

DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A GESTÃO DEMOCRÁTICA E A SUA APLICAÇÃO NO ÂMBITO ESCOLAR

LA GESTIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA Y SU APLICACIÓN EN LAS ESCUELAS



Márcio Donizetti ROCHA
e-mail: marcionews@gmail.com



José Anderson SANTOS CRUZ
e-mail: anderson.cruz@unesp.br

How to reference this paper:

ROCHA, M. D.; SANTOS CRUZ, J. A. Democratic management and its application in the school environment. **Rev. Educação e Fronteiras**, Dourados, v. 13, n. 00, e023023, 2023. e-ISSN: 2237-258X. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30612/eduf.v13i00.16945>



| Submitted: 01/08/2023
| Revisions required: 21/10/2023
| Approved: 15/11/2023
| Published: 22/12/2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. Alessandra Cristina Furtado

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to identify the works developed in the last 5 years on democratic management and its subareas and to verify the most observed by educators. We searched for "democracy," "democratic management," or derivatives, in titles and keywords. We found 27 articles, however, six were discarded as they were not within the scope, related to Brazilian basic education. Thus, the new model of school management proposes the construction of autonomous institutions, capable of making decisions, elaborating institutional projects, managing resources, and choosing fruitful strategies (BRASIL, 2006c, p. 19). There is a need to focus on student administration, considering the individuals targeted by their actions and understanding activities beyond exclusively administrative or pedagogical. Therefore, it is crucial to think about democratic and participatory management, in which the school community participates, autonomously and decentralized, in activities and decisions. Thus, it is urgent to debate education since it is not preparation for life but is life itself.

KEYWORDS: Democracy. Democratic Management. Basic Education. Management.

RESUMO: *O objetivo deste artigo é identificar os trabalhos desenvolvidos nos últimos 5 anos sobre gestão democrática e suas subáreas e verificar as mais observadas pelos educadores. Buscamos por “democracia”, “gestão democrática” ou derivados, nos títulos e palavras-chave. Encontramos 27 artigos, porém, seis foram descartados, pois não estavam no escopo, relacionado à educação básica brasileira. Destarte, o novo modelo de gestão escolar propõe a construção de instituições autônomas, capazes de tomar decisões, elaborar projetos institucionais, administrar os recursos e escolher estratégias profícuas (BRASIL, 2006c, p. 19). Necessita-se focar na administração no aluno, considerando os indivíduos-alvo de sua ação, entendendo as atividades para além de exclusivamente administrativas ou pedagógicas. Assim, é fulcral pensar em uma gestão democrática e participativa, na qual a comunidade escolar participa, de maneira autônoma e descentralizada, das atividades e decisões. Logo, urge debater educação, uma vez esta não é preparação para a vida, mas é a própria vida.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Democracia. Gestão democrática. Educação básica. Gestão.

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este artículo es identificar los trabajos desarrollados en los últimos 5 años sobre gestión democrática y sus subáreas, así como verificar las más observadas por los educadores. Hemos buscado por “democracia”, “gestión democrática” o sus derivados, en los títulos y palabras clave. Encontramos 27 artículos, sin embargo, seis fueron descartados por no estar dentro del alcance relacionado con la educación básica brasileña. Por lo tanto, el nuevo modelo de gestión escolar propone la construcción de instituciones autónomas, capaces de tomar decisiones, elaborar proyectos institucionales, administrar los recursos y elegir estrategias provechosas (BRASIL, 2006c, p. 19). Es necesario centrarse en la administración del alumno, considerando a los individuos como objetivo de su acción, comprendiendo las actividades más allá de lo exclusivamente administrativo o pedagógico. Así, es crucial pensar en una gestión democrática y participativa, en la cual la comunidad escolar participe de manera autónoma y descentralizada en las actividades y decisiones. Por lo tanto, es urgente debatir la educación, ya que no es preparación para la vida, sino que es la propia vida.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Democracia. Gestión democrática. Educación básica. Gestión.

Introduction

Democratic management, after the Federal Constitution of 1988 and, mainly, with the elaboration of Laws and Guidelines for Basic Education LDB 9394/96, became quite relevant for the construction of a less centralized education. It is worth noting that historically, Brazil was leaving behind a rather complex period, the militaristic phase, in which society was educated not to have an opinion and only to receive orders from different fronts that made up the country's public administration, which, in turn, was exiting the scene and beginning a new way of administering. Nardi (2017) asserts that many scholars consider the 1980s to be a promising period for education in the country, but that after it, there were others who contributed significantly to its improvement.

After several years of these changes, whether through legislation or administrative practices, there is an attempt to map the research published on democratic management and its subareas: Pedagogical Political Project (PPP), student council, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) (PECEGE, 2021). This will help us have a parameter of what is being considered relevant to assist in implementing democratic management in schools. Moreover, such publications reflect the practices carried out within these institutions.

Through articles elaborated on the concept of democratic management, the research brings a discussion about the current scenario of Brazilian education. In it, there emerges the need to think about democratic and participatory management, in which teachers, parents, students, management teams, employees, and the local community share decisions within the school from the perspective of participation, autonomy, and decentralization of school activities and decisions. It is always essential to discuss education, once

The quality of education is a complex and comprehensive phenomenon that involves multiple dimensions and cannot be apprehended solely by recognizing the variety and minimum quantities of inputs considered indispensable for the development of the teaching-learning process, nor can it be apprehended without such inputs. [...] Thus, the quality of education is defined by involving the relationship between material and human resources, as well as, from the relationship that occurs in the school and in the classroom [...] (DOURADO; OLIVEIRA; SANTOS, 2007, p. 6, our translation).

Furthermore, democracy and education are associated when we start from the realization that the act of educating exists in any social group (DEWEY, 1978). Education is not a preparation for life but part of life itself. Therefore, it is necessary to think of democratic education for a democratic society, and not just democratic education focused on itself.

Educational management, conceived as a participatory practice, is a fundamental tool for the realization of the pedagogical work organization of the school unit. In other words, to be democratic and popular, regular education must be completely free and universal, in favor of access for all, at all levels, public and lay, built and maintained by the State, mandatory, provided in public and state schools, with a non-bureaucratic tendency, more critical, creative, and, in a word, autonomous (SANTOS, 2020).

Boschetti and Motta (2016, p. 104, our translation) consider that

The school management process has the primary function of decentralizing pedagogical and administrative development in the education system. The result of this management is the increasing autonomy of the school in the face of the commitment and involvement of all actors involved in this democratic construction. Therefore, the progress of management also evokes various indicators to be worked on, such as participatory management, interpersonal relations, performance, and self-assessment.

In this context, it is necessary to identify the works developed in the last 5 years on the theme of democratic management and its subareas and, thus, verify which of them are being more observed by education professionals within school institutions.

Materials and Methods

In this research, we identified the titles of articles found in publications made in the last five years in the *Revista On line de Política e Gestão Educacional* [RPGE]¹, addressing the concept of democratic management related to its subareas: pedagogical, political project, parents, and teachers association, and student council. These subareas comprise democratic management and will be part of the analysis criteria in this work.

We used the systematic research method, which helped us conduct surveys of journal articles, based on concepts, keywords, and systematic reviews. This method enabled us to organize research with better performance, maximizing the search quality and efficiently finding results that helped us to develop the study in the best possible way (KOLLER; COUTO; HOHENDORFF, 2014).

The journal selected for our study is virtual and was founded in 2001, with an interest in educational policy and management, arising from the interest of professors from the Graduate

¹ The name in English would be: Online Journal of Educational Policy and Management [OJEPM].

Program in School Education of the Faculty of Sciences and Letters at UNESP/Araraquara and is currently also linked to the Department of Education Sciences.

After 2007, the journal gained strength with the organization of the Study Group on Educational Organizations: Planning and Management Processes (GEOPLAGE), which took responsibility for its publication. In our research, we searched for the concepts of democracy, democratic management, or derivatives of the same word, both in titles and keywords. As a result, we found 27 articles. However, six were discarded, as 3 were related to higher education, 1 discussed Latin America, 1 was about another country, and 2 addressed racism. Our focus, however, was related to primary education in Brazil. Thus, we sought to construct a path that would allow us to develop our research universe in the best possible way.

Results and Discussion

The Beginning of Formal Education in Brazil

Formal education in Brazil emerges and develops in an authoritarian manner and spreads for centuries in this mold. This behavior legitimizes the power of those who receive it over others in Brazilian society. Such legitimacy arises from three directly intertwined forms: colonization; education; and catechesis, which, in turn, shapes Brazilian educational epistemology (SAVIANI, 2010).

With Brazilian education under the influence of religious orders such as the Jesuits and Franciscans, priests aimed to instruct according to the standards by which they were educated, namely through discipline, obedience, and respect for their superiors and the rules of the congregation to which they belonged.

These educators' initial and ongoing training was also based on the same principles of authoritarian education that they applied in schools, as this authoritarianism was also present in convents and seminaries. Thus, discipline, respect, and obedience to those in power were to be internalized by those who did not possess it. The processes by which a person's self is mortified are relatively standardized in institutions (GOFFMAN, 1961). This shows us that such materialization of authoritarianism is standardized in power relations within institutions, and schools, it would be no different.

Brazilian Education After the Proclamation of the Republic

Over the years, Brazil transitioned from a colony to a republican regime, and education, which was previously in the hands of confessional schools, began to be crafted also by liberal politicians. This new phase of Brazilian education presents itself in two aspects: a large part remains in the hands of confessional schools, while public education with liberal principles begins, seeking free and secular education.

Thus, over time, education has undergone various historical and social contexts, including the transition of the economy into the hands of large landowners and the emergence of industrialization. During this period, Brazilian education began to be valued by those in power, as they needed skilled labor to meet the demands of growing industrialization. The investments made were substantial, requiring individuals capable of operating machinery, which contributed to increased financial returns.

Consequently, education became more valued and subject to new teaching methods, such as division by grades and a more comprehensive institutional restructuring. However, it is essential to emphasize in this article that it was still developing in a closed institutional environment, without active participation from society in promoting a more democratic education.

With the military coup in 1964, education became directly related to the world of industries (SAVIANI, 2010). Consequently, man is likened to a robot, reinforcing the exact behavior offered by confessional education at the outset of the construction of Jesuit schools.

The military dictatorship came to an end in the mid-1980s, and as a result, Brazilian education became the subject of reflection by various thinkers and researchers. They seek an education distinct from what prevailed until then, aiming to establish a secular, free, and public educational model. Consequently, Brazilian education was often (or is) in the hands of professionals who used (or used) their power to selfishly and controlling manage their schools, preventing the community and society from contributing to their children's education. From this reality, we will observe in articles published in the *Revista On line de Política e Gestão Educacional* how democracy operates within schools and its needs and potentialities.

As we emphasized earlier, we found 27 articles; among them, 33.3% developed studies on the topic, that is, discussed the importance of democratization in educational practice; 7.4% related to democracy and the school council institution; 7.4% addressed democracy and comprehensive education; 3.7% focused on democracy and history teaching; 3.7% on democracy and music education; 3.7% on democracy and the contribution of the Public

Ministry; 3.7% on democracy and early childhood education; 3.7% on democracy and the New Public Management program; and finally, 7.4% discussed democracy from Dewey's perspective in schools.

Democracy and Democratic Management

The articles analyzed here bring to light issues concerning democratic management and everything surrounding it, providing comparisons, illustrations, applicabilities, case studies, bibliographic surveys, and other resources, endowed with a critical and analytical perspective on Brazilian education and our current management.

In Cardoso Machado and Falsarella (2020), the authors point out that "the democratization of quality public schools as the right of every citizen" is an expression that marks the legal discourse supporting the new model of public management proposed in Brazil in the 1990s. However, proclaiming rights is different from effectuating them. In this sense, a large part of the academic literature points to difficulties in organizing and managing schools within this model.

Law No. 9394/1996, in item VII of Art. 3, defines "democratic management of public education" as a principle of maintaining education, "following the Law and the legislation of the education systems" (BRASIL, 1996, p. 1). In Art. 14, in its items I and II, the LDB establishes that "the rules of democratic management of public education in basic education" must be defined by the education systems following the principles of:

- I - participation of education professionals in the elaboration of the school's pedagogical project;
- II - participation of the school and local communities in school councils or equivalent bodies (BRASIL, 1996, p. 6, our translation).

The new paradigm of school management proposes the development of autonomous institutions capable of making decisions, elaborating institutional projects aligned with the needs and interests of the community, managing resources and materials effectively, and adopting strategies that lead to desired outcomes (BRASIL, 2006c, p. 19, our translation).

School organization understood as a democratic learning community transforms the school into a place of shared values and practices through work and joint reflection on work plans, problems, and solutions related to student learning and the functioning of the institution (LIBÂNEO *et al.*, 2007, p. 316, our translation).

In education, the new management would respond to the struggle of social movements for free and quality public schooling, which was also affirmed in the CF/1988, in article 205:

Article 205. Education, a right for all and a duty of the State and family, shall be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the individual, their preparation for exercising citizenship, and their qualification for work (BRASIL, 1988, our translation).

Educational and managerial objectives are necessary to facilitate this process of democratic management. The manager needs to act as an articulator of the teaching-learning process, focusing on the educational quality of the students. Because, according to Lück (2000, p. 18, our translation) a committed manager:

Creates participative environments, fosters a comprehensive vision associated with cooperative action, promotes a climate of trust, values the capabilities and aptitudes of participants, combines efforts, breaks down barriers, eliminates divisions, and integrates efforts, establishing a workload focused on ideas rather than individuals, and develops the practice of assuming responsibilities collectively.

Santana (2018), the author emphasizes that democratic management can be considered the means by which all segments involved in the educational process participate in defining the direction the school intends to take. In this sense, democratic management brings about the need for a democratic posture. This posture reveals a way of approaching education and teaching, in which the Public Power, the school community, and the local community, together, are aligned to ensure the quality of the process. For this, the school must assume a position of social quality, which pays attention to the development of the social being in all its dimensions: in the economic realm, insertion into the world of work; in the cultural realm, appropriation, development, and systematization of popular culture and universal culture; in the political sphere, the emancipation of the citizen.

In Menezes and Brasil (2018), it was observed that the Educational Plan (PME) has contributed to strengthening democratic practices by promoting reflection and the development of attitudes and actions that highlight and stimulate the responsibility of the entire school community with issues such as student learning. In advanced capitalist societies, the process of universalizing access to school and extending periods of attendance has occurred amid reforms in education systems, often inspired by social-democratic approaches, even when led by political parties of different ideological orientations. However, participation has been limited, usually restricted to some school administration members, which poses a challenge to involve

the various educational segments in actions and decisions related not only to the PME but also to other relevant issues for the school.

According to Lima (2000, p. 19, our translation), school democratization is:

A conceptual perspective that focuses on democratically referenced interventions, exercised by educational actors and embodied in actions of (self) government; actions that not only reveal themselves as political-administrative decisions taken from organizational contexts and decision-making power structures, but also interfere in the construction and recreation of these structures and in a more democratic way of exercising educational powers in the school system, in the classroom, etc.

Law No. 9,394/96, in its Article 14, establishes that educational systems must define the norms of Democratic Management according to their peculiarities, based on the principles of teachers' participation in the elaboration of the school's pedagogical project and the participation of the school and local community in councils or equivalent bodies. In Article 15, educational systems are guaranteed pedagogical, administrative, and financial autonomy, in accordance with the general norms of public financial law.

The autonomy established by this legislation can be considered a benefit arising from the democratic process. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that Democratic Management provides various benefits to the school community, ranging from respect for collectively constructed norms to ensuring broad access of those involved to school information, contributing to the formation of critical, participatory, and knowledgeable students of social dynamics. In other words, the democratic school empowers conscientious citizens to participate effectively in society.

We must consider the significant institutional reorganization that encourages and promotes greater participation in schools. This implies that democratization within the school can embody mechanisms that provoke the expression of conflicts, divergences, and decisions. Another imminent and determining risk that can compromise collective work in its autonomous and democratic character is the conflict and pressure that like-minded groups impose on the school in the name of corporatist and clientelist interests. These multiple interests of groups are the influential socio-political factors that permeate social relations within the school.

In Pena, Castilho, and Borges (2021), the implementation of democratic management as a guiding principle to be observed in public policies for Basic Education in public educational institutions is discussed, within the context of a new management model called "New Public Management" (NPM) and "managerialism." The purpose of the article was to investigate the implementation of democratic management in public educational institutions based on the

literature, the National Education Plan (2014-2024), and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (LDB), and to problematize its implementation in the context of NPM. The analysis highlighted difficulties in implementing democratic management in the context of NPM and suggested that changes in this new management model should not hinder new educational achievements. They conclude that

Democratic management does not have an end in itself and goes beyond its cultural, social, political, and economic roles, in the sense of promoting transformations and offering conditions for the improvement of the quality of education, it is necessary to consider the pedagogical role of democratic management (PENA; CASTILHO; BORGES, 2021, p. 15, our translation).

Machado and Falsarelli (2020) aimed to expand the discussion on the new public management and its repercussions in education, especially in the exercise of school management, through bibliographic exploration. They concluded that the new model disregards regional, economic, and cultural differences; there is a need not only for policies but for affirmative actions that actually promote inclusive education; the conditions imposed on school managers do not correspond to the multiple roles assigned to them. The authors discuss the importance of public policies in this scenario,

Since it is up to the policies to formulate, implement, monitor, and evaluate the solutions proposed for the challenges of education, considering the situations imposed by the interests of society. The school, as a space for consolidating these policies, presents, in its organization and management practices, the experience of their implementation in everyday life, and shows which proposals are successful and which require reformulation (MACHADO; FALSARELLI, 2020, p. 10, our translation).

In De Paula, Costa, and Lima (2019), an analysis was conducted regarding the problematic issue of educational management, aiming to unveil the current landscape of the debate concerning the contradiction between democratic management and bureaucratic administration of the school. In this survey conducted by the authors, no article opposing the democratic idea of *management* was found. It was found that the theme of educational management and its insights do not oppose the notion of democracy in the way a school is administered, since the concept of administration used in the content of the analyzed articles considers administration as the rational use of resources to achieve its ends.

Regarding these ends, they are configured as the pedagogical process, that is, teaching and learning. To achieve quality, beyond educational indicators and performance in external or internal assessments, a new perspective on the members of the technical-pedagogical team,

consisting of the pedagogical coordinator, educational counselor, school supervisor, and manager, is necessary. It becomes essential for coordinated actions to occur among the management team members.

Boschetti and Motta (2016, p. 104, our translation) consider that

The primary function of school management is to decentralize pedagogical and administrative development within the education system. The result of this management is the increasing autonomy of the school in the face of the commitment and involvement of all actors involved in this democratic construction. Therefore, management progress also evokes various indicators to be worked on, such as participatory management, interpersonal relationships, performance, and self-assessment.

Similarly, Santos (2020) conducts an investigation that addresses the theme of school management as an educational phenomenon that has its peculiarities due to its historical moment of continuity and discontinuity. They bring to the debate the Gramscian view that the democratization of the educational process and school management provides a hegemonic struggle.

According to Saviani (1980, p. 10, our translation),

Hegemonic struggle precisely means: a process of disarticulation-articulation, that is, it is about disarticulating from the dominant interests those elements that are articulated around them but are not inherent to the dominant ideology, and rearticulating them around popular interests, giving them the consciousness, cohesion, and coherence of an elaborated worldview, namely, a philosophy. Considering that "every relation of hegemony is necessarily a pedagogical relation," it is up to education to be understood as a tool of struggle. Struggle to establish a new hegemonic relation that allows for the constitution of a new historical bloc under the leadership of the fundamental dominated class of capitalist society – the proletariat. However, the proletariat cannot become a hegemonic force without raising the cultural level of the masses. Herein lies the fundamental importance of education. The form of insertion of education into hegemonic struggle configures two simultaneous and organically articulated moments: a negative moment, which consists of criticizing the dominant conception (bourgeois ideology), and a positive moment, which means working on common sense in order to extract its valid core (good sense) and give it elaborate expression aimed at formulating a worldview suitable to popular interests (SAVIANI, 1980, our translation).

This argument makes school democratic management an important condition for the collective and purposeful construction of an educational project aimed at quality education for the working class. Teaching management, conceived as a participatory practice, is a fundamental instrument for the realization of the pedagogical work organization of the school unit. In other words, to be democratic and popular, regular education must be completely free

and universal, in favor of access for all, at all levels, public and lay, built and maintained by the State, mandatory, imparted in public and state schools, non-bureaucratic, more critical, creative, and, in a word, autonomous (SANTOS, 2020).

In Lima (2014, p. 1079, our translation), the author asserts that

The democratic management of schools, as self-governance and, to a large extent, even as a set of democratic structures and procedures, has been the subject of systematic criticism by political sectors that conceive democracy in school governance as an example of progressive mismanagement in education and the irresponsibility of collective leadership, which can still be found in specific public organizations. Organizations that have not yet been sufficiently influenced by the modernizing and rationalizing winds of New Public Management, despite the marks that this managerial ideology has indelibly left on schools, according to available research.

Masson and Van Acker (2018) discuss educational management from the debate on democratic management of social institutions, particularly schools. They discuss aspects of Brazilian legislation on the subject and the possibilities arising from the growth of political conservatism opposing initiatives for democratic educational management. School management faces an immense challenge in promoting democratic management in educational units because, although laws support the legality of the issue, joint actions with the school and local community need to be on the daily agenda of educational establishments.

In Bernado, Borde, and Cerqueira (2018), the objective was to analyze school management from a democratic perspective, exploring legal frameworks and relevant literature. The study adopted a qualitative methodological approach with an emphasis on bibliographic and documentary research. School management emerged as the focus of analysis, demonstrating its crucial role in the context of school units. There is a need for a Collaboratively Elaborated Political-Pedagogical Project in the school, reflecting on its history, philosophy, and contextual references, as well as establishing guidelines and diagnosing reality, which should be addressed through actions involving all members of the school community.

Dourado, Oliveira, and Santos (2007, p. 6, our translation) emphasize that:

The quality of education is a complex, comprehensive phenomenon that involves multiple dimensions and cannot be grasped solely by recognizing the variety and minimum quantities of inputs considered indispensable for the development of the teaching-learning process, nor can it be understood without such inputs. [...] Thus, the quality of education is defined by the relationship between material and human resources, as well as by the interactions that occur in the school and in the classroom [...].

Democracy and Specific Teaching Areas

Cafagna (2019) aims to contribute to the debate on the importance of the humanities and offer educational insights. The focus is on the teaching of history and literature, with a clear objective: to listen to students to discover how and to what extent their voice and intimate involvement in the subject of study can contribute to a better understanding of the teaching-learning process and an improvement in the effectiveness of teaching practices. Through the conducted research, the obtained result makes it possible to link the teaching of history and literature to democratic participation through significance, reaffirming the essential role that schools and universities are called to play in defending democratic societies.

In Oliveira and Borges (2017), the authors assert that, regarding Music education, there are a series of factors and issues that hinder the full integration of the discipline into Brazilian schools. In this sense, the article analyzes the social and political dynamics that permeate the teaching/learning of music and the experiences in the collective teaching of musical instruments in an attempt to democratize Music education, aiming at social inclusion through it.

The article states that a technicist view of Education fails to grasp the importance of delivering artistic and cultural content. Law No. 13,278 (BRASIL, 2016) proposes to democratize access to these contents and reverse this exclusionary trend. Both studies addressed how democratic management influences the implementation of disciplines that are often neglected nowadays.

Democracy and Early Childhood Education

The articles analyzed here converge towards a common purpose. Education is responsible for the acquisition, updating, and utilization of knowledge. "[...] Early childhood education is a stage governed, therefore, by the principles and purposes of Brazilian education, which express the great ideals and values of the nation regarding the education of its citizens" (BRASIL, 2005a, p. 19, our translation).

Article 5. Early Childhood Education, the first stage of Basic Education, is offered in daycare centers and preschools, which are characterized as non-domestic institutional spaces constituting public or private educational establishments that educate and care for children aged 0 to 5 years during the daytime, on a full-time or part-time basis, regulated and supervised by the competent authority of the educational system and subject to control (Brasil, 2009, our translation).

In Nascimento and Cavalcanti (2017), the aim was to explore and acquire knowledge of the process of Democratic Management in Early Childhood Education, opting for qualitative research and delineating it into a case study. In this study, it was seen that the effective participation of all involved in the educational process is extremely necessary, noting that this stage of education has undergone several transformations in recent decades. They realized that only the effective participation of school community members, in partnership with public authorities, will be able to overcome educational challenges.

School management must articulate and consider all individuals involved in education in each educational institution. The work of school management should focus on the possibility of participation and involvement of all (BRASIL, 2005c, p. 14, our translation).

Furthermore, the authors concluded by stating that Ongoing Training is necessary for managers to be able to autonomously manage educational institutions, effectively contributing to the promotion of quality education in Early Childhood Education. Therefore,

the participation of the school community in the decision-making process, in the collective construction of objectives and school practices, in dialogue, and in the search for consensus must be present in the daily life of Early Childhood Education units (NASCIMENTO; CAVALCANTI, 2017, p. 21, our translation).

Democracy and Education in Dewey's View

The American philosopher John Dewey strongly influenced educational theories in Brazil, emphasizing the importance of democracy as a guiding principle for Education and contributing to school administration. In Araújo (2019) and Correia and Zoboli (2020), many of Dewey's ideals are brought to the fore, both affirming that his work leaves a legacy for Education, as it brings concepts and principles that can guide a discussion of school administration today.

In this context, it is crucial to understand how the philosopher establishes a relationship between two fundamental concepts: democracy and education. Firstly, democracy and education are intertwined insofar as only in a democratic community can the purpose of education, which is to empower individuals to continue their educational process, be fully realized. Additionally, the relationship between democracy and education is evident when considering that the act of educating is a constant in any social group (DEWEY, 1978). Dewey argues that education is not simply a preparation for life; it constitutes an intrinsic part of life

itself. Therefore, he raises the question of democratic education for a democratic society, rather than just democratic education oriented towards itself.

Similarly, if Dewey (1979) understands the school as an inherent part of the social whole, this means that a democratic society is one that enables the opening of points of contact between individuals and social groups, with the suppression of barriers of class, race, gender, and national territory that hinder the expansion of diverse ways of life (DEWEY, 1979).

Our conception [of education] must be based on societies that actually exist, in order to obtain some assurance of the feasibility of our ideal. On the other hand, the ideal cannot be limited to reproducing the traits found in reality. The problem lies in extracting desirable traits from existing social forms of life and using them to criticize undesirable traits and suggest improvements (DEWEY, 1979, p. 88, our translation).

Thus, discussing and updating Dewey's (1979) concepts and ideals implies rethinking school management, focusing on student-centered administration, recognizing students as agents of their own actions, seeking to arouse interest, and realizing that activities go far beyond merely administrative or exclusively pedagogical aspects.

It involves administration conducted democratically, not as mere imitation, but as a real process, through which the discussion of social practices and institutions requires the equitable distribution of interests. If the direction of the educational process is not coercive, but must combine external with internal direction, school administration cannot be carried out vertically, under penalty of contradicting the educational philosophy through which the aims of education and the school are established (ARAÚJO, 2019, p. 14, our translation).

Therefore, this reconsideration of school management based on Dewey (1979) is current and of great relevance to the present scenario.

Debates on School Management and Different State Realities

In Bittencourt and Amaral (2021), a debate is conducted on the trajectory of the election of school principals in public schools since their emancipation in the 1990s in the municipality of Queimados, located in the State of Rio de Janeiro, southeastern Brazil. The study questions and reflects on the participation of democratic management in this process, based on documentary analysis.

In Santos, Souza, and Carvalho (2021), the objective of the article is to present an initiative for the democratic construction of the curriculum by a municipal public education network in the city of Almirante Tamandaré, in Paraná, also based on documentary analysis. In this article, constant challenges faced by the municipal public education network are mentioned, requiring planning and collective decisions for the formation of critical and participative citizens.

In Bandeira, Monteiro Oliveira, and Miléo (2020), the aim is to debate the principle of democratic management in relation to the structural crisis of capitalism, being a theoretical, documentary, and bibliographical research. In this sense, the authors observed that the ramifications of this crisis afflict all social complexes. Educational systems are now monitored by international organizations whose purpose is to absolve the State of its responsibilities for education execution and financing, concluding that democratic management for education, immersed in this scenario, is a principle that should support policies aimed at reducing state functions.

In Amaral's article (2018), the authors elucidate the actions of the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) of the state of Rio de Janeiro in conjunction with municipalities regarding the regulation of democratic management in legislation focusing on the provision of school leadership in public schools. They concluded that the performance of the state MP of Rio de Janeiro has been present in seeking the regulation of democratic management despite the limited concrete action by municipalities, however, the process of selecting principals still demonstrates the fragility of public education democracy. The authors suggest continuous monitoring of the processes of regulating democratic management and the selection process for principals.

In Mota's article (2018), reflections on Integral Education and Full-time Education occur within the framework of goal 6 of the current National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024), with the aim of contributing to the discussion on extending students' school hours and seeking a more comprehensive human formation for the subjects of this process.

In the current educational scenario, there arises the need to consider democratic and participatory management, in which teachers, parents, students, management team, staff, and the local community share decisions within the school from the perspective of participation, autonomy, and decentralization of school activities and decisions.

Therefore, it becomes crucial to analyze the distinct scenarios of each locality, not restricting oneself to just a general Brazilian perspective. Through a more thorough survey, it is possible to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the state of school management in our country, identifying pertinent and viable solutions, rather than generic and standardized solutions.

In education, equality is not conceived as an abstract principle, but as a critique of inequalities. To think of equal education is not to desire perfect equality, which is utopian; but it is to seek to reduce some of the inequalities in terms of education, which may be linked to the territory where one lives, social origin, gender, religion, etc. The differences in conditions among individuals should not be definitive. Only equality in rights is definitive, and the goal of a just society is to provide each person with the possibility of choices and encounters with the new. Social differences should not be linked to birth, parental wealth, cultural habits, religion, gender, skin color, etc. All discrimination must be fought against. Equality of rights should guarantee the power of choice for every citizen (FERREIRA; POCHMANN, 2016, p. 1241, our translation).

Final considerations

Democratic management gained considerable relevance after the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and, especially, with the formulation of the Laws and Guidelines of National Education (LDB) 9.394/96, aiming to build a less centralized educational system. Historically, Brazil was emerging from a complex period, the military regime, during which society was deprived of active participation and restricted to obeying orders from the various instances that composed the country's public administration. With the end of this regime, a new paradigm of governance was beginning to take shape.

The school's purpose should be to enable students to recognize and employ their cognitive resources, developing learning strategies essential not only for those who have not inherited the legitimate cultural capital but also for students from classes positioned more favorably in the social field. It is essential to disseminate the debate about democratic ways of managing a school, spreading the concept of administration that is not confined to the bureaucratic mechanisms of the school institution.

However, it is necessary to point out the aspects that correspond to the achievement of the aims, of the pedagogical process. This concept of school administration is essential to establishing a school where decisions arise from the debates outlined by the community members, educators, and managers. Pedagogical traditionalism is still very strong and does not prioritize contextualization and problematization, favoring the recognition and memorization of solutions (formulas) from their formalized and artificial, unproblematic situations.

It is necessary to focus administration on the student, considering the condition of subjects of the individuals-targets of their action, endeavoring to generate interest, and understanding activities as going far beyond exclusively administrative or exclusively pedagogical purposes.

It consists of administration conducted democratically, not as mere imitation, but as a real process, through which the discussion of social practices and institutions demands the equitable distribution of interests. Suppose the direction of the educational process is not coercive, but must combine external with internal direction. In that case, school administration cannot be carried out in a vertical manner, lest it contradict the educational philosophy, through which the aims of education and the school are established (ARAÚJO, 2019, p. 14, our translation).

A proposal for democratizing school management and teaching requires the creation of conditions that allow overcoming the fundamental principles of common sense, as advocated by Pierre Bourdieu, through radically rational pedagogical practices. It is not a matter of excluding common sense from the school environment, since such an attempt would be utopian and inconsistent, as Freire pointed out, it is necessary to present to the

[...] the duty not only to respect the knowledge with which learners, especially those from the working classes, come to it – knowledge socially constructed in community practice – but also, as I have been suggesting for over thirty years, to discuss with the students the rationale behind some of that knowledge in relation to the teaching of content (FREIRE, 1996, p. 30, our translation).

Moreover, democracy and education are associated when we start from the realization that the act of educating exists in any social group (DEWEY, 1978). Education is not a preparation for life; it is part of life itself. Thus, it is necessary to consider democratic education for a democratic society, not just democratic education focused on itself.

In the contemporary educational context, there is a need to consider democratic and participatory management, in which teachers, parents, students, the management team, staff, and the local community share decisions within the school from the perspectives of participation, autonomy, and decentralization of school activities and decisions.

Therefore, it is always urgent to debate education, as it is not a way to prepare for life, but it is life itself, and it is through it that we can contribute to the transformation of a nation's history.

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About the Authors

Márcio Donizetti ROCHA

Programa de Educação Continuada em Economia e Gestão de Empresas (PECEGE) (ESALQ/USP MBAs), Piracicaba – SP – Brazil. Specialist in School Management (PECEGE/ESALQ/USP). Doctoral degree in Education (UNESP).

José Anderson SANTOS CRUZ

Programa de Educação Continuada em Economia e Gestão de Empresas (PECEGE) (ESALQ/USP MBAs), Piracicaba – SP – Brasil. Associate Professor. Doctoral degree in School Education (FCLAr/Unesp). Executive Associate Editor of RIAEE. Editor of the Ibero-American Education Publisher. Editor and Technical Advisory for journals.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

