

DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF QUEIMADOS (RJ): THE ELECTION PATH FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

A GESTÃO DEMOCRÁTICA NO CONTEXTO DO MUNICÍPIO DE QUEIMADOS (RJ): A TRAJETÓRIA DE ELEIÇÃO PARA DIRETORES ESCOLARES

GESTIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA EN EL CONTEXTO DEL MUNICIPIO DE QUEIMADOS (RJ): EL CAMINO DE ELECCIÓN PARA LOS DIRECTORES ESCOLARES

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the election of public-school principals since the emancipation, in the 1990s, of the municipality of Queimados, located in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Through documentary analysis of texts from the executive and legislative branches, it can be observed that participation, as a dimension of democratic management, is in the center of this process. Aspects of the performance of the candidate are important for the election and the election of directors according to legal documents generates a kind of self-loyalty, in view of goal 19 of the Brazilian National Education Plan, which regulates the selection of directors through public consultation.

KEYWORDS: Democratic management. Election of school principals. School management.

RESUMO: O presente artigo debate a trajetória da eleição de diretores das escolas públicas, desde a emancipação na década de 1990, no município de Queimados, localizado no estado do Rio de Janeiro, na região sudeste do Brasil. Por meio de análise documental de textos dos poderes executivo e legislativo, pode-se observar que a participação, como dimensão de gestão democrática (LIMA, 2014) afasta-se do centro deste processo. Aspectos relacionados ao desempenho do candidato à direção escolar são cruciais para a participação no pleito e estão sob o crivo do poder executivo. Ademais, a eleição de diretores expressa nos documentos legais gera uma espécie de auto fidelidade, visto a meta 19 do Plano Nacional de Educação que regulamenta a seleção de diretores por meio de consulta pública.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gestão democrática. Eleição de diretores. Seleção de diretores escolares. Gestão escolar.

RESUMEN: Este artículo debate la trayectoria de la elección de directores de escuelas públicas desde la emancipación, en la década de 1990, del municipio de Queimados, ubicado en el estado de Rio de Janeiro, en la región sureste de Brasil. A través del análisis

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documental de textos de los poderes ejecutivo y legislativo, se puede observar que la participación, como dimensión de la gestión democrática (Lima, 2014), se aleja del centro de este proceso. Aspectos relacionados al desempeño del candidato a la dirección escolar son fundamentales para la participación en el pleito y están bajo el control del poder ejecutivo. A elección de directores basada en los documentos legales genera una especie de autofidelidad, una vez que la meta 19 del Plan Nacional de Educación, que condiciona la selección de directores por medio de la consulta pública.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Gestión democrática. Elección de directores. Selección de directores de escuela. Gestión escolar.*

Introduction

Present in Brazilian legal norms for about thirty years, the democratic management of the Brazilian public school is a principle, the effect of the disputes and clashes that occurred in the period of democratic reopening of Brazil, after more than twenty years of civil-military dictatorship. As stated by Rocha and Hammes (2018), democratic management is a great challenge for the construction of a school in which all its segments are contemplated, especially the students who, in the final analysis, are the reason of the whole school. According to the authors, democracy has become, in theory, the scope of the entire management of public agencies in the country since the democratic opening of Brazil in the 1980s, having as a landmark the constituent that culminated in the 1988 National Magna Carta (BRASIL, 1988).

This paper discusses the assumptions about the democratic management of the public school, the theoretical and conceptual debate, based on the contributions of Lima (2014), about the dimensions of the democratic management of education: election, collegiality and participation. From these dimensions, we highlight the election of directors to focus our discussion and analysis based on the movement carried out since the 1990s in the municipality of Queimados, one of the municipalities that make up the Baixada Fluminense, a geopolitical region composed of thirteen cities in the state of Rio de Janeiro .

The choice of the research universe is associated with the master's thesis from which the article originated, considering a municipality in the state of Rio de Janeiro that legislated the selection of school principals, through direct election, shortly after their emancipation, in 1990. The election is present in the Municipal Organic Law (QUEIMADOS, 1993) confirming the principle of democratic management laid down in the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988). Law no. 187 (QUEIMADOS, 1995), even before democratic management

was ratified in the Law of Directives and Bases of Education no. 9394/96 (BRASIL, 1996), regulated how this process would take place. Although it portrays a local context, it contributes to the understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the election of directors as a selection format for this function in public schools.

The present work, of a qualitative character, used documentary analysis to investigate how the political texts of the municipality of Queimados (RJ) deal with the election of directors and their developments, considering the candidate's profile and the form of community participation: who can apply to office, who votes, what formation is required to be a school principal, what requirements must be met in order to run for election.

The work is divided into four sections after this introduction: the theoretical debate about the dimensions of democratic management proposed by Lima (2014); the discussion about the dimension of the election of directors, their possibilities and limits; the trajectory of the election in the municipality of Queimados (RJ), the movement of normative infidelity and self-fidelity when taking off from the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2014), but reaffirming its option for the election of directors in the Municipal Education Plan (PME) (QUEIMADOS, 2015) and, finally, the final considerations.

Dimensions of democratic management: election, collegiality and participation

Democratic school management is a complex political-educational category that does not dispense with the analysis of historical contexts, political projects, the correlation of forces in which it occurs, as it is a social construction (LIMA, 2014). Such an assertion corroborates our understanding of denying shallow relations with democratic management, which do not consider the participation of school actors and collegiate spaces of the school.

We can understand democratic management as the set of relations of participation in the school between the different groups that comprise it: students, parents, guardians and families, teachers, non-teaching staff, possible subjects as the school's public, among others, the sum of these collectives in Brazil, it is commonly called the school community. This set of relationships involves the horizontalization of these collectives in the identification of specific local problems, demands and issues, the debate of possible solutions and the commitment of the collectives to resolve, equalize and transpose them.

Lima (2014) defends three basic dimensions associated with democratic management: the election, collegiality and participation in the decision. However, the dimensions presented by the author are not a recipe or prescription for guaranteed and full democratic management;

the perspectives of democratic management at school are not exhausted. We can find in the public schools scene other forms of participation, in addition to the regulated ones, such as assemblies, associations and forums that count on the participation of the different actors. In other words, the fact of observing the three dimensions at the school level - election of principals, collegiality spaces (school council, unions, parents' association, class council, school feeding councils and FUNDEB, among others) and participation - does not rule out possible limitations on the exercise of democratic management in public schools.

The election, the focus of this work, refers directly to the choice of the school principal by the school subjects. However, the election not only allows the participation of those who choose the director, but also of those who choose to dispute the election. We can say, therefore, that the election improves the democratization of the school by two biases, as a two-way street.

Collegiality makes it possible for many of the school's demands, inscribed in democratic and horizontal practices, to be discussed in collegiate spaces composed of representatives of the different school collectives on the school council, as provided for in the Law of Directives and Bases of Education (LDB), Law No. 9394 (BRASIL, 1996) and in municipal, state and national collegiate agencies, such as boards of education, FUNDEB and school meals monitoring.

Participation is a crucial dimension that permeates all others, since election and collegiality is not understandable without the subjects participating, acting and deciding. One form of participation of the collectives is in the construction, review and re-elaboration of the Pedagogical Political Project - PPP, a document that structures the changes and transformations that the school intends to achieve in its context, in a given period, in a normatively defined way in the LDB (BRASIL, 1996).

An issue pointed out by Lima (2014; 2018) is the crystallization of democratic management when it becomes a slogan or a commonplace repeatedly called for, in the sense of being evoked without actually being practiced or that happens punctually on rare occasions. In this sense, democratic management is an aspect that is difficult to measure and is not limited to moments of punctual participation in the school, nor the sporadic fulfillment of requirements that aim at mere proceduralism, such as the existence of school councils and the pedagogical project, as necessary to LDB legal assistance (BRASIL, 1996). The problems related to the democratic realization of the PPP can be pointed out when they are made by a single school actor, without the participation of teachers, staff and students of the school in its elaboration or that are not completed under the prerogative that they are under construction,

but never ready (FERNÁNDEZ, 2015). As for school councils, we can mention problems such as the formation assumed by predefined individuals by the school management or the summoning of its members to legitimize a decision that had already been defined, emptying its deliberative character.

The theme of democratic management can appear in political-pedagogical projects, management or action plans, municipal/state education plans without, however, permeating everyday school actions. For Santos and Sales (2012), this issue goes through the use of democratic management as a motto to summon and raise awareness of the subjects to carry out tasks that distance themselves from the decentralization of power and the participation of school collectives in decision-making. Democracy and democratic collegiality practices, as well as autonomy in participation in decisions and the ability to produce its own rules, towards the forms of “democratic endogovernment” (LIMA, 2018, p. 24), are far from being simple techniques of management or even political principles constitutionally legitimized in certain cases. As highlighted by the author, they are practices of educational and learning of democracy through the exercise of participation in decision-making processes and a right of teachers, students, families and the community.

In view of the possibilities that democratic management broadens us and, proportionally, the difficulties of achieving it, given that the confirmation of the existence of the PPP and the class council does not imply a democratic management in fact, how can we think of this principle in the form of a goal, as expressed in the National Education Plan (PNE) (BRASIL, 2014)? Could democratic management be translated as a goal? What would be the most concrete actions and how could we go about guaranteeing a democratic management, knowing that this demands a permanent vigil?

A possible clue is to know that the existence of school councils and a pedagogical project in the school is not enough, besides, it is necessary to understand and identify how the representatives of these collegiate spaces are chosen, how often they meet, how the agendas are defined. Likewise, in addition to identifying the existence of a pedagogical project, it is questioned how and who participates in its preparation and review, as well as the frequency of this process. Another clue, the focus of this article, is the selection process for school principals.

The election of principals as a dimension of democratic management

The election of principals of public schools is defended by several authors who consider it as the most democratic way of selection (SOUZA, 2009; LIMA, 2014; MENDONÇA, 2001; PARO, 2007; 2011; 2016; AMARAL, 2018). When compared to other more common forms - political nomination and competition - the election stands out as an option that deviates from the political interests in favor of nomination through executive or legislative power and the impersonality characteristic of public competition.

In this logic, the election constitutes a space for participation both by those who work at the school, those who are served by it, and by those who can apply for the position - as long as they meet the criteria to apply, which is defined for each education network in Brazil, given the relative autonomy of the subnational bodies as determined by the Federal Constitution (CF) (BRASIL, 1988). The election, in general, moves the entire school community, even before its execution, through the monitoring committees, the plaque campaigns and the verification of this process, and, according to Paro (2007), the democratization of the school is not reduced to the election of directors, since it is not an everyday process.

The election can take place biannually or with a longer interval and this is a factor defined by each subnational body in its education network, as an expression of its responsibility and autonomy. Another aspect that each context delimits is the number of reappointments of the same director to the position. Not limiting the number of reappointments or expanding this number by a large number of terms, voids the possibility of providing other subjects with access to school management and, consequently, to other projects, gives in to the personalization of the function, represses the oxygenation of management. It is not difficult to see cases of school principals who, even elected, remain in this position for many years and even decades.

In Brazil, the most common ways of conducting the function of a principal are, in addition to the election, the political nomination and the public notice, the latter on a smaller scale. The nomination is the model considered less democratic because it considers the possibility that the principal is a representative of the interests of the executive or legislative power in that context served by the school. However, the appointed director may also be a representative of the dominant forces in that place. About this model, we have to:

The appointment by political criterion, in which the secretary of education or the head of the executive branch chooses the person occupying the position, based on the political-party criterion, is commonly considered the worst alternative, due to the political patronage it feeds and the lack of technical

base to support it, since the candidate is chosen not for his experience and knowledge of management and education, but for his greater affinity with the party or group in the state or municipality government (PARO, 2011, p 45, our translation).

Regarding the political indication of the school principal in meeting clientelistic interests, Mendonça (2001) argues that political interference has a fertile field in school for growth:

For the professional politician, having the school principal as a political ally means having the possibility of indirectly holding control of a public institution that directly serves a significant part of the population. For the director, to enjoy the confidence of political leadership is to have the possibility to enjoy public office. In this way, the conditions for the exchange of favors that characterize patrimonialism in the occupation of public employment are established. This form of provision, which I called indication, is based on the personal and political trust of the godparents and not on the proper capacity of the nominees, being far from the impersonal ordering that characterizes bureaucratic administration. The exoneration follows, in this sense, the same logic. To the extent that the beneficiary with the position loses the political trust of the sponsor, the exoneration is triggered as a natural consequence, as the deprivation of a privilege (MENDONÇA, 2001, p. 89, our translation).

Thus, the school is perceived as a space for exchanging favors between politicians and potential voters, which characterizes clientelism. The social and pedagogical functions of the school are at the expense of these interests. The dismissal of the appointed principals surrounds the school, which can lead to the rotation of principals in the same school regulated to the interest of their political godfather personified as representative of the executive, legislative or even other subject who has some kind of power and control in the territory in which the school is located. For Mendonça (2001), the indication is in a relationship of interests and personal and political trust of these godparents and not in the proper or technical capacity of the nominees. The option for the political indication of the school principal points to more problems than possibilities for the school, since it is seen in this model of provision as a place of service for personal, political and individual interests.

In the case of the competition, it is not a matter of the principal's role being a function, but rather a position, due to the fact that the principal remains exercising this activity until he retires or resigns the position. Although it is a more impersonal way of leading the professional to the school management function, the public notices shows problems exactly because of the excess of impersonality. It is not argued here that the public notice is not an appropriate option for other cases, but, specifically in relation to the function of school director, it is necessary to point out the weaknesses for this option. Paro (2011) states that the

importance of public notice for the assignment of positions cannot be denied in order to avoid the practices of political appointments that tend to favor personal and private interests as opposed to the public interest, but it is necessary to realize its limitations especially when in the democratic management debate.

When assessing the performance of the candidate for school management, whether through instruments generally used in public notices, internal competitions and selection processes, such as written tests, essays, curriculum analysis and/or management/action plans/projects etc., one do not observes the candidate's relationship with the school community and the perception of that community for the candidate, nor their participation in the selection. In this case different from the nominated director who owes justification to his political godfather, the competing principal can be seen exclusively as an executor of State policies in a vertical way, with little or no dialogue with the community, which, in both options, empty the possibilities of meeting the demands arising from the school, that is, technical competence is privileged over political leadership (PARO, 2011; MENDONÇA, 2001).

The election, conceived in this article as a more democratic form, is not free from limitations and ways to reduce its potential for participation. We can list some of these limitations as elections that define as voters only a restricted group of school actors from a cut-off age, the possibility of unlimited reappointments, the requirement for a very specific candidate profile that includes a small number of possible candidates, etc. Likewise, problems such as excessive personalism in the figure of the candidate, lack of preparation of some of them, populism and clientelistic attitudes, behavior of appropriation of the role by the elected candidate, are pointed out as weaknesses of this process (MENDONÇA, 2001). This leads us to reflect and to problematize that the existence of the election in a teaching system does not point to the guarantee of a democratization of the school management and of the relations understood there, even because, as already defended here, the election alone, does not guarantee democratic management, since this is a continuous process, not the result of occasional occasions.

Also according to Mendonça (2001), the election of principals was adopted by several education systems as an initiative to democratize management, even before the promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988. This trend occurred in the municipality of Queimados when the legislative power disciplined the election of directors of public schools in the municipal system through law No. 187/95 (QUEIMADOS, 1995), even before the LDB. It is understood that, based on Ball's assertion (1994), political texts are the result of political

processes in interrelated contexts. It is about the relation of the national context of democratic reopening, of the movements that precede and were triggered from this framework and the interpretation of the local context in an attempt to democratize the management of the public school. Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) point out in this respect the symbiotic relationship between the context of influence and the context of the production of policy texts. The influence of the country's re-democratization movement can, to a greater or lesser extent, signal the local intention to promote the participation of school actors in the choice of school management.

The trajectory of the election of directors in the municipality of Queimados (RJ)

In the Brazilian context, the municipalities started to have relative autonomy to legislate and formulate policies, after the promulgation of the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), and act in a collaborative regime, differently from other countries. Thus, the municipality of Queimados, when emancipating itself in the early 1990s, began its process of elaborating political texts for its educational system. Law no. 187 (QUEIMADOS, 1995), sanctioned five years after the city's emancipation, represented attention regarding the democratization of school management and ratified what was defined in the Municipal Organic Law (QUEIMADOS, 1993). When it was approved, it opened the candidacy for the directive function to teachers and education specialists, but in return, it limited the group of voters to students over 16 years old, responsible for students under the age of 16 and to public servants in effective exercise in the school unit. School employees who were hired or commissioned and a significant portion of students served by the network were excluded from the possibility of decision: the students in the early and final years of elementary school, since this stage of basic education was concentrated between 07 and 14 years of age. This implies the exclusion of a large part of the addressees of the school policy in the decision of the directive function.

Since the initial regulation of the election of directors, the law has been changed by executive decrees that have modified it in several aspects - limiting the number of reelections (QUEIMADOS, 2001; 2015a); as for the candidate, delivery of documentation that proves the performance of the exercise of the function of origin, length of service in the municipal public teaching, time of class management, graduate or postgraduate formation in school management (QUEIMADOS, 1999; 2011), among other points, as shown in table 1. After approval by the PME (QUEIMADOS, 2015), a new law brought together several points of the

texts that altered law no. 187/95 (QUEIMADOS, 1995) in a single text, law no. 1,278/15 (QUEIMADOS, 2015a) that revoked the law that inaugurated the way of selecting principals from municipal schools in Queimados. It is revealed, therefore, that since its approval, law No. 187/95 (QUEIMADOS, 1995) has undergone five changes: four of which by decree and one by law. Such movement indicates that there may have been disputes between the executive and legislative branches, so that the aforementioned law was altered, to a greater extent, by means of decrees.

As highlighted by Amaral (2018), we understand that law is the set of rules providing on a certain matter and legislation is the set of laws that are in force in the legal system, therefore, it is formed by the gathering of codes, special laws, rules, ordinances, resolutions, etc., that is, all the regulations in force. In this sense, we consider that the existence of a kind of scale that measures democracy as democratic management is disciplined or regulated in a given federated entity. Depending on the changes in the regulation of the principal election process that occurred by decree of the mayor or by law, the participation of the school and local community and the recipients of the policy will be different. In table 1 we gather the main points of the legislation that discussed the selection of directors in Queimados in the period of twenty-five years. This set includes the PME (QUEIMADOS, 2015) that dealt with the theme.

Table 1 – Regulation of the election of principals of municipal schools in Queimados (RJ)

Legislation regulating the election of principals	Provisions in relation to the candidate	Provisions in relation to the voter	Provisions regarding the electoral commission, voting and other aspects.	Other aspects
Law no. 187/95 (QUEIMADOS, 1995)	Member of the Municipal Public Ministry with 5 years of experience in public education.	Public servants in effective exercise; Students (16+) Parents or Guardians	Electoral commission with members appointed by the school board.	Term: 2 years
Decree no 039/97. (QUEIMADOS, 1997)	Adds class regency in the public network; 2 years in practice at the school to which you are applying; 2 years of experience in administration or technical function for non-specialist candidates in education; program of work. Candidates who have not suffered an administrative penalty.	-----	Electoral commission elected by the School Council.	-----
Decree no. 203/99 (QUEIMADOS, 1999).	Candidate must be an education specialist.	-----	-----	-----
Law no. 531/01 (QUEIMADOS, 2001)	-----	-----	-----	Term: 2 years, maximum of 4 renewals
Decrees no. 320/01 (QUEIMADOS, 2001a)	-----	-----	-----	Election calendar defined by ordinance.
			Electoral commission elected and accompanied	

Decree no. 1272/11 (QUEIMADOS, 2011)	The application is subject to the delivery of documentation related to the candidate's original position.	-----	by the School Council. From the delivery of documentation for application, the Municipal Secretary of Education issues Conference Declaration and Partial Opinion on the fulfillment of the Management Contract (in the case of the acting principal or deputy principal)	-----
Municipal Education Plan – PME (QUEIMADOS, 2015)	Goal 19 - Maintain and guarantee the direct election, in consultation with the school community, for the function of Directors of schools in the municipal education network.	-----	-----	-----
Law no. 1,278/15 (QUEIMADOS, 2015a)	The application is subject to the delivery of documentation related to the candidate's original position; Member of the municipal public service for at least 3 years in office at the school to which he/she competes. Formation in Administration, Management, Inspection and school supervision, pedagogical guidance or educational guidance; Availability of 40 hours per week.	Public servants and other employees of the school unit. Student over 16 years old and responsible for student under 16 years old.	Electoral commission chosen at a general meeting convened by the acting director and accompanied by the School Council. The Municipal Secretariat of Education (SEMED) issues a declaration of financial default and an opinion to the acting principals.	Unsatisfactory evaluation by the Educational Management Evaluation Committee prevents reelection; The result of the election is valid if the elected person takes a management course held by the Municipal Education Secretariat (SEMED) and obtains 90% participation and after signing a management contract; Term 3 years. Maximum of 3 renewals. Repeals Law 187/95.

Source: Devised by the authors

Politics, as a text, is the result of multiple agendas and influences, changing according to the arenas and interpretations, with the texts and contexts that carry their stories (BALL, 1994). The moment when the policy for the election of principals was created, a few years after the emancipation of the municipality, it represented demands of that period and were (re)contextualized as progressed this policy. It is observed that the candidate's performance was not highlighted in Law No. 187/95 (QUEIMADOS, 1995). However, the trajectory of the regulation of the election of principals points out that the candidate's performance becomes a relevant issue, moving towards a more meritocratic and performative model. It is possible to observe a measurement movement in this sense: candidates for election must deliver to SEMED supporting documentation of their functions so that, through the Conference Declaration of the referred documentation and Opinion to be issued by the portfolio, they will be considered suitable for candidacy with the Electoral Commission. The Opinion is issued by the Educational Management Assessment Commission (CADEGE) with members appointed by the Education Secretariat, but there is no predictability in Law No. 1,278/15 (QUEIMADOS, 2015a) of how many people and who will comprise them: if technicians from

the secretariat itself, school subjects, parents and guardians and students, not even what criteria are considered when issuing the opinion.

Even before the candidacy, the executive power carries out with this process a kind of pre-selection through the investigation of the documentation to be gathered and delivered by the candidate, which points to a protection of the process, pervaded by the sieve of the secretariat. In this regard, Ball (2005, p. 543, our translation) considers that:

The performances of individual subjects or organizations serve as parameters of productivity or result or serve as demonstrations of "quality" or "moments" of promotion or inspection. They mean or represent the merit, quality or value of an individual or organization within an area of judgment, making "audible silences".

To this condition, the author conceives the concept of performativity: the subjects are gauged by the transcribed proof of their practices, and it is up to them - or not - to claim the space of the school management. The election is a form of democratization of the school even before the day of the decision itself. Before that, it must be considered whether candidates' access to this process is also democratic. The measurement of performance that limits the participation of candidates in the electoral process goes against the very idea of the election. If, on the one hand, those who are in the school must decide by vote their representative in the school management, whoever is in the school, must also have access to the application - provided that the requirements established in the LDB are met (BRASIL, 1996). Each education network will define the profile of the principal within its autonomy, however, very specific profiles limit the participation of subjects in the democratic game.

Throughout the changes brought about by the election law for public school principals in Queimados, whether by decree or by law, the definition of voters has not been expanded: in the twenty-five years of existence of the school principal election legislation in Queimados, the participation of the policy recipient in the election process was not considered. The assertion is sustained by the maintenance of the vote per student enrolled in the municipal network from the age of 16, which may correspond to a reading by the local legislative power of the Brazilian electoral legislation in a more legalistic and less inclusive bias since, in Brazil, voting is allowed from the age of 16.

The data from the 2017 *Prova Brasil*³ questionnaires, applied to students in the 5th year of elementary school, pointed out the existence of a very small portion of students over

³ The Prova Brasil and the National Basic Education Assessment System (Saeb) are diagnostic assessments, on a large scale, developed by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep / MEC). It aims to assess the quality of education offered by the Brazilian educational system using standardized

the age of 15 was attended by the network in that year of schooling. Only 17 students were over the age of 15, which means 1% of students enrolled in this series. This means that few students in the 5th year would be able to vote and participate that year in the decision on who will assume the role of school principal. The tendency is that in the grades preceding the 5th year of elementary school, the age of the students is lower, which, if confirmed, represents an even smaller portion in the other grades of the first segment of elementary school. The highest age groups among students enrolled in the 5th year in the municipal network, according to the responses to the questionnaires, are 10 and 11 years old - 26% and 48%, respectively.

When analyzing the questionnaires applied to students in the 9th year of schooling, there is a greater possibility of participation since all respondent students were born in 2000 or earlier, that is, everyone could be a voter if there was an election for school principal that year. The data indicate that participation can be slightly increased in the second segment of elementary school due to the probable age-grade distortion, considering that the age comprised in elementary school - offered by the municipal network of Queimados is from 6 to 14 years old.

The contraction of the participation of different voters is one of the ways seen by Lima (2014) on how to reduce the democratic potential of the election. If, on the one hand, the municipality opens the participation of school subjects to the decision through voting, on the other, democracy is dehydrated (AMARAL, 2019) by limiting the participation of students, policy recipients and for whom the school exists. In this analysis, it is worth noting that the school council, which previously defined the formation of the Electoral Commission in schools, starts to monitor the formation, but it is not clear whether the collegiate decides the members of the commission. The number of reappointments of an elected director indicates the possibility of the same person retaining the position, which can veil it with personalism. In the case of Queimados, the term of office was extended from two to three years. In contrast, the limit for renewals goes from four to three times. The maximum length of stay of the principal in the function increases from eight to nine years. This implies an extension of the time that the same subject is in the role of school principal, which may not favor democratic aspects, since it limits the possibility of oxygenation of the school management. If, on the one

tests and socioeconomic questionnaires. Teachers and principals of the evaluated classes and schools also answer questionnaires that collect demographic data, professional profile and working conditions. We used the data from the Prova Brasil 2017 applied to students in the 5th and 9th grade of elementary school. Regarding the 5th year of schooling, 1849 questionnaires were applied and 1420 questionnaires were considered to be valid answers. In the 9th year of schooling, 500 questionnaires were applied, 401 of which were considered to have valid answers. These data can be consulted at: <https://www.qedu.org.br/cidade/2794-queimados/pessoas/aluno5ano>; <https://www.qedu.org.br/cidade/2794-queimados/pessoas/aluno9ano>. Access: Sep. 2019.

hand, the election of principals in Queimados resembles the electoral process for the choice of president, governor and mayor, on the other hand it moves away when the limit of permanence of these executive heads of power in office is a maximum of eight years, or two sequential terms.

The election of principals of public schools is not without limitations, however it is the most indicated option because it is democratically superior to the other forms and considered by Lima (2014, p. 1071) as “the most favorable to the possible combination of practices of direct democracy and representative democracy practices in schools”. In a context marked by patrimonialist and clientelistic practices such as that of the Baixada Fluminense, a locus that, for Hora (2010), presents itself with an important social, cultural, geographical, economic identity due to its historical origin, the opening of the participation of the school community through the election of principals, moving away from political nomination, albeit with limitations, represents a step forward in relation to historically established practices.

Still in the debate on the selection of principals through the election, it is worth discussing here a way to select professionals for this function: public consultation. Inaugurated in the official texts by the PNE (BRASIL, 2014), public consultation, as a way of choosing principals, is a dissimilar process from the election. The main characteristic that distinguishes the two forms focuses on the format itself and on the instruments that each of these models uses to perceive the desire of those who are at school. While the election has the vote of the members of the school community - except for the possible limitations of participation - to choose the most voted for the function of principal, public consultation does not necessarily use the vote for the choice.

The election by secret and personal vote guarantees voters the privacy of their choice. The consultation, if by acclamation, can induce the participants to a vote that does not necessarily represent their decision, since that way there is no privacy of the option of the respondent. In addition, public consultation may not follow the candidacy of groups, as in the election, which may restrict, this time, the participation of those who intend to claim the function of school principal. Another variation of the consultation that reduces the possibilities of participation is the consultation model by list. In the event that the executive branch indicates internal or external names of the school to be consulted by members of the school community, not everyone who might wish to participate in the consultation could be appointed, which could depend on the individual's relationship with the executive branch.

Still in public consultation, the executive branch may not necessarily nominate the most voted candidate and any member of the school community who has the necessary merit

and performance can apply, however the education secretary or the mayor chooses from among the most voted, the one who will be nominated on a triple list. On the other hand, the consultation can expand the possibilities of participation compared to the election of directors that follows the models of the elections in Brazil, as is the case of Queimados, where the tutelage of the vote goes up to 16 years, preventing the participation of those who are below this age range.

Public consultation and election are different forms that can have variations, possibilities and limitations of participation. We believe that the election is the most comprehensive mechanism for selecting public school principals, although this format may present weaknesses, depending on how it is regulated. The analysis of how it is put in each of the scenarios is that it can affirm how participatory or not each one of these types of selection can be, based on how each one of them is standardized in the Brazilian subnational units for their education systems.

We also emphasize that in 2009 the Supreme Federal Court (STF) ratified its understanding that the holding of direct elections to fill commissioned positions in public school boards is unconstitutional. The decision was taken in the judgment of Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI) 2997 (SUPREME FEDERAL COURT, 2009), filed in court by the Christian Social Party (PSC) against provisions of the State Constitution of Rio de Janeiro and other derived rules. The device questioned (article 308, item XII, of the Fluminense State Constitution) defines that the elections for the direction of state public education institutions in Rio de Janeiro should be made directly and with the participation of the school community. For the Christian Social Party (PSC), the position of director of school units is a commissioned position, whose provision “belongs to the discretionary sphere of the head of the Executive Branch, in whose organizational structure that position is inserted”. The rules violate the constitutional principles of the independence of the powers and the democratic management of education, in addition to facing articles 37, XI (requirement for a competition to enter public office); 61, II, "c" (private competence of the President of the Republic to propose laws on federal civil servants); and 84, II and XXV (exclusive competence of the President of the Republic to exercise the direction of the federal administration and to provide and extinguish the federal public positions). The rapporteur of the process, Minister Cezar Peluso, recalled that the issue has already been widely discussed and pacified by the Court. Thus, based on several precedents, the minister voted for the merits of the action, an understanding that was followed unanimously by the other ministers present at the session. In this context, the PNE 2014-2024 makes use of the term community consultation when it

comes to the selection of directors, moving away from legal problems and inducing federated entities to use the same strategy in their education plans. More than a decade after this understanding, we question whether the time has come to rethink this debate, considering what Amaral (2019) will call dehydration of democracy. We agree that the public school, in this sense, is a place to treat and deepen the contradictory practice and exercise from the initial stages of basic education.

The municipality of Queimados did not comply with the National Education Plan, as it guides the selection of public school principals based on technical criteria of merit and performance and public consultation with the community. On the contrary, goal 19 of the PME (QUEIMADOS, 2015) has the following wording: “Maintain and guarantee the direct election, in consultation with the school community, for the function of Principal of schools in the municipal education network”. By remaining in the PME, the maintenance by the municipal management of the election of principals, as outlined in their legal documents (QUEIMADOS, 1993; 1995) generates a movement of normative infidelity (LIMA, 2011) and, simultaneously, a kind of self-loyalty, given all of its political texts are anchored in the model for the election of principals. The election of principals for municipal schools can thus be considered a mark of policies for the management of public education in Queimados since its emancipation, but with accidents along this path.

Final considerations

The present work aimed to analyze the political texts that regulated the selection of principals of public schools in the municipality of Queimados (RJ). The municipality that, since the beginning of the 1990s, has already organized itself to comply with the principle of democratic management provided for in the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), even before the sanction of the LDB in 1996 (BRASIL, 1996), which ratified the principle. However, participation, one of the dimensions of democratic management, which permeates the dimensions of election and collegiality is weakened when in more than two decades of election of principals, the student, the recipient of the policy, does not decide and his vote is tutored. Another weakness in the process of electing principals for municipal schools in Queimados is due to the impossibility of other employees who are not teachers being able to apply for the election. The process of participation in the election starts before the moment of the vote itself, when school actors can opt for the candidacy, as long as they have the necessary formation.

After the PNE, the municipality reformulated all the texts that dealt with the election of principals in a single law. In view of the PNE text, it generated a normative infidelity by moving away from public consultation for the choice of directors and concomitantly generating self-loyalty, as it maintains the election as from the Municipal Organic Law. Each policy formulated in this sense needs to be analyzed, since the existence of the election of principals does not guarantee the democratization of the school's decision, as we could see in Queimados, given that the student, the recipient of school policies, does not participate in the election. There is also a tutelage on the part of the executive power regarding the candidacy of the interested professors, without clarity of which actors will compose, in each election, the education portfolio commission determined the conference of the bureaucratic procedures to ratify the intention to the candidates' election.

Although the municipality in question has standardized the election of the democratic management principle in the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), participation, as a crucial dimension, is not the center of the process, on the contrary, the investigation of the candidate's merit and performance and self-fidelity are the major key points that stand out in the analysis.

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