

**ARTICULATED PLAN OF ACTIONS IN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN THE MUNICIPALITIES BELONGING TO THE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF THE PRODUCTION AREA (AMZOP)-RS**

***PLANO DE AÇÕES ARTICULADAS NA GESTÃO DA EDUCAÇÃO DE MUNICÍPIOS PERTENCENTES À ASSOCIAÇÃO DOS MUNICÍPIOS DA ZONA DA PRODUÇÃO (AMZOP)-RS***

***PLAN DE ACCIONES ARTICULADO EN LA GESTIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN DE MUNICIPIOS PERTENECES A LA ASOCIACIÓN DE MUNICIPIOS DEL ÁREA DE PRODUCCIÓN (AMZOP)-RS***

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to analyze the limits and possibilities that the Joint Action Plan - PAR brings to the education management in municipalities in the State of Rio Grande do Sul belonging to AMZOP (Association of Municipalities in the Production Zone). We adopted a qualitative approach (FLICK, 2009; 2012), which characterizes our study as a multiple case study (YIN, 2001; TRIVIÑOS, 1987). We use Google questionnaires for data collection, through which we send an access link to all Education Departments in the municipalities of the AMZOP/RS. For analysis purposes, we use data triangulation (GIL, 2008; FLICK, 2009) and content analysis (BARDIN, 2011). We listed the limits and possibilities that PAR brought to education in the municipalities participating in the research. The main result we found was access to financial infrastructure resources for education networks. The main limitation we can highlight was the centralization of resources and decisions at the federal level. The study confirms singular changes in education management in the municipalities belonging to AMZOP/RS, from PAR. There is a need for a critical analysis of the plan and management that is municipalities are developing. It regards democratization based on the principles of autonomy, power decentralization, and effective community participation.

**KEYWORDS:** Educational public policies. Articulated Action Plan. Municipal education management. Democratic management.

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**RESUMO:** Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar os limites e as possibilidades que o Plano de Ações Articuladas - PAR traz para a gestão da Educação de municípios do estado do Rio Grande do Sul pertencentes à AMZOP (Associação dos Municípios da Zona da Produção). De abordagem qualitativa (FLICK, 2009; 2012), como estudo de casos múltiplos (YIN, 2001; TRIVIÑOS, 1987), foram utilizados questionários Google para a coleta de dados, enviados via link de acesso a todas as Secretarias de Educação dos municípios da AMZOP/RS. Para fins de análise, foi usada a triangulação de dados (GIL, 2008; FLICK, 2009) e a análise de conteúdo (BARDIN, 2011). A partir disso, elencou-se os limites e as possibilidades que o PAR trouxe à educação nos municípios participantes da pesquisa. A principal possibilidade foi o acesso a recursos financeiros de infraestrutura para as redes de ensino e a principal limitação foi a centralização dos recursos e das decisões na esfera federal. O estudo confirma mudanças singulares na gestão da educação nos municípios pertencentes à AMZOP/RS, a partir do PAR. É preciso uma análise crítica do plano e da gestão que vem sendo desenvolvida, referente à democratização da educação a partir dos princípios da autonomia, descentralização de poder e da participação efetiva da comunidade.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Políticas públicas educacionais. Plano de Ações Articuladas. Gestão da educação municipal. Gestão democrática.

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar los límites y posibilidades que el Plan de Acción Conjunto - PAR aporta a la gestión de la Educación en los municipios del Estado de Rio Grande do Sul pertenecientes a AMZOP (Asociación de Municipios de la Zona de Producción). Con un enfoque cualitativo (FLICK, 2009; 2012), como un estudio de caso múltiple (YIN, 2001; TRIVIÑOS, 1987). Para la recogida de datos se utilizaron cuestionarios de Google, enviados a través de un enlace de acceso a todos los Departamentos de Educación de los municipios de AMZOP / RS. Para fines de análisis se utilizó la triangulación de datos (GIL, 2008; FLICK, 2009) y el análisis de contenido (BARDIN, 2011). A partir de esto, se enumeraron los límites y posibilidades que el PAR trajo a la educación en los municipios participantes en la investigación. La principal posibilidad era el acceso a recursos de infraestructura financiera para las redes educativas y la principal limitación era la centralización de recursos y decisiones a nivel federal. El estudio confirma cambios singulares en la gestión de la educación en los municipios pertenecientes a AMZOP / RS, del PAR. Es necesario un análisis crítico del plan y la gestión que se está desarrollando, en cuanto a la democratización de la educación en base a los principios de autonomía, descentralización del poder y participación comunitaria efectiva.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Políticas públicas educativas. Plan de Acción Articulado. Gestión educativa municipal. Gestión democrática.

## Introduction

This study is the result of discussions and research carried out within the scope of the REDES Group for Studies and Research in Public Policy and Educational Management/CNPq, linked to the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), which had as its theme the Articulated Action Plan (PAR, Portuguese initials) and its implications for the

management of education in municipalities belonging to the Association of Municipalities in the Production Zone (AMZOP, Portuguese initials), northern region of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, seeking an analysis in the light of the principles of democratic management of education, during the year of 2018.

Thus, the Articulated Action Plan, as part of the Everyone for Education Commitment Plan of Goals, emerged bringing numerous doubts and uncertainties. During this time of implantation and implementation of the PAR, numerous questions arose, among them: the legislation determines the democratic management of education, however, the federal government took for itself the creation of Public Policies, which the municipalities adhered to via PAR, with the main objective of obtaining financial resources; PAR is divided into four dimensions: 1 - Educational Management; 2 - Formation of Teachers and Service Professionals and School Support; 3 - Pedagogical Practices and Assessment and; 4 - Physical Infrastructure and Pedagogical Resources. However, attention was turned almost exclusively to the fourth, which would make it possible to receive financial resources. In this sense, PAR emerged as a methodological instrument of cooperation between the Municipality and the Union, for the planning and management of education in a democratic and participatory manner. But is that really what happened?

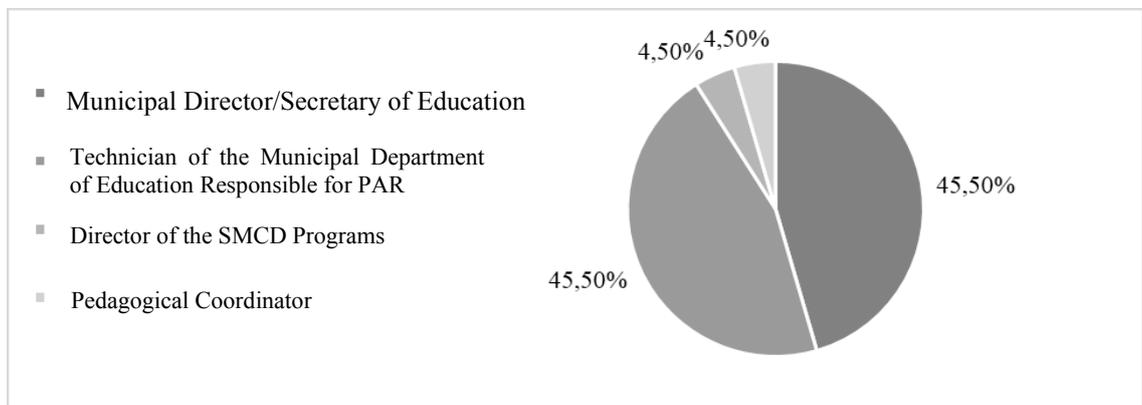
So, these questions gave rise to the research problem: what are the limits and possibilities brought by the Plan of Actions Linked to Education Management in municipalities belonging to the AMZOP region (Association of Municipalities in the Production Zone)? These questions aimed to analyze the limits and possibilities brought by the Articulated Action Plan - PAR for the management of Education in municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul belonging to the AMZOP (Association of Municipalities in the Production Zone).

For this reason, in order to better understand the management proposal brought by PAR to municipal education networks and how it was implemented, a qualitative research was developed, having as locus of investigation the municipalities in the North of Rio Grande do Sul, belonging to to the Association of Municipalities in the Production Zone (AMZOP). Therefore, a social research of a qualitative nature was developed, of the multiple case study type (TRIVIÑOS, 1987), which considered the logic of “replication” (YIN, 2001), that is, the answer, the argumentation, and not only the sampling, using, in this way, as a data construction instrument, the online questionnaire, organized through the Google Forms tool.

Thus, to carry out the survey, the link to the questionnaire page was sent to all 43 (forty-three) Education Departments of AMZOP municipalities, obtaining a response from 22

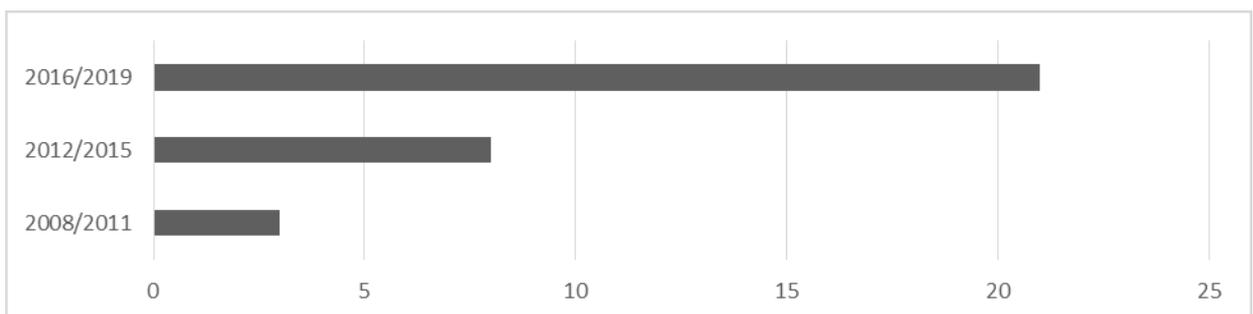
(twenty-two) questionnaires, which is equivalent to 51% (fifty-one percent) of the total. The questionnaires were filled in by the Municipal Education Secretaries/Directors (45.5%), by the Municipal Education Secretariat Technicians Responsible for PAR (45.5%), by the Director of Programs of the Municipal Education Secretariat (4.5 %) and by the Pedagogical Coordinator of the SME (4.5%). Of these, 21 (twenty-one) participated in the preparation of PAR 2016/2019, and nine also participated in the preparation of one of the previous plans, as shown in the following figure:

**Figure 1** – Graph of the role of the person responsible for completing the questionnaire applied in the survey



Source: Devised by the authors

**Figure 2** – Graph of Participation of those responsible for completing the questionnaire in the preparation of the PAR (2008-2019)



Source: Devised by the authors

The collected data allowed us to analyze the organization of education management in the municipalities from the premises of Democratic Management: autonomy, decentralization of power and participation. As well as pointing out the main implications of the Articulated Action Plan in the management of education in these municipalities. The treatment of the results was done through content analysis, considering the analysis categories and their subcategories, the latter being from the data produced: Municipal Education Management

(Dialogue and representativeness, Planning, Financing, Continuing Education, Law of Democratic Management of Education and Technical Cooperation); Democratic Management (Autonomy, Decentralization of Power, Participation and Collegiate Bodies) and Articulated Action Plan (Dimension 1 - Educational Management; Dimension 2 - Formation of Teachers and Service Professionals and School Support; Dimension 3 - Pedagogical Practice and Assessment and Dimension 4 - Physical Infrastructure and Pedagogical Resources, Collaboration Regime, Limits and Possibilities). It is noteworthy that the category 'Democratic Management' was analyzed transversally, assuming the role of interlocutor between the other categories and their subcategories. From this, the two sessions that make up the body of the study were organized.

### **The management of municipal education in the AMZOP region: an analysis in the light of the principles of democratic management**

In this section, the data referring to the management of education in the municipalities of AMZOP are listed, correlating them to the categories of analysis: Municipal Management and Democratic Management, in the light of the principles of autonomy, decentralization of power and participation.

Democratic Management is the legal principle of Education, established by the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988, art. 206), by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LBDEN – Portuguese initials) (BRASIL, 1996, art. 3, VIII) and by the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2014, Art.2, VI). LDBEN also reiterates that municipal education systems will define the norms of democratic management, according to their peculiarities, considering the participation of education professionals in the preparation of political pedagogical projects of schools and school communities in collegiate bodies (BRASIL, 1996, article 14, I-II). In turn, the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2014, our translation) dedicates Goal 19 to Democratic Educational Management:

Ensure conditions, within 2 (two) years, for the effective democratic management of education, associated with technical criteria of merit and performance and public consultation with the school community, within the scope of public schools, providing for resources and technical support from the Union therefore.

This goal has eight strategies for its achievement, of which 19.5 stands out, regarding municipal education systems, which deals with the constitution and strengthening of Municipal Education Councils and School Councils, as instruments (mechanisms) of

participation and supervision of educational and school management; strategy 19.6, which encourages the participation of all members of the school community in the construction and evaluation of Political-Pedagogical Projects, curricula, regulations and school management plans; and strategy 19.7, which aims to strengthen the pedagogical, administrative and financial management autonomy processes of educational establishments.

Afterwards, seeking to understand the organization of democratic management of the municipalities participating in the research, an analysis of the Democratic Management Laws of the 11 (eleven) municipalities was carried out, which at the time already had their approval, seeking to ascertain how the Management of Municipal Education is legally organized, based on the principles of autonomy, decentralization and participation. It is worth noting here that of the 11 (eleven) laws analyzed, nine are limited to standardizing school management, that is, at the level of educational establishment, and only two referred to educational management, that is, at the level of the education system.

The municipalities that cover educational management in their legislation had as participation mechanisms the collegiate bodies: Municipal Education Conference, Municipal Education Forum, Municipal Education Council, FUNDEB Social Monitoring and Control Council and School Food Council. All municipalities determine that School Councils, Parent and Teacher Circles, and in some cases, the Student Union, are the mechanisms for participation in school management.

It was then verified that the *participation* was linked to the Collegiate Bodies, mainly to the School Council, which was defined as co-responsible for the administration of the teaching establishments. *Autonomy appeared* in all laws as a basic principle of Democratic Management, however, in six regulations, it was included as “**relative autonomy** (our emphasis) of teaching establishments in administrative, financial and pedagogical management” (our translation). Thus, the legal acts defined *autonomy in the financial management* of educational establishments as: adherence to the MEC/FNDE Programs; participation in the preparation of the annual budget and the application and accountability of financial resources arising from Federal Programs and/or other institutions and initiatives. As *autonomy in administrative management*, they defined: the choice of representatives of collegiate bodies by the school community, community participation in school councils and the participation of councils in the preparation of Political Pedagogical Projects. Finally, as *autonomy in pedagogical management*, the improvement of education professionals and participation in the elaboration of the Political Pedagogical Project were listed.

According to the data regarding the effectiveness of this principle in the educational management of municipalities, and based on the analysis of legal mechanisms, it can be said that the principle of autonomy was included in the municipal management of municipalities, however, it could be improved and better implemented, being necessary for this to deepen the concept of autonomy in management, and everything that this principle encompasses, in order to be able to expand and improve it in each context and in each agency of the municipal education systems. Because, according to Luck (2013, p. 104, our translation):

This autonomy is built with authority, that is, with a sense of authorship. It is an intellectual (conceptual capacity), political (capacity to share power), social (capacity to lead and be guided by leadership), and technical (capacity to produce and monitor results) authority.

In this sense, it is necessary the formation of intellectually, politically, socially and technically qualified 'authors', to act collectively, with commitment, competence, leadership, mobilization, transparency, strategic and proactive vision and creativity in management, aiming at improvement quality of education and life in society.

With regard to the decentralization of power, according to the data produced, the principle received a median assessment as to its effectiveness in the management of the municipalities. Thus, if it is considered that the decentralization process permeates the realization of administrative, financial and pedagogical autonomy, the organization and performance of collegiate bodies, and the elaboration and execution of the pedagogical political project, as a way to modify the relations between the central and schools systems, redistributing decision-making power, it can be said that this principle was contained in the analyzed municipal legislation, however, it was not fully implemented in the organization of education in the municipalities.

This was reiterated by the data on the financial management of education resources, which showed that it was centralized in the City Hall, given the fact that it held the accounting, planning and management of the application of education resources in 81.8% of the municipalities, and because school directors were appointed by the mayors. In only two municipalities, this power was delegated to the school community, through direct choice.

In this sense, it is up to us to question whether what happened in the municipal education networks could be considered decentralization of power or just a redistribution of tasks and responsibilities. It is worth noting that, for this principle to be effective, it is necessary to provide spaces for the exercise of democratic relations, enabling political decisions to focus “[...] on those who are at the base of the educational system (teachers,

technicians, parents, communities)” (CASTRO; LAUANDE, 2009, p. 9, our translation), which in turn did not materialize.

Finally, the democratic principle of participation was analyzed, which was positively evaluated, demonstrating its effectiveness in the educational management of the investigated municipalities. According to municipal legislation, participation was reserved for the school community in terms of the definition and implementation of pedagogical, administrative and financial decisions, through collegiate bodies. As seen, the municipalities had collegiate bodies (Municipal Council of Education, CACS-FUNDEB and School Councils) established and active. However, their participation involved individual efforts in favor of the community, where through cooperation and team spirit, they sought to implement social and institutional objectives, assuming authorship and responsibility for educational actions. Thus, the legal existence of collegiate bodies is not enough, it is necessary that they play their management role, assuming, together with the Departments of Education and School Management, their role in decision-making. Therefore, the principle of participation requires improvements and enhancement so that, together with the principles of autonomy and decentralization, the management of education in the municipalities under study could be defined as effectively democratic.

### **The Articulated Action Plan and its implications for the management of education in AMZOP's municipalities**

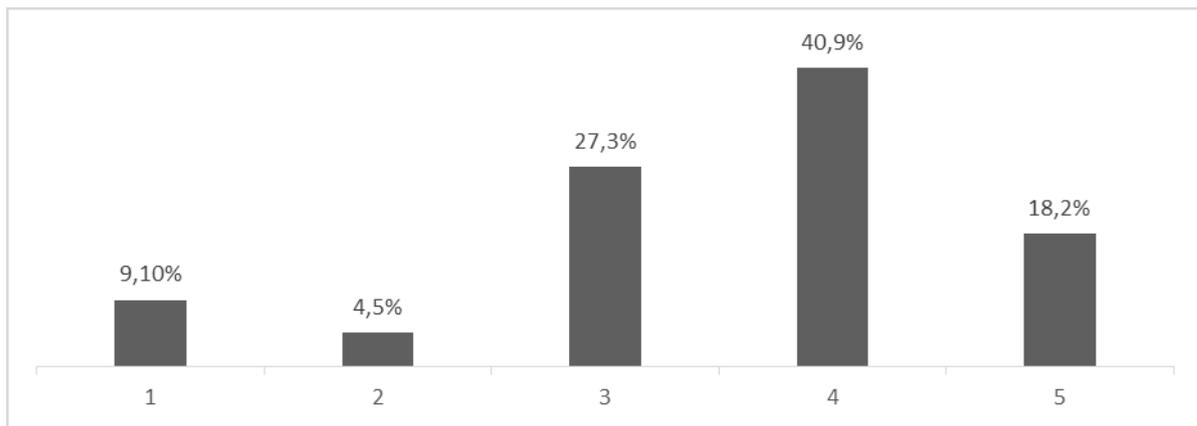
The Plan of Articulated Actions was created in 2007, as a mechanism to implement the Plan of Goals for All for Education (BRASIL, 2007a), with the function of assisting the departments of education in planning actions based on the diagnosis of the educational problems faced, aiming at solve them through the collaboration regime between the federated entities.

As a way to guarantee the democratic participation of the local community in the construction of this plan, from identifying the educational problems faced in the municipalities, to proposing actions to solve them, it was necessary to form a *Local Team*, whose function was to participate elaboration, execution and monitoring of the PAR.

Of the 22 (twenty-two) municipalities participating in the research, three did not organize the local team to prepare the PAR, which violates the democratic and participatory principle proposed by the plan, after all, they ended up centralizing the decision-making power in the education secretariats, not considering the opinion and concerns of the

community. Positively, 19 (nineteen) municipalities formed their local teams, however, as evidenced by the data regarding their performance, illustrated in the graph below, this had an average character, which leaves room for questioning the effectiveness of the democratic principle, since its elaboration.

**Figure 3** – Evaluation Chart of the research participants regarding the role of the Local Team in the preparation, execution, monitoring and evaluation of the Articulated Action Plan (attribution of grades from 1 to 5)



Source: Devised by the authors

### The implementation of the PAR from the perspective of Dimensions

The Articulated Action Plan contemplates four dimensions: 1- Educational Management; 2- Formation of Teachers and Professionals in Service; 3- Pedagogical Practices and Assessment and 4- Physical Infrastructure and Pedagogical Resources. In this context, it was intended to evaluate how this plan was assimilated and implemented in the municipalities belonging to the AMZOP, based on its dimensions.

According to the data collected, 95.5% (ninety-five percent) of the municipalities participating in the study started to have more resources with PAR, and they mainly focused on Dimension 4 - *Physical Infrastructure and Pedagogical Resources*, but not only, with reference to other dimensions, to Education as a whole, to the improvement of the quality of education and to the fulfillment of the goal of the National Education Plan.

Analyzing the answers regarding the implications of the PAR in the municipal education networks, it was found that in the AMZOP Region, Dimension 4, referring to financial resources, stands out. However, other dimensions and other consequences are raised, but with lesser incidence. This does not mean, *a priori*, that the other dimensions were not reached. However, the responses collected made it possible to suppose that, due to the

financial difficulties that plagued and plague the municipalities, in all areas, the possibility of improving the infrastructure of education networks, with the construction and expansion of schools, sports courts, furniture, new buses, among others, are actions that could not be implemented with the municipalities' own resources, which end up making Dimension 4 stand out, despite the others.

Another answer that is worth emphasizing is that which refers to the fulfillment of Goal 1 of the National Education Plan, as this demonstrates that the PAR was in line with the PNE, a novelty brought about by the cycle in force at the time.

Goal 1: To universalize, by 2016, early childhood education in preschool for children from 4 (four) to 5 (five) years of age and expand the offer of early childhood education in daycare centers in order to meet at least 50% (fifty percent) of children up to 3 (three) years old by the end of the term of this PNE (BRASIL, 2014, our translation).

As for the actions, programs and projects that the municipalities started to develop after the implementation of the PAR, 13 (thirteen) referred to Dimension 4, ten to Dimension 3, eight to Dimension 2 and one to Dimension 1. Dimension that stood out was related to Physical Infrastructure and Pedagogical Resources. However, Dimensions 2 and 3 were also cited. It should be noted that:

Since the launch of the Education Development Plan (PDE), all voluntary transfers and technical assistance from MEC to municipalities, states and the Federal District are linked to the preparation of the Plan of Articulated Actions (PAR). In the plan, the manager describes the type of support that the state or municipality needs, by detailing a set of actions. All those who prepared the PAR can receive technical and/or financial assistance from the MEC in different areas (BRASIL, 2018, our translation).

It was possible to observe that among the actions mentioned by the municipalities, the most remembered in terms of infrastructure were the expansion works, improvements and construction of schools and improvements in school transport. As for the pedagogical actions, there were the programs: More Education, More Literacy, Health at School and teacher formation, especially the PNAIC. This does not mean that during these ten years of PAR existence, other programs and projects have not been developed, however, these have gained more evidence and meaning, either because of the needs of each municipality, or because of the relevance they have acquired for local education.

As for the implications of PAR in the Pedagogical Management of the education networks, the following stood out: the improvement of continuing education; a greater reach to programs and resources, which facilitated the guarantee of the right to access and

permanence of students in schools, which, in turn, is related to the management of education as a whole, but also to pedagogical management, since the guarantee of this right is directly linked to the development of learning and educational quality; the innovations and pedagogical improvements recurrent in the Plan, highlighting the importance of adequate and quality physical space for pedagogical development and the importance of the PAR as an Education Planning mechanism for the quadrennium. One of the objectives for which the PAR was created is, precisely, to help education departments to plan their educational policies and ensure that they are maintained even with government changes (BRASIL, 2007b).

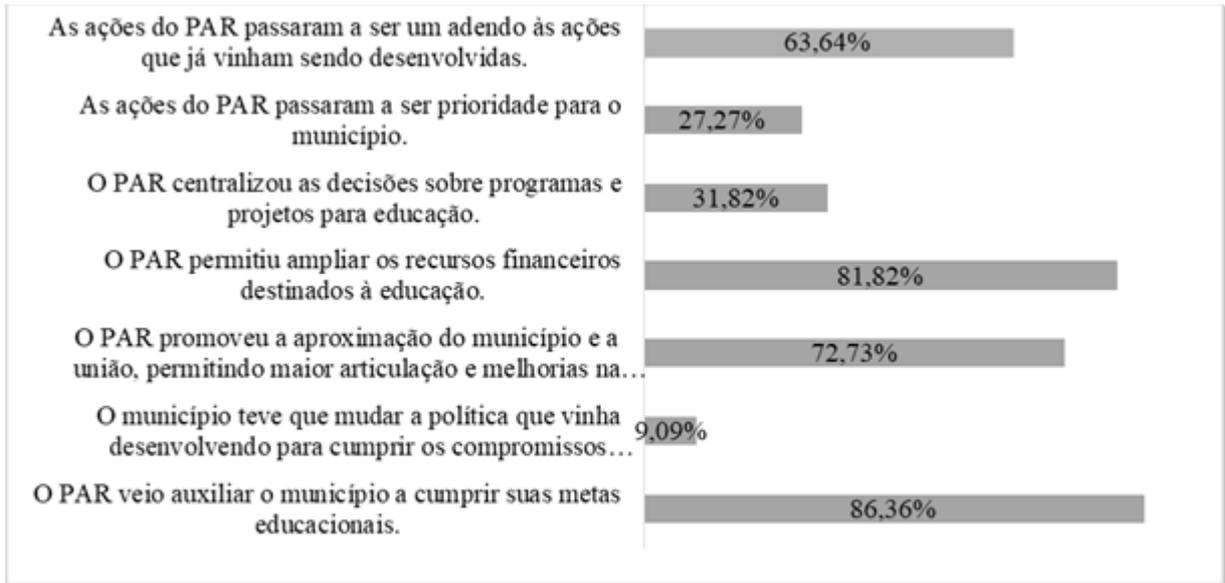
Regarding the modifications incremented in PAR 2016-2019, in the opinion of those surveyed, the most relevant ones refer to the changes at the System level (SIMEC), which made it less bureaucratic, more practical and, of course, bringing better organization and ease of access and action planning. It was also highlighted the possibility of joining the electronic auctions automatically and the need for the rendering of accounts to be up-to-date, so that new requests could be made. It should be noted that, as announced by the MEC / FNDE, one of the main changes made for this cycle was the articulation of the PAR with the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2014), so that the actions proposed in the first would make it possible to achieve the goals of the second. However, this was not remembered by any of the respondents when answering this question.

### **PAR and the Collaboration Regime: decentralization or centralization**

The Education Development Plan (PDE) had as one of its pillars the Collaboration Regime between federated entities. The PAR, an instrument to implement the PDE, was conceived as a democratic mechanism for planning and managing education, with the aim of implementing the collaboration regime. Therefore, we sought to assess the effectiveness of its decentralizing and articulating role in educational management in AMZOP municipalities.

In this context, respondents were asked for their opinion about the PAR. The vast majority reported that the plan: helped the municipality to meet its educational goals (86.4%); made it possible to expand the financial resources destined for education (81.8%); it brought the municipality closer to the Union, allowing for greater articulation and improvements in educational management (72.7%) and becoming an addendum to the actions that were already being developed (63.6%), as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4** – Graph of the opinion of survey participants in relation to PAR



Source: Devised by the authors

Thus, it was perceived that the PAR was evaluated positively, as it helped them to achieve their educational goals, as well as promoting closer ties and greater articulation between Municipalities and the Union. In other words, in a way, it met one of its objectives: *the implementation of the collaboration regime*, understood as the sharing of political, technical and financial attributions for the maintenance and development of education, respecting the autonomy of each federated entity (BRASIL, 2007b). However, it is evident that this collaboration took place, to a great extent, through the Union's supplementary responsibility for financing education.

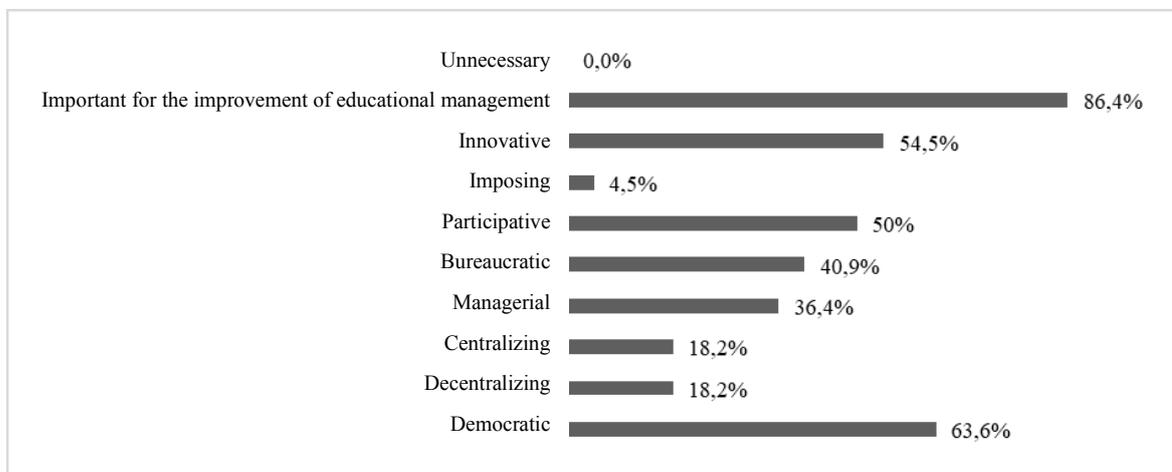
To a lesser extent, but considerable to the point of being analyzed, the PAR issues are centralizing decisions about programs and projects for education (31.8%) and their actions become a priority for the municipalities (27.3%). This demonstrates its centralizing bias, even if it is the opinion of a smaller proportion of municipalities.

Therefore, we sought to know how the municipalities assess their adhesion and commitment, as well as the adhesion and commitment of the MEC/FNDE, with the actions established in the PAR. Since, they considered that their commitment to the implementation of the plan was significantly greater than the commitment of the MEC/FNDE, which fell short of the municipalities' expectations. Even so, they considered that the plan improved the relationship between the federated entities. This could be attributed to the fact that, until then, relations between municipalities and the Union needed intermediaries (deputies, senators...)

and the PAR ended up shortening this path, positively influencing the municipality's autonomy.

Thus, the PAR was considered, by 86% of respondents, important for the improvement of municipal education management, 63.6% evaluated it as democratic, 54.5% as innovative and 50% as participatory. A smaller number of respondents indicated it as bureaucratic (40.9%) and managerial (36.4%), with 18.2% classifying it as decentralizing and the same number as centralizing. However, it was not pointed out as unnecessary by any of the respondents (Figure 5), that is, a positive evaluation of the plan.

**Figure 5** – PAR chart, as a management and planning mechanism is considered



Source: Devised by the authors

In turn, when asked whether educational policy, with the implementation of the PAR, was redirected due to federal interests, opinions were divided: five were not specific in their responses, highlighting the joint action of the municipalities and the Union in favor of education, promoted by the plan; seven consider that educational policy was not redirected to meet federal interests; and the other ten declare that yes, the PAR brought about changes in the educational policies of the municipalities, to meet the interests of the Union. Thus, they showed that the PAR promoted the partnership between the municipalities and the Union, referring to the concept of a regime of collaboration between the federated entities, one of the pillars of the Education Development Plan. However, the concept of collaboration regime cannot be reduced to the formation of partnerships, since, for it to materialize, it is necessary for there to be cooperation between the spheres, so that they share political, technical and financial competences, without harming the autonomy, in favor of educational qualification.

That said, other responses revealed the importance that PAR has acquired in the management of municipal education, and at the same time its dependence on the plan. This

confirms the idea brought up by Souza and Castro (2017), when they affirm the ambivalence of their discourse, when proposing the collaboration regime, while conditioning this collaboration (technical/financial assistance) to the organizational change of municipal education management, in order to adapt it to the four dimensions of the plan.

As for the affirmative answers to the question under analysis, a large part referred to possible resources from the PAR. But four corroborated the hypothesis that drove this study: the Plan of Articulated Actions is an instrument that centralizes decisions at the federal level, leaving the municipalities to carry them out. This idea of centralizing decision-making at the federal level is reiterated by Souza and Castro (2017, p. 890, our translation), when they affirmed that subgovernments were underestimated as formulators of public policies, with the latter being responsible for the implementation of central government policies:

There is in the division of power and authority proposed by PAR the coexistence of several power centers represented by the three entities, but which have unequal capacities; making subgovernments take PAR as a space for political negotiation (constant bargaining to influence decisions that affect their interests). Although the federal government has centralized PAR's actions and decisions in its hands, it does not mean that the other entities have been eliminated from the federative game.

In this context, it can be said that the municipalities had their capacity for joint decision subdued, with the idea of “customer satisfaction” being implemented through the PAR as a strategy to make management more efficient and effective in the search for results, which had been announced by Saviani in 2007. For this, actions are decentralized, which become the responsibility of the municipalities, but not the necessary financial resources, which continue to be managed at the national level.

### **Limits and possibilities of the PAR: final considerations**

This study was motivated by the practical experience in working with the Articulated Action Plan. The uncertainties and questions it brought to education management gave rise to the theme: Municipal Education Management, from the implementation of the Articulated Action Plan.

Thus, the research aimed to analyze the limits and possibilities brought by the Articulated Action Plan for the management of municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul belonging to the AMZOP (Association of Municipalities in the Production Zone), in terms of their democratization.

As the main possibility brought by its implementation in the municipalities, the access to financial resources for infrastructure for the education systems was highlighted, having also enabled the development of programs related to the formation of teachers and other education professionals, as well as aimed at students, in addition to encouraging democratic management, through the creation and action of several councils.

The main limitations were the focus closely linked to Dimension 4, mainly linked to the transfer of financial resources and physical infrastructure; the difficulty in working and managing the PAR platform and, above all, the development of actions in partnership with the FNDE/MEC, due to the centralization of resources and decisions at the federal level. This proved the study hypothesis, as the most impactful decisions for education were linked to the federal sphere, reporting to the research problem/theme, proving the centralization of decisions and the supporting role of municipalities in the management of their own education.

However, the implications of the PAR in the management of AMZOP municipalities are notable. It certainly changed the way of thinking and organizing the management of municipal education. As much as most municipalities signaled that they did not change their management to meet the demands of the plan, it is clear that this happened: when they affirmed adherence to government programs, otherwise they would lose their financial resources; when they reported the countless actions, projects and programs they developed; when they organized their education systems and collegiate bodies, among other demands originated from PAR.

In this way, the PAR had a decisive influence on the management of municipal education, bringing countless possibilities for improvements to the management, to the physical and pedagogical infrastructure, which directly reflected in the quality of the education offered. In other words, there were several gains. Even so, it is not possible to say that it has successfully fulfilled its objective of being a plan that fully implemented Democratic Management. And this is confirmed for several reasons: the way in which it was installed and implemented was implicitly imposing, as anyone who did not adhere to the PDE/Commitment All for Education and did not prepare the Articulated Action Plan could not claim for financial resources or participate FNDE programs, which forced all municipalities to join.

Regarding the layout of the program, it was designed and defined without considering the Brazilian territorial and cultural diversity. And especially, it was configured, yes, in a centralizing instrument, because it retained in the federal sphere the resources, the decision-making on the projects, programs and actions, being up to the municipalities its execution.

In short, as much as the direct opinions of the municipalities did not portray the managerial, centralized characteristic of limited participation and autonomy, a deeper analysis of the open questions revealed that the PAR is a limited, managerial, centralizing mechanism that minimizes autonomy of municipalities, wrapped in veils of a discourse of democratic-participatory management, capable of implementing the regime of collaboration between federated entities, which in practice did not take place.

All of this highlighted the need for a deeper and more critical analysis of the PAR and the management that has been developed, with regard to the democratization of education in light of the principles of autonomy, decentralization of power and effective community participation in decision-making, since these principles were not fully incorporated and effective in the educational and school management of the AMZOP Teaching Systems.

In order to democratize education and use PAR as a mechanism for democratic and participatory planning, it would need to be re-signified, and this would require an in-depth study that would allow to know the theoretical and legal bases of education management, democratic management and the plan, so that, in line with the empirical knowledge of municipal managers, ways could be built to use the PAR as a democratic and participatory planning mechanism for municipal education.

Therefore, a change of focus could be proposed, which would consist in the municipalities to better explore the potential of all four dimensions, seeking to improve actions related to Educational Management, especially regarding democratization, enabling greater participation collegiate bodies, promoting autonomy and decentralization of power.

However, Brazilian society is in a period of doubt in the face of the path traced by its choices. Its still fragile democracy is in danger. It is public knowledge that Brazil is going through a critical period. Engulfed in a political, economic and, why not say, democratic values crisis. Many of the social achievements are being questioned, ignored and even undone. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (*apud* ALMEIDA, 2018), there was a breaking point with democracy, alerting to the fact that dictatorships are taking on new faces. He cites as an example what has been happening: “[...] in Brazil through a grotesque instrumentalization of the judiciary to caricature democracy without eliminating it” (our translation), leading to the weakening of the forces that fight for it.

This is pointed out by Santos (2016) as social fascism, which is configured in social relations when the stronger part holds much greater power than the weaker part, to the point of being able to veto their desires, needs and aspirations for a dignified life.

We live in politically democratic and socially fascist societies. The more social and economic rights are restricted and the less effective the legal action against violations of existing rights, the larger the field of social fascism will be (SANTOS, 2016, our translation).

In this sense, this reading of society portrays much of the reality experienced in Brazil. We experience the weakening of social forces and struggles, while authoritarianism, extremism, rivalry, and the loss of social and economic rights are evident, wrapped in a discourse of 'new politics', of 'cleaning the house', from 'Saviors of the Fatherland', "criminalizing social protest in the name of defending democracy" (SANTOS, 2016).

In the area of education, it is no different. Brazil was at a time of building education for all, in the search for equity and quality. Much has been made in this regard in the last decade. However, Brazilian education today walks in the wake of uncertainties, in a context of polarity and political and partisan clashes.

Therefore, it is necessary to tension the "to come". It is necessary to think and analyze the Articulated Action Plan from the current political-economic-social situation in the country. In this scenario, it is challenging to predict the future of public policies aimed at education, of which PAR is a part of. At the same time, understanding and reiterating the need to implement the Democratic Management of Education becomes crucial in order to guarantee the legitimacy of democratic principles.

In this bias, this study points out that it is essential to keep the flame of democratic management alive. As for educators, they must remain firm in their struggle for the democratization of education, so that society can be redemocratized. Therefore, technical, theoretical and legal knowledge must anchor planning in educational management. It is inferred that the PAR is a democratic management mechanism that needs to be planned in the light of participation, collectivity, transparency and decentralization of power.

Thus, by analyzing the limits and possibilities brought by the plan for AMZOP's municipalities, it is possible to glimpse new possibilities and changes. For this, it is proposed to resume studies, share experiences, be supplied with new knowledge, and improve management practice, strengthening each other. Finally, it is necessary to be resistance in the fight for education as a right of all, fulfilling and enforcing the duty of the State, the family, and society in its promotion, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship (and democracy) and their qualification for work (BRASIL, 1988, Art. 205).

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