

THE MATERIALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN THE
MUNICIPAL EDUCATION NETWORK OF MANAUS-AM

*A MATERIALIZAÇÃO DA GESTÃO DEMOCRÁTICA NA REDE DE ENSINO
MUNICIPAL DE MANAUS-AM*

*LA MATERIALIZACIÓN DE LA GESTIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA EN LA RED DE
EDUCACIÓN MUNICIPAL DE MANAUS-AM*



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ABSTRACT: The article is the result of a master's survey and has as its theme the democratic school management in public schools in the city of Manaus (AM). The objective is to analyze the process of democratic school management of municipal schools in Manaus. We used the field research, of qualitative nature using the semi-structured interview, using a recorder for data collection, in four schools that make up the structural organization of SEMED Manaus. Based on the analysis, the results indicate that there is no clear understanding of how Democratic Management has been materialized in public schools, for the interviewees this category is related to norms, disciplines and rules that should be indispensable in the school organization, leading to the need for a constant dialogue with society in order to reflect on the real meaning of democratic school management.

KEYWORDS: Democratic management. School management. Manaus municipal education.

RESUMO: O artigo é o resultado de uma pesquisa de mestrado e tem como tema a gestão escolar democrática nas escolas da rede pública da cidade de Manaus (AM). O objetivo é analisar o processo da gestão escolar democrática das escolas municipais de Manaus. Utilizou-se a pesquisa de campo, de natureza qualitativa, com aplicação de entrevista semiestruturada, com uso de gravador para coleta de dados, em quatro escolas que compõem a organização estrutural da SEMED de Manaus. Com base na análise, os resultados indicam que não existe entendimento claro de como a Gestão Democrática tem sido materializada nas escolas públicas: para os entrevistados, esta categoria relaciona-se com normas, disciplinas e regras que devem ser imprescindíveis na organização escolar, levando a considerar haver a necessidade de um diálogo constante com a sociedade na perspectiva de refletir sobre qual o sentido real da gestão escolar democrática.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gestão democrática. Gestão escolar. Educação Municipal de Manaus.

RESUMEN: El artículo es el resultado de una investigación de maestría y tiene como tema la gestión escolar democrática en las escuelas públicas de la ciudad de Manaus (AM). El objetivo es analizar el proceso de gestión escolar democrática de las escuelas municipales en Manaus. Se utilizó la investigación de campo, de naturaleza cualitativa, con aplicación de entrevista semiestructurada, con el uso de registrador para la recolección de datos, en cuatro escuelas que componen la organización estructural de SEMED de Manaus. Con base en el análisis, los resultados indican que no hay una comprensión clara de cómo se ha materializado la Gestión Democrática en las escuelas públicas: para los entrevistados, esta categoría está relacionada con normas, disciplinas y reglas que deberían ser esenciales en la organización escolar, lo que lleva a considerar la necesidad de un diálogo constante con la sociedad en la perspectiva de reflexionar sobre el significado real de la gestión escolar democrática.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Gestión democrática. Gestión escolar. Educación Municipal de Manau.

Introduction

This text is the result of a master's research carried out by the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Amazonas. In this research, democratic management and its relationship with the total quality of education in the city of Manaus was followed, carried out with the support of the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Amazonas (FAPEAM), in the period of March and April 2011, in four of the six district divisions that make up the organizational structure of the Municipal Secretariat of Education of Manaus.

It is important to reflect on democratic management because it constitutes the basis of the entire Brazilian educational process and the guiding axis of the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988); in this sense, the empirical field of the research took place in eight municipal public schools in Manaus. The definition of teaching units was based on the largest number of enrolled students and the legally constituted school board. With regard to the research subjects, the following indicators were taken into account: a) teachers and managers with more than five years of effective performance in the school; and b) parents or guardians who participate in the School Board and age ranges between 18 and 60 years. The research was submitted to the Health Ethics Committee, considering the Informed Consent Form, inclusion and exclusion criteria, risks and benefits, among other factors that make up the set of elements for a favorable opinion in carrying out research involving human beings. Therefore, the data collection instrument consisted of interviews with the use of recorders. The interviews were scheduled in advance and all were held at the schools themselves. Thus, data were collected, categorized and analyzed by Textual Discursive Analysis.

In these terms, it is inferred that Democratic Management is an important conquest of the workers and constitutes a break with authoritarianism. However, it is necessary to think about its materialization and effectiveness on the school floor, and in this manuscript, we will highlight this process in four public schools enrolled in the municipal network of the city of Manaus, given that there are contradictions in the understanding of the process of democratic management. The analyzes presented in this text were guided by bibliographical and field research from a critical perspective, and are based on authors such as: Dourado (2006), Oliveira and Bartolozzi (2007), Paro (2008), Luck (2008), in addition to other authors who seek to conceptualize democratic school management as one that enables the collective participation of all subjects in the directions that will be decided in the management at the macro and micro levels of the educational process.

The methodology used in carrying out the research is a qualitative approach, using a semi-structured interview as an instrument for data collection in four schools in the municipal public education network in the city of Manaus. Managers, teachers and parents were interviewed, who answered questions related to the problematizing question about the understanding of what democratic school management is and the actual practice of this model in the network's schools.

In order to discuss this topic, we have organized this article into two sections. The first section is entitled “The legal frameworks and principles of democratic management in public education”, and brings a reflection of the legal frameworks and the totality of these documents in the construction of democratic management, focusing on punctuating these principles in the Organic Law of the Municipality of Manaus, which in 1990 reaffirmed the principles established by the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988) regarding the management model of public schools in Manaus.

In the second section, we analyze the conception of managers, teachers and parents in relation to democratic school management: this topic is important because it presents the voices of subjects and the school community, as well as their impressions regarding democratic management. Then, we infer the final considerations, where we point out that in the schools surveyed, the school community is related to rules and disciplinary norms: this fact highlights contradictions in the understanding of democratic management.

Legal frameworks and principles of democratic management in public education

The discussion about democratic school management in Brazil has become one of the most frequent topics in the educational field, mainly since the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), which established, among several principles, democratic management for public schools in the country, being ratified in 1996 by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education, law no. 9.394/96 (BRASIL, 1996, our translation), as explained in art. 14, stating that:

Education systems will define the norms for the democratic management of public education in basic education, in accordance with the peculiarities and in accordance with the following principles:

- I – Participation of education professionals in the elaboration of the school's pedagogical project;
- II – Participation of school and local communities in school councils or equivalent.

This principle, in theory, signaled the possibility for all agents involved in the educational process to make decisions collectively in favor of improving the management and quality of teaching, both in administrative, financial and pedagogical aspects. Democratic management also received attention in Law no. 10.172/01 (BRASIL, 2001), which approved the National Education Plan, establishing guidelines, objectives and goals to be implemented in the various stages and modalities of basic and higher education, in order to guarantee access, permanence, democratic management and the quality of teaching.

The Organic Law of the Municipality of Manaus, enacted on April 5, 1990 (MANAUS, 1990), also reaffirms the principles established by the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988), with regard to the management model of public schools in the municipality of Manaus. According to Caldas (2009), the school management of the municipal network, at least in theory, meets the constitutional principles of democratic management, however, the General Regiment of schools in the municipality of Manaus, when referring to the management model, uses terms such as “co-management” (art. 105) and not that of democratic management (CALDAS, 2009).

In an attempt to understand the terms that are posed by the General Regiment of Schools in the Municipality of Manaus, this same author uses the speech of Hora (2009, apud CALDAS, 2009, p. 35) who says that “it is necessary to perceive the tenuous and purposeful, but a fundamental difference between sharing and democratizing management”, since:

In the form of shared management, after proving the seriousness of the situation and the need to resolve it, the solution is placed in the hands of the school community (parents, students, teachers, principals), the various neighborhood associations and entrepreneurs to improve school performance. Participation, in this model, represents a professional duty for some and volunteering for others, revealing a fallacious conception that distances the idea of social control (CALDAS, 2009, p. 46, our translation).

For Dourado (2006), public schools experience paradoxes, because they say they are democratic, but they have difficulties in experiencing democratic management and deciding on their projects. In some cases, the centralized bases of the exercise and personalization of power remain, in which the call to participation becomes yet another control strategy. Perhaps the realization of this model of democratic management for public schools in Brazil still has a long way to go, but it is urgent that there can be concrete signs to put into practice an education that proves to be truly fair and egalitarian, as advocated by the legal systems that they deal with education as well as critical thinking.

Oliveira and Bartolozzi (2007), when referring to this management model, share the idea that in order for it to be effective in the educational field, it is necessary that there actually be sharing in the school's decisions, and at the same time it must be articulated with administrative decentralization processes. What is least seen in the school are democratic management attitudes, since practices that historically consolidated themselves as authoritarian permeate it, which the liberalizing discourse barely manages to disguise.

There are people working in the school, especially in leadership positions, who call themselves democrats just because they are “liberal” with students, teachers, employees or parents, because they “give them an opening” or “allow” them to take part in this or that decision. But what this discourse does not seem to be able to completely cover up is that, if participation depends on someone opening up or allowing manifestation, then the practice in which this participation takes place cannot be considered democratic, because democracy is not granted, it is realized: there cannot be a “democratic” dictator (PARO, 2008, p. 18-19, emphasis added, our translation).

In this context, the materialization of democratic practices on the school floor becomes innocuous, since they are always guided by a direct relationship of subordination between the power relations that constitute our society and which is clearly manifested in the pedagogical relations within the school; this situation was very evident in the speeches of the research subjects, as will be shown later.

In this regard, Paro (2008) states that in the day-to-day life of the school, administration, which he calls management, is usually associated with leading or controlling the actions of others. This stems from the fact that, day in and day out, we live with arbitrariness and domination and we hardly realize it. It is understandable, therefore, the understanding and acceptance that managing, administering, is confused with ordering, leading, controlling, regulating and even more, is the understanding that the people who assume these positions of managers are generally in that position in a condition of positions of trust of politicians or with the function of hindering any feeling that may oppose the interests of the constituents and, in other words, that may meet the democratic sense of management.

According to Paro (2008, p. 25, our translation), “democracy as a universal value and practice of reciprocal collaboration between groups and people, is a globalizing process that tends to involve each individual, in the fullness of his personality”. In this sense, the process of democratic management should be seen as an important instrument for the consolidation of democracy at the level of society, given that school and society are dialectically constituted. However, it is important to understand that the school does not become democratic only for its

administrative practice, but for all its pedagogical and essentially educational action. Nor can one think that, because it is democratic, it ends up solving all the problems that permeate the educational process, since the school is a space of conflicts where different interests coexist (GARBIN; ALMEIDA, 2010).

Breaking with these practices that are crystallized in the minds and actions of the ideologues of Brazilian education implies, among other things, putting into practice principles already constitutionally established in the organization of pedagogical work and school management, in a perspective that proves to be in fact democratic, such as, for example: the collective construction of the Pedagogical Political Project and the creation of collegiate bodies (School Councils), which we will briefly discuss in this text.

a) Pedagogical Political Project

The Pedagogical Political Project (PPP), in a conception of democratic management, constitutes an essential instrument of educational management, as long as it is taken into account in the planning: the effective participation of those who make up the school, compliance with legal provisions, the needs of the community, in addition to considering the aspects that have historically been accumulated by humanity, in order to promote in students conditions to discuss the reality that presents itself, with the intention of transforming it.

Vasconcelos (2009, p. 169, our translation) takes a position saying that:

The Pedagogical Political Project (or Educational Project) is the institution's overall plan. It can be understood as the systematization, never definitive, of a Participatory Planning process, which is perfected and materialized along the way, which clearly defines the type of educational action to be carried out. It is a theoretical-methodological instrument for intervening and changing reality. It is an element of organization and integration of the institutions' practical activity in this transformation process.

Seen from this point of view, the PPP can constitute itself as a guiding thread of all educational action that is developed in the school in an autonomous and participatory way, considering the entire process of change that occurs in society.

b) School Council

In the implementation of democratic management, it is important that it be exercised and experienced in everyday school life. For this, it is necessary to create concrete conditions

for its exercise. In this sense, the creation of the school council can contribute to make the school democratic process viable in opposition to the centralizing practices still present in the pedagogical and administrative processes experienced in this space.

According to Dourado (2006), it is essential that the school council, in the process of its construction and constitution, goes through moments of collective experiences in which not only the meaning of a collegiate body for the political-pedagogical organization of the school is discussed, but also define the type of man, education and society that one wishes to build with this exercise, which ranges from didactic-pedagogical understanding for student learning, to knowledge of the reality surrounding the school.

Article 14 of LDB n°. 9.394/1996 (BRASIL, 1996) in effect, when dealing with democratic management, emphasizes in Item II that one of the components of this management model is precisely the participation of school communities and in school councils or equivalent. Therefore, a management that intends to be democratic presupposes the participation of the community in the decisions of the educational process. According to Ciseski and Romão (2000, p. 70, our translation), the School Council is:

A collegiate normally formed by all segments of the school community: parents, students, teachers, management and other employees. Through it, all people connected to the school can be represented and decide on administrative, financial and pedagogical aspects, making this collegiate not only a channel for participation, but also a management tool for the school itself.

Achieving these purposes implies, among other things, that participation is a reality at school, and for that, new means and actions are needed that lead to rethinking the culture and organization of the school and the local community, in a way that breaks with the practices authoritarian attitudes that resist in the power relations constituted in the school space.

According to Rocha (2006), there are several forms of participation that do not always characterize principles of democratic management. There is submissive participation, in which people are called only to hear teachers' complaints about their children, which does not contribute to a democratic practice. Collaborative participation, in which subjects even make suggestions for improving pedagogical practice, but do not participate in decision-making, as they are taken from top to bottom; there is also what he calls co-author participation, which implies the direct involvement of all actors in decision-making, monitoring the implementation and evaluating the paths that are collectively decided at school.

In this sense, when the school involves teachers, students, employees, parents and the community, it is believed that all these actors become co-responsible for the success of the institution, contributing to its transformation into an educational instance, where collective spaces will be made possible. of work and learning.

According to Dourado (2006, p. 67, our translation):

The basic idea is that of management as a process of comings and goings, built through the articulation between the different actors, who weave the feature that this process takes on. Democratic management is the expression of learning about participation based on dissent, coexistence and respect for differences in favor of establishing spaces for collective discussion and deliberation.

The participation of the school community in the management process of schools in the municipal network is also contemplated in the General Regiment of Schools in the municipality of Manaus, as highlighted in article 14, item VIII: The school, in order to function, must comply with the following requirements: VIII – existence of School Councils or equivalent (BRASIL, 1990). It is observed, therefore, that the municipal schools of Manaus belong to a context in which the participation of the school community in its management is an obligatory part of its operation, at least as far as the legal documents are concerned. It is implicit, with this document, that the management of schools should be associated with a joint action of teachers, students, employees and parents in order to integrate, plan and forward actions that aim to achieve collective results built in a democratic climate.

However, it is necessary to be clear that these practices are not yet constituted as effective actions in schools, since:

Community participation in the management of public schools faces countless obstacles to materialize, which is why one of the basic and preliminary requirements for anyone willing to promote it is to be convinced of the relevance and necessity of this participation, so as not to give up in the face of the first difficulties (PARO, 2008, p. 16, our translation).

Paro (2008) reaffirms that democracy, as a universal value and practice of collaboration between subjects, is a globalizing process that should involve each individual, in the fullness of his personality. Knowing the meaning of what the actors of the schools that lead the management process think, such as: managers, teachers and parents, can clarify a little the situation of the thought and the distance of the lived by the subjects on this subject in the researched schools. This procedure will be specified from the results obtained with the field research carried out in four schools in the teaching network of Manaus.

Conception of managers, teachers and parents in relation to democratic school management

The results of the interviews made it possible to hear the subjects, thus, their impressions were the focal point of this work, because in addition to the difficulties in logistics regarding the location of the schools, the participation and the punctuality of the interviewees, one can perceive the importance of knowing how to listen in several respects. These range from the researcher's discipline in not interfering to the care of not evading the issues on the subject in a specific way, leading to what Fazenda (1991) calls the educational character of the research, in which the researcher also ends up going through a process educational, including listening to the other.

All questions that were systematized in the interview script with the research subjects were directed, in summary, in the perspective of tracing an understanding of the concept of democratic school management and how it has been implemented in schools in the municipality of Manaus, a principle enshrined in the Constitution Federal (BRASIL, 1988) and ratified by LDB nº. 9.3949/1996 (BRASIL, 1996).

When carrying out the interviews with the managers, teachers and parents and/or guardians, it was noticed that although they had already heard about democratic management, the concepts or understanding of 'what management is' is always based on a concept superficial.

A fact that drew attention in the professional profile of managers is that 75% of them do not have training in Pedagogy, and do not have any training in school management. Of this percentage, training is in Philosophy or Sociology, with a second degree in business administration.

From this point of view, we report to Paro (2008), who observes that in Brazil one of the major problems of School Administration has revolved around two antagonistic positions: those who defend models of school administration based on principles and methods developed from the business management model, foundation in managerial management, and those who defend a socially referenced education with principles and purposes of Democratic Management. The big problem, in Paro's view (2008), is that the methods and techniques adopted are similar to each other, insofar as they are based on the same general principles of Administration, that is, a standardized model that disregards the specificities of the schools and their subjects; on the other hand, those who defend the denial of this convenience at school,

placing themselves against any type of administration or attempt at bureaucratic, standardizing and standardized organization in defense of inclusive education as a right and not as a service.

Corroborates Paro (2008) warning that both conceptions can incur serious errors if they do not work with the concrete reality of the subject, if they are not focused on social transformation, guaranteeing both the quality of teaching and the social quality of the subjects who belong to it.

Democratic management, in the view of one of the interviewed managers, means “something good, but democracy does not actually happen in public schools” (verbal information). Even though there is no clear definition of the concept of this principle, it is notable for the position given that it does not happen in public schools in Manaus. According to Luck (2008), good school management largely depends on good leadership, and this leadership process corresponds to a set of actions, attitudes and behaviors assumed by a person, to influence people individually or in groups to,

[...] achievement of educational objectives, in its broad sense, which depends on the channeling and adequate use of the dynamic energy of interpersonal relationships occurring in the context of education systems and schools, around educational objectives, conceived and assumed by their members, in order to constitute a collective commitment around its realization (LUCK 2008, p. 23, our translation).

It was noticed, with the research, that many managers claim to be democratic, but have attitudes that go against the principles of democratic management (art. 15 of LDB nº 9.394/1996) (BRASIL, 1996). In the teachers' speech about the same question asked to managers, there was almost a consensus on what democratic management is, that is, control practices to meet the interests of capital in which decisions are constituted unilaterally (manager) and excessive acts bureaucratic aspects of teaching at school. In the view of the public-school teacher in Manaus, “democratic management at school is still dragging on. Proof of this is that managers are not chosen by the community, they are political appointments” (verbal information).⁴

In this way, the considerations about the materialization of democratic management in the schools of Manaus register that there are generally decisions that are taken through the intervention of party politics, mainly in what concerns the choice of school administrators, and not by election by the school community.

⁴ Verbal information obtained during the research data collection period.

Paro (2008, p. 45, our translation) considers:

The Director freely appointed by the powers of the State, even though he is well-intentioned, is committed to those who appointed him. His work cannot contradict the political party responsible for his nomination. A possible commitment to your school community will only happen if it does not clash with partisan political interests. Any setback may be grounds for his dismissal and the appointment of another Director who meets the interests of the governing bodies.

In these terms, practices that lead to the choice of school leaders in a democratic way are incipient, since old clientelism behaviors, characteristic of the traditionalist culture in Brazil, still prevail. The second aspect concerns the culture of authoritarianism, which is still very present at school.

Hora's speech (2007) is relevant when he states that the school as a social organization and that intends to be democratic needs to think of a space where professional educators, students, parents, community activists and other citizens have the right to be well-informed and to have a critical participation in the creation and execution of school policies and programs, breaking with the authoritarianism that still prevails in school organization. For a public-school teacher in Manaus, "parental participation is still very low. They are the ones who have to make this demand more so that there is democratization" (verbal information)⁵.

The manifestations mentioned above are in line with the thought of Dourado (2006), when he states that democracy in the school space will not occur without understanding the political and social role of the school, which, as a privileged space for systematized production, needs to be organized so that their educational actions achieve the concrete objectives of forming participatory, critical and creative subjects. Therefore, it is possible to state, from what was exposed above, that the interviewees have a very superficial command over the statements given, pointing the responsibility to others, as well as waiting for something to happen without needing military action around the issue.

With regard to parents, we initially sought to ask the following question: what would it be like to participate in administrative, financial and pedagogical decisions at the school? We can infer from the speeches that participation boils down to just participating as a listener in the meetings to which they are called and "picking up your child and helping to work on homework together with the teacher so that he does well to have a good time". apprenticeship. I see it as participation" (verbal information)⁶.

⁵ Verbal information obtained during the research data collection period.

⁶ Verbal information obtained during the research data collection period.

At no time in the schools surveyed was there a concern on the part of school leaders with the choice of members of parents and/or guardians of students in the composition of school councils that took the socio-political background of these members as a criterion. According to Gohn's assumptions (2007), democratic participation in school administrations will depend, to a great extent, on the degree of information (or misinformation) that its representatives have; for this author, the participation of society in management models that are said to be participatory implies a popular engagement that takes into account opinion, consensus and conflicts as a manifestation of the generation of new knowledge for the elaboration of strategies that can guarantee school management democratic and participatory. Therefore, the training of all segments of the school organization becomes necessary for the construction of pedagogical strategies that actually contribute to the quality of teaching.

Final remarks

The research allowed us some reflections about how the management in the municipal schools of the city of Manaus has materialized. It was possible to infer that there is a certain confusion of the real meaning of what democratic school management is, manifested in the speeches of managers, teachers and parents, at least in what is theoretically defended in this work, which is a model of democratic management in which there is the participation of the school collective from thinking, elaborating, to distributing the necessary tasks for the execution of actions that favor a process of educational growth of those who participate in it.

Democratic management in public schools in the state of Amazonas, and in particular in the municipal public school system in the city of Manaus, is contradictory because of the capitalist system that seeks a society engaged in clientelism, political favoritism, authoritarianism and oppression, typical of the maneuvers of Capital, which blocks any creative or autonomous factor of the subjects, especially in the field of education, leading to misunderstandings in what democratic management is, given the numbness or consent in attitudes that become banal in the daily life of the school, although some speeches also denounce such attitudes and non-agreement.

However, although we consider the negative aspect demonstrated in the subjects' speeches, we cannot let democratic management in schools die, nor despair as to its need in a Democratic State that guarantees everyone access to free, quality public education, especially in current times, when education and democracy itself are under severe attacks from conservative governments.

Rather, it is necessary to resist the discourse that tends to make the meaning of education and management a business, which has increasingly prioritized an idea that diminishes the State's ability to manage social policies, including educational policy. It is necessary to broaden this discussion in schools, in initial and continuing training courses for teachers, in addition to implementing it in practice in a way that not only has quantitative participation, but the constant exercise of dialogue with the social whole that surrounds the school of intentionally and constantly, without the acceptance of a simplistic and bureaucratic concept of management and the implementation of a constant and contradictory journey in search of building a more just and egalitarian society.

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