent during the internship period in relation to management was the planning of actions aimed at including the family in the students' educational process. Events such as the pedagogical week, where parents and guardians went to the school to talk directly to the teachers about their students' performance, alignment meetings for calendar adjustments or other changes, frequent announcements about exam periods, important activity periods, among other actions were recurrent in this daily school routine. In addition, technological tools were also used in this process, such as WhatsApp groups with parents and students from all over the school, where staff and teachers took advantage of this space as a source of information and communication, bringing the two worlds even closer together.

Much has been said about the importance of a principal in the process of democratic management, how he or she can be the fundamental link in building a new way of thinking about the school, but we mustn't forget the other agents that make up this process, such as the pedagogical team made up of coordinators, who plan, support and accompany the teachers, who are in the classroom with the students on a daily basis.

At the school where the non-mandatory internship was carried out, this was a well-structured process, where the coordinators were concerned with strengthening the teacher/student bond. There were challenges, some teachers were reluctant to share ideas and experiences, and often had difficulty listening to plans and proposals, but these problems were mostly overcome, avoiding further damage. This relationship of commitment was satisfactorily reflected in the classroom, as teachers and students viewed the coordination

with a sense of partnership and reciprocity, rather than as mere dictators of rules, which contribute little to the formation of an autonomous and critical student.

Although there was usually good planning and alignment between coordinators and teachers, nothing prevented them from having autonomy in carrying out their activities in the classroom. Many teachers at this school had an innovative view of what it means to educate, bringing practices and behaviors into the classroom that stimulated students, building links between subjects through multidisciplinary activities, articulating concepts and theoretical/practical knowledge, thus increasingly arousing students' interest in being at school. This autonomy of the teacher in the classroom is fundamental, although this does not mean that they will act and make decisions alone, but rather that it is part of a socially constructed practice.

The concept of autonomous subject, therefore, involves the idea of social responsibility, as it requires commitment from those who participate in the decision-making process to issues that go beyond their own interests. For this reason, far from being an individual endeavor, autonomous behavior must be linked to a sensitivity capable of understanding others and a willingness to seek social consensus (Monteiro et al., 2010, p. 119).

In fact, it is necessary for teachers within the school environment to build a relationship of autonomy, to exercise their role with complete freedom of decision, and for the management team to make room for this stance to be exercised in a dialogical and collective manner. Among the experiences that occurred during that period and in that space, it was noticeable that communication between management and teachers brought about this rapprochement, in addition to the trust placed in these teachers, who responded to these stimuli by creating spaces for connection and freedom to make the classroom an environment of protagonism, to be designed and shaped based on the experiences of the group.

When we turn our attention to reflecting on a quality school, and how it can be shaped by the agents that comprise it, we discuss at length the role of the manager, pedagogical coordination, relationships built within the school environment, etc. In the midst of this discussion, one theme that has been gaining momentum is the importance of the administrative team (school secretary, administrative assistant, interns, and other collaborators) in building a routine that, although not directly linked to pedagogical issues, creates the conditions for the school to develop to its full potential.

In the field of school administration, registering and monitoring students and teachers is a laborious task, hence the fundamental importance of this role. The challenges are numerous, from taking care of all student and teacher documentation to assisting parents and guardians, who often need more specific guidance from the school office. This work requires rigorous care, as any error, however small, can cause damage that is difficult to repair. During contact with the reality of the institution, the secretary's attitude was noticeable, always patient and welcoming to everyone, in addition to her performance and professional competence.

Like the secretary, other employees stand out here, such as administrative assistants, the doorman, the cook, and cleaning staff. All of them played a very important role and had a lot of responsibility, each in their own job, but always working together and maintaining the fundamental connection necessary for the final product, that is, the functioning of the school, to run smoothly. In this regard, Lima (2014) emphasizes the importance of school management in responsibly performing its school functions as well as promoting "[...] a good working relationship with all actors in the school community, as it refers to the relationship between the manager and his subordinates in order to obtain collective efforts aimed at achieving the desired goal" (Lima, 2014, p. 234).

With this statement in mind, it is possible to understand how management, in order to be truly participatory, depends on a series of components that consistently influence the search for a more egalitarian space, with a focus on education that aims at citizenship and social transformation. This construction does not happen on its own; it depends on a whole chain of attitudes that need to be deconstructed, constructed, or reconstructed on a daily basis for truly democratic management.

Negrini (2008) discusses the Brazilian educational policy scenario, criticizing abuses in the name of appearances and the lack of effective solutions to chronic problems in education, such as illiteracy, exclusion, grade repetition, low salaries, among others. The author points out the lack of effectiveness of the educational policies implemented in consolidating a broadly democratic society and warns that one of the many ways to make educational policies is through democracy, by means of an ethical and transparent state, with intense and close participation by the population.

Despite mentioning all these factors that bring with them a burden of responsibility for those involved in the school system, there is another determining factor that significantly hinders the pursuit of an egalitarian system:

the lack of resources in many schools. Hence the need for government assistance, providing the fundamental support to overcome the challenges faced by public schools.

We talk constantly about how we can contribute internally to building a quality school, and about how administrators, teachers, and the community play a fundamental role in this process, but sometimes we forget that in order to implement this school model, financial support is needed, and more than that, legal and operational support from the state and municipalities is needed so that democratic management is not just a meaningless law, but is fulfilled by the government's duty to provide what is necessary to overcome the authoritarian and hierarchical system that still prevails in many schools.

Revising teacher training therefore requires coordination between educational policies and training concepts as processes of collective construction. It also involves drawing on the experiences implemented by states and municipalities as important steps in strengthening the actions of the Ministry of Education, in support of teacher training policies and processes of organization, educational management, and school management. In this sense, actions aimed at organizing national education, whose political-pedagogical focus, in rural and urban areas, must consider the richness and diversity of experiences and the conditions and specificities with which training processes for teachers and students are carried out, considering the guarantee of quality parameters and indicating alternatives and pedagogical perspectives centered on a solid conception of education, school, culture, and educational management (Dourado, 2007, p. 924-925).

The experiences gained both in PIBID and in the non-mandatory internship prompted a more accurate look at the management models existing in educational institutions, in addition to highlighting the relationship between democratic management and the school's central objective of educating critical and participatory citizens for society.

According to Gadotti (2000, p. 36), democratic management should

[...] be imbued with a certain atmosphere that permeates the school, in the circulation of information, in the division of labor, in the establishment of the school calendar, in the distribution of classes, in the process of developing or creating new courses or new subjects, in the formation of working groups, in the training of human resources, etc. Democratic management is, therefore, an attitude and a method. A democratic attitude is necessary, but it is not sufficient. We need democratic methods for the effective exercise of democracy. It is also a learning process that requires time, attention, and work.

The school where PIBID was held in the first semester of 2018 was based on a political-pedagogical project that did little to promote democratic concepts, and this was reflected in the school structure, where it was noticeable that the management team was distanced from the school community and even from the teachers, who ended up not participating in some processes that were fundamental to the school's development. At the school where the non-mandatory internship was held during the second semester of 2019, the scenario was just the opposite: the management team constantly sought to bring the community together and involve them and all teachers as much as possible in school activities, in addition to having a project that was rooted in democratic principles. Despite the difficulties, the school's commitment to offering students, teachers, and the community a welcoming space for daily reflection was evident.

The training experiences highlighted the correlation between the practical and theoretical aspects of the teacher training policy (PIBID) and unpaid internships, in dialogue with aspects of democratic intervention/management in the schools surveyed, namely: active participation of managers in the school environment; awareness of the school community regarding the importance of their participation in their children's school life; quality of the relationship between the teaching staff, other employees of the institution, and the management team; active participation of students in building the school they want. The role of welcoming management stands out, with a keen eye on the desires and needs of the school community, capable of establishing clear and precise communication with all the agents that make up the school; and fostering the planning of actions with the objective of including family and community in the students' school process.

Final considerations

Taking into account the narratives described here of the experiences of PIBID and non-mandatory internships, as well as the authors who contextualize the understanding of democratic management as a central element in the quest to improve the quality of public education, we realize that investigating these challenges and contradictions goes beyond the mere understanding of theories, but above all permeates the experiences on the school floor, which point to the gap between the democratic system that schools should be guided by and what is actually experienced in these environments.

Democratic management goes beyond the particular interests of schools. For it to happen, this management model needs to be disseminated so that the school community understands its real importance within this context, thereby enabling effective participation and mutual collaboration among its agents. The schools analyzed during the formative experiences described in this article sometimes attempted to implement actions to foster this partnership, but the information gap often ended up alienating the community, making these moments of exchange impossible. Therefore, blaming only the school for the lack of shared management becomes merely a way of blaming a sector that, in fact, should receive as much support as possible.

Another aspect present in the narratives described was the existence of democratic-participatory relationships in both realities. Although there was great difficulty in implementing participatory management, in some actions it was possible to see attempts to overcome traditionalism and authoritarian practices, whether in parent meetings, during teaching weeks, or in more direct interactions between the school, teachers, and the community.

Each school has its own specific characteristics and priority demands to be met, and all actions must be planned and executed in such a way as to ensure interaction between its agents and its resources. It is not possible for these institutions to be fully committed to management based on the participation of all without financial/technical support from public policies, with a lack of resources, as well as without direct support to consolidate these precepts in their spaces. Providing the necessary conditions for schools to function to their full potential is the starting point for change to happen gradually and, from this perspective, for these environments to advance in the construction of democratic management.

In fact, researching democratic management as a fundamental element for quality education is essential because, as we learn about the reality of schools from our experiences, we are able to question certain aspects that keep education management stuck in traditional patterns. Even though we know that we should work differently today, the paths to this evolution depend on numerous factors, which together become challenges to be overcome.

Thus, research into these relationships and conflicts becomes fundamental, as it carries a strong social contribution, since educational management, when well exercised through various forms of participation, provides satisfactory results for the entire education system, which must always be updated. Hence the fundamental relevance of initial and continuing training processes as spaces for building the knowledge necessary for competent, qualified, and socially endorsed professional performance. In addition, we emphasize the role of management research in continuing to explore these relationships, based on a cautious and attentive view of the construction of conditions for effectively democratic school management, which provides students with the experience of a free, egalitarian school, preparing them for a full and conscious life in society.

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NOTE:

With regard to contributions to the text, the first author developed the monographic research from which this article originates, guided by the second author. Leandra Maiara Barreto dos Santos was responsible for the design, analysis, and interpretation of the data; Andréa Hermínia de Aguiar Oliveira was responsible for writing and critically reviewing the content of the manuscript, as well as approving the final version to be published.

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Evaluation rounds:

R1: Dois convites; dois pareceres recebidos

Standardization reviewer:

Adriana Curti Cantadori de Camargo

Data availability:

Not applicable.