

**ORDINARY CHANGES IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE CITY OF ASTORGA-PR (2004 - 2015)**

***MUDANÇAS ORDINÁRIAS NA ADMINISTRAÇÃO ESCOLAR: A IMPLANTAÇÃO DA GESTÃO DEMOCRÁTICA NAS ESCOLAS MUNICIPAIS DE ENSINO FUNDAMENTAL DO MUNICÍPIO DE ASTORGA- PR (2004 - 2015)***

***CAMBIOS ORDINARIOS EN LA ADMINISTRACIÓN ESCOLAR: LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE GESTIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA EN ESCUELAS PRIMARIAS MUNICIPALES DEL MUNICIPIO DE ASTORGA-PR (2004 - 2015)***

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**ABSTRACT:** This article analyzes how the goal of democratic management, established as a law by the Municipal Education Plan of Astorga (PME-Ast, in Portuguese), was appropriated and implemented by school principals in the municipality of Astorga, Parana, Brazil. The research is of qualitative and descriptive nature. The methodology used was content analysis, as proposed by Laurence Bardin (1977), comprising pre-analysis, material exploration, treatment of results, inference, and interpretation. The sources used were Law number 9.394/96, or the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBEN, in Portuguese), the National Education Plan (PNE, in Portuguese), the Municipal Education Plan of Astorga-PR (PME-Astorga, in Portuguese), the regulations of municipal schools of Elementary Education and the records from the Municipal Council of Education from 2004 to 2015, in addition to semi-structured interviews with the school principals of municipal schools and the then director of the Municipal Department of Education. In the interpretation stage, the concept of appropriation of Chartier (1990) allowed for analyzing the discontinuity between the ideals and the uses made of the PME-Astorga by the school principals. As a result, it was identified that, although the school principals had the knowledge and access to the mentioned plan, not all of them understood in the same way regarding the use of its definitions in everyday school situations. Difficulties and insecurities for its implementation were mentioned, although changes in power relationships in the school are explained, from more authoritarian postures to decisions of more collective nature. Elections for school principals would have reduced the interference of local power structure within the schools. The collegiate instances of discussions and the involvement of different individuals were the elements of change most remembered by the managers. However, although they recognize the openness to participation, they reveal that the engagement of the individuals would be scarce, which requires the constant mobilization of strategies so that some involvement takes place.

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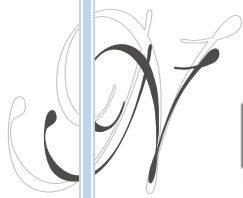
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**KEYWORDS:** Municipal Education Plan. Implementation of Democratic Management. History of the present time. Municipality of Astorga-Paraná.

**RESUMO:** No presente artigo, o objetivo é analisar como a meta de gestão democrática, instituída como lei pelo Plano Municipal de Educação de Astorga (PME-Ast), foi apropriada e implantada pelas diretoras das escolas do município de Astorga. A pesquisa realizada é de cunho qualitativo e de caráter descritivo. A metodologia utilizada foi a análise de conteúdo proposta por Laurence Bardin (1977), compondo-se da pré-análise, exploração do material, tratamento dos resultados, inferência e interpretação. As fontes utilizadas foram: a Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDBEN) 9.394/96, o Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE), o Plano Municipal de Educação de Astorga-Pr (PME-Astorga), os regimentos das escolas municipais de Ensino Fundamental e as atas do Conselho Municipal de Educação no período de 2004 a 2015, além de entrevistas semiestruturadas com as gestoras das escolas municipais e a então diretora do Departamento Municipal de Educação. Na interpretação, o conceito de apropriação de Chartier (1990) permitiu analisar a descontinuidade entre os ideais e os usos realizados do PME-Astorga pelas gestoras. Como resultado, identificou-se que, embora as gestoras tivessem conhecimento e acesso ao referido Plano, nem todas compreenderam da mesma maneira o uso de suas definições em situações do cotidiano escolar. Dificuldades e inseguranças para sua implantação foram mencionadas, embora sejam explicitadas alterações na relação de poder na escola, de posturas mais autoritárias para decisões mais coletivas. As eleições para direção teriam reduzido a interferência do poder local no âmbito das escolas. As instâncias colegiadas de discussões e o envolvimento de diferentes sujeitos foram os elementos de mudança mais lembrados pelas gestoras. No entanto, embora reconheçam a abertura para a participação, revelam que o engajamento dos sujeitos seria escasso, exigindo a mobilização constante de estratégias para alguma participação ocorrer.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Plano Municipal de Educação. Implantação da Gestão Democrática. História do tempo presente. Município de Astorga-Paraná.

**RESUMEN:** En este artículo, el objetivo es analizar cómo el objetivo de la gestión democrática, establecido como ley por el Plan Municipal de Educación de Astorga (PME-Ast), fue apropiado e implementado por los directores de las escuelas del municipio de Astorga. La investigación realizada es cualitativa y descriptiva. La metodología utilizada fue el análisis de contenido propuesto por Laurence Bardin (1977), que comprende preanálisis, exploración de materiales, tratamiento de resultados, inferencia e interpretación. Las fuentes utilizadas fueron: la Ley de Directrices y Bases de la Educación Nacional (LDBEN) 9.394/96, el Plan Nacional de Educación (PNE), el Plan Municipal de Educación de Astorga-Pr (PME-Astorga), los reglamentos de las escuelas municipales de Primaria Educación y las actas del Consejo Municipal de Educación de 2004 a 2015, además de entrevistas semiestruturadas a los directivos de las escuelas municipales y al entonces director de la Secretaría Municipal de Educación. En la interpretación, el concepto de apropiación de Chartier (1990) permitió analizar la discontinuidad entre los ideales y los usos que los gestores hacen del PME-Astorga. Como resultado, se identificó que, aunque los directivos tuvieron conocimiento y acceso al mencionado Plan, ni todos comprendían de la misma manera el uso de sus definiciones en situaciones cotidianas escolares. Se mencionan dificultades e inseguridades



*para implementación, aunque se expliquen cambios en las relaciones de poder en la escuela, desde posturas más autoritarias a decisiones más colectivas. Las elecciones para directores habrían reducido la interferencia del poder local dentro de las escuelas. Las instancias colegiadas de discusión y el involucramiento de diferentes sujetos fueron los elementos de cambio más recordados por los directivos. Sin embargo, aunque reconozcan la apertura a la participación, revelaron que el compromiso de los sujetos sería escaso, lo que exige la constante movilización de estrategias para que se produzca alguna participación.*

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** *Plan Municipal de Educación. Implementación de la Gestión Democrática. Historia de la actualida. Municipio de Astorga-Paraná.*

## **Introduction**

The defense of democratic management in basic education schools is present in the discourse of public policies for education, but its implementation in the practical field does not occur instantaneously or spontaneously. Instead, there is a distance between the defense and the effective implementation of this management model. Implementing this idea involves, among other elements, changes in the existing cultural tradition, which promotes resistance and changes in the presented novelty.

The democratic opening and the end of the military dictatorship characterized the 1980s. The scenario "was marked with struggles for the democratization of the management of the Brazilian State itself and against its centralizing character that had been in force during the military regime" (ALBUQUERQUE, 2011, p. 77, our translation). The need to draft a new Federal Constitution that would install more transparent and participatory procedures for public administration emerged.

The new Federal Constitution, promulgated in 1988, in paragraph VI of article 206, establishes democratic management in public education as a principle. Eight years later, the new Law of Directives and Bases for National Education, Law 9.394 of 1996, regulated this principle, establishing determinations for organizing projects and actions to make this management model a reality in educational institutions.

After the approval of the National Education Plans (PNE) for the 2001-2010 and 2014-2024 periods, followed by the approval of the Paraná State Education Plan (PEE-Pr) in 2015 and of the Astorga Municipal Education Plan (PME-Astorga), also in 2015, goal 19 of these plans define the strategies for the implementation of the democratic management model in schools. However, such implementation is faced with the particularity of a place.



Given this scenario, the question that guided this research was: How has the goal of democratic management, instituted by the PME-Astorga, been appropriated and implemented by school principals in the municipality of Astorga? The choice to study this problem is allied to the fact that one of the researchers is a teacher and manager in the municipal school system of Astorga-Pr, experiencing the democratic management model. Thus, this research contributes to analyzing the mishaps and changes in the school space caused by the democratic management model established in the late 1980s for Brazilian schools.

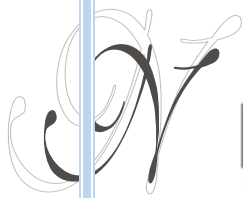
## **Methodology**

This research is exploratory and qualitative in nature. As sources, we used the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education 9.394/96, the National Education Plan, the Municipal Education Plan of the city of Astorga-Pr, the Astorga's Municipal Elementary School's Regulations, and the Minutes of the Municipal Education Council from 2004 to 2015. Also, as a research source, we adopted the data survey utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire, approved by the Ethics Committee of the State University of Maringá, carried out with the then director of the Education Department of the city of Astorga-Pr and the managers of municipal schools who worked in the period of preparation of the Municipal Education Plan of Astorga-Pr, locus of our research.

The data were examined using the content analysis methodology proposed by Bardin (1977). The reading of the material and the data classification were performed by creating codes, which were later grouped by correspondences or contrasts, forming the categories of analysis and discussion themes. After organizing and discussing the results, we conducted the data treatment consisting of inferences and interpretations.

## **Educational Policies and the democratic management of public schools**

The 1990s were marked by the implementation, in different Western countries, of reforms in education systems. From then on, educational policies transferred central powers to other regional and local instances, allowing greater political, financial, and administrative autonomy. The principle is to give more power to those close to the citizens and their needs (LOBO, 1990).



Supported by this principle, countries began to organize their national and local policies, elaborating several guiding documents for Basic Education. In Brazil, for example, the new Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBEN), the National Education Plan 2014, and the National Curricular Guidelines 1996 were promulgated in 1996.

The LDBEN and the National Curricular Guidelines brought the principle of administrative and pedagogical autonomy, which required another professional profile of managers who started to manage financial resources that were being decentralized and to manage pedagogical aspects, from curricula to teacher training and improvement.

Thus, the concept of school administration, which originated in business administration, was replaced by that of school management, not limited to a change in terminology but also to a change in attitude and conceptual orientation required by the process of decentralization of State actions, which gave greater commitment and autonomy to the school community.

The decentralization of the power of the State in the definitions of educational issues was not restricted to the Brazilian State, it was supported by international agreements that guided this model at the end of the 20th century. Although the decentralization of this end of the century involved the redistribution of power from the Union to the states and municipalities and from the Executive to the Legislative and Judiciary, one wishes to shed light on its redistribution to civil society.

In this sense, it is important to keep in mind that the political and administrative history of the Brazilian State has been based on the centralization of power, inherited from colonialism, colonialism, and slavery, a social and political practice that restricted the participation and autonomy of the subjects, with civil and political rights restricted to a portion of society. In these terms, when establishing decentralization and democratization as models for managing Brazilian educational institutions, we must question our society's little experience of autonomous and citizen practices.

To set in motion a practice of engagement and autonomy in a social context of little or no experience of participation is a culture to be created. At this juncture, the school principal assumed the role of mobilizing and articulating the dynamics of the school's operation. He would be responsible for the integration and articulation of the various internal and external activities to make the institutional policy feasible and for defining and making decisions so that the school's fundamental objectives would be achieved.

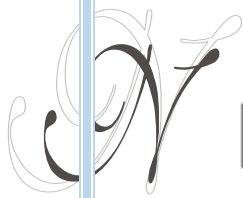
The LDBEN established that school administration should involve the active participation of education professionals and the school community using deliberative councils, each school system having the autonomy to draw up its specific management rules.

Article 14: The educational systems will define the rules for the democratic management of public education in basic education according to their particularities and by 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 equivalents (BRASIL, 1996, online, our translation).

In the same direction, the LDBEN also indicates that the educational establishments have to "articulate with families and the community, creating processes of integration of society with the school" (Art. 12, item VI) and that teachers must "collaborate with the school's articulation activities, with families and the community" (Art. 13, item VI). The principles of participation and democracy guide the text of the Law of National Education Directives, and the practical applications of these principles are articulated in the National Education Plan, responsible for the organization of the national education system, with the establishment of goals for its development.

Item I of Article 9 of the LDBEN established that the Union is responsible for "elaborating the National Education Plan in collaboration with the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities" (BRASIL, 1996, online). The World Conference on Education for All debates, held in *Jomtien*, Thailand, in 1990, by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank, was used to prepare the National Education Plan. These discussions were based on offering quality and improvement in education and basic learning for children, young people, and adults. Besides this debate, the National Education Plan met the commitments made by the *National Forum in Defense of Public Schools*, contemplating the social problems that Brazilian education was going through at that time, according to the publication of the House of Representatives Journal of 1998.

This National Education Plan is a reference document that contemplates Brazilian social, cultural, political, and educational dimensions and problems based on the struggles and proposals of those who defend a more just and egalitarian society and, consequently, a public, free, democratic, lay, and quality education for all, at all levels. Thus, this Plan's principles, guidelines, priorities, goals, and action strategies consider structural and conjectural issues, defining long, medium, and short-term objectives to be assumed by society as a whole as action references (BRASIL, 1998, online, our translation).



Although the debate on the need for a national education plan can be traced back to the 1932 Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education and its first inclusion in the Constitution in the 1934 text, it did not occur in that context. The first National Education Plan dates back to 1962, after the promulgation of the first education guidelines and bases law of 1961, however, it was not a bill but a goal created by the Ministry of Education and approved by the National Education Council. Its prediction in law and obligatory nature will be taken up again by the 1988 Constitution, as foreseen in Article 214.

Art. 214. The law will establish the National Education Plan, lasting ten years, to articulate the national educational system in a collaborative system and define guidelines, objectives, goals, and implementation strategies to ensure the maintenance and development of education in its various levels, stages, and modalities through integrated actions of the public powers of the different federative spheres (BRAZIL, 1998, our translation).

Thus, instituted as law, the first National Education Plan was approved by the Brazilian National Congress, Law No. 10.172, on January 9, 2001, with a duration of ten years, articulating the national education system and containing six thematic axes, each one defining the diagnoses, guidelines, objectives, and goals to be achieved in each one. Art. 6 defines:

The Powers of the Union, the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities will strive to disseminate this Plan and the progressive realization of its objectives and goals so that society may know it widely and accompany its implementation (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation).

The guidelines referring to democratic management in the document are found in axis V, according to which "financing and management are inextricably linked. The transparency of the management of financial resources and the exercise of social control will ensure the effective application of resources for education" (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation). This axis was divided into diagnosis, guidelines, objectives and goals, financing, and management. The school management guidelines are presented as follows:

At the system management level in the form of Education Councils that bring together technical competence and representativeness of the various educational sectors; at the level of school units, through the formation of school councils in which the educational community participates and forms of choice of school management that associate the guarantee of competence with the commitment to the pedagogical proposal emanating from the school councils and the representativeness and leadership of school managers (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation).

It is worth noting that of the 44 objectives and goals presented in Axis V, 25 are focused on management. Goal 22 establishes to "define, in each education system, standards for democratic management of public education, with the participation of the community" (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation). Article 2 of the PNE/2001-2010 states that "as of the effective date of this Law, the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities must, based on the National Education Plan, elaborate corresponding ten-year plans" (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation).

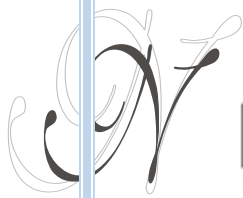
The second National Education Plan, Law No. 13.005 of June 25, 2014, effective until 2024, provides for implementing a national education policy with principles based on participation, ending authoritarian practices still in force in the management of public schools. Thus, collective participation is a fundamental element of management. Goal 19 of this plan foresees the implementation, within two years, of the democratic management model, making use of eight political strategies:

- 19.1) prioritize the transfer of voluntary transfers from the Union in the area of education to the federative entities;
- 19.2) expand the support and training programs for councilors;
- 19.3) encourage the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities to establish Permanent Education Forums;
- 19.4) encourage, in all basic education networks, the creation and strengthening of student councils and parent associations;
- 19.5) encourage the establishment and strengthening of school councils and municipal education councils;
- 19.6) encouraging the participation and consultation of education professionals, students, and their families in the formulation of political-pedagogic projects, school curricula, school management plans, and school regulations;
- 19.7) favoring processes of pedagogical, administrative, and financial management autonomy in educational establishments;
- 19.8) develop training programs for principals and school managers and apply specific national tests (BRASIL, 2014, online, our translation).

It can be observed that the strategies that involve the implementation of decentralization and democratization of school management act in diverse fields. It is worth highlighting the participation of the civil community in school management, achieved through the constitution and strengthening of student councils, parents' associations, school councils and municipal education councils.

Based on the National Education Plan (PNE) for the 2014-2024 period, the Paraná State Education Plan (PEE-Pr), Law No. 18.492, approved on June 25, 2015, and the Astorga





Municipal Education Plan (PME-Astorga), approved by Law No. 2.725 of 2015, were prepared. The principle of collective participation was kept aligned between these plans.

### **The education of a place: the construction of the Astorga-PR municipal education plan**

The Municipal Education Plan is the instrument through which the municipality can diagnose its educational reality and plan systematic actions to improve local education. For example, for Gadotti and Romão (1993, p. 12, our translation), the Municipal Education Plan must be "articulated with the guidelines and priorities of the National Plan, piloting this movement of creating a new consciousness around the need to reverse the process of deterioration of education in Brazil.

The municipality of Astorga, in the state of Paraná, after the promulgation of Federal Law No. 13,005 of June 25, 2014, began preparing its PME. This occurred through meetings and studies coordinated by the Municipal Department of Education, forming committees with representatives of the Municipal Education Council, the Regional Education Center of Maringá, the Municipal Department of Administration and Finance, the Municipal Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, the FUNDEB Council, the City Council, the City's Chamber of Aldermen, the City's Higher Education Institution, regular and special education schools, public and private, involving principals, teachers, and parents, and organized civil entities. Thus, with the defense of collective representation and participation, the strategy assumed for the construction of the document involved the relationship between different and divergent ideas, ideologies, and worldviews.

According to the testimony of the Director of the Astorga-Pr Municipal Department of Education, it was necessary for the municipality to create the Democratic Management Law for municipal schools before the construction of the PME. Thus, the discussion of the plan mentioned above imposed objective changes in how principals of public municipal educational institutions were chosen, as well as the regularization of the School Council. These changes have a political and pedagogical aspects. The choice of school directors meant less interference of the local power in the institutions and effective democratization through the choice of their leaders, with pedagogical repercussions in the school space. The relationship between the manager and the local community has changed, with a greater possibility of the school community feeling its desires represented by the Director. Thus, the school work environment and the community's engagement with the school have changed.

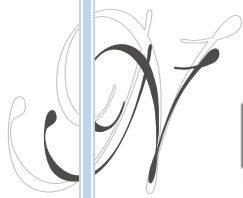


In the municipality, according to the report of the then-director of the Municipal Department of Education, the construction of the PME began in 2014 with the collaboration of the Regional Education Center. The interviewee pointed out that a team was formed to analyze the PNE and to diagnose the municipality's education, which involved historical and economic aspects, as well as a survey of quantitative data on municipal education based on the school census. In this process, the Municipal Education Conference was held with representatives of the education professionals of the time. During this event, the goals and strategies of the PNE were discussed, as well as their application in the municipality of Astorga-Pr.

The PME was approved on June 18, 2015, establishing as a goal the provision of quality education for all and the search for closer ties between the school and the local community, responding to the wishes and needs of their students. About the implementation of democratic management in municipal schools, seven (07) strategies were established:

- 19.1) Encourage participation in support and training programs for councilors of the FUNDEB monitoring and social control councils;
- 19.2) Encouraging, in all basic education networks, the creation and strengthening of student councils and parent associations;
- 19.3) Stimulating the constitution and strengthening of school councils and municipal education councils;
- 19.4) Encouraging the participation and consultation of education professionals, students, and their families in the formulation of political-pedagogical projects;
- 19.5) Stimulating the participation and assuring the offer of training programs for school principals and managers;
- 19.6) Continue promoting democratic management in the school system using mechanisms that ensure the participation of education professionals, families, students, and the local community;
- 19.7) Strengthen school management with technical and formative support in pedagogical, administrative, and financial dimensions (ASTORGA, 2015, online).

The participatory principle, involving education professionals, families, students, and the local community, was reiterated in the municipal document as a strategy for achieving the democratic management model. Delving into how these strategies have been appropriated and implemented by the principals in the municipality's schools contributes to the visibility of this place and its characteristics, as well as connecting the regional experience with those from elsewhere, identifying what is common in Brazilian education.



## **The implementation of the democratic management model in Astorga municipal schools**

The Municipal Education Plan has great relevance for the school community because it deals with institutionalizing a municipal education policy and an instrument for educational planning. Its purpose is to diagnose the educational reality of the municipality in its different stages and modalities, establishing goals for its improvement. Thus, the role of the PME is to improve the quality of education with actions that mobilize the school in the use of instruments and procedures essential to acquire this quality.

Implementing a municipal education plan depends on a series of objective conditions. Besides the financial and material resources structure, its effectiveness depends on the people who will set the defined changes in motion. As far as the implementation of the democratic management model is concerned, the school principal is the professional responsible for making the gears work. Suppose the terrain of practices is made up of cleavages between what is thought and what is done, as Chartier (1990) suggests. In that case, we should ask how the school principals appropriated and implemented the democratic management model, a question that this topic will address.

When asked about their familiarity with the Astorga Municipal Education Plan, especially goal 19, which deals with democratic management, the school principals described

It is not a document we usually consult daily, but we have access. [...] Yes, we use it, I don't mean the way it is on paper, but in our daily practice, day to day, we use it. [...] Yes, we do, the Municipal Education Plan is part of the PPP proposal, right... the school's Political-Pedagogical Project, so there is no way to escape this practice, right, it has to be part of it, it is what governs our work (SILVA, 2021, p. 98, our translation).

In the statements, it is identified that, although the female managers had knowledge of and access to the document, not all of them perceived it in the same way in using its definitions in their daily school situations. For example, the expression "I don't say it's the way it is on paper" reveals changes in the use of the document while indicating the movement for change in practice. In the same way that, by stating that "the Municipal Education Plan is part of the PPP proposal," the legal route and the network of definitions triggered by the national sphere, the PNE, passed by the state (PEE), by the municipal (PME) and reached the educational institution, guiding its educational practices and administrative management.

About the democratic management model defined by the PME, the interviewees understand that this model not only brought new ideas but also established a transforming orientation of the existing relationships in the school context and practice. Cury (2006, p. 18,



our translation) states that "democratic educational management is, at the same time, transparency and impersonality, autonomy, and participation, leadership and collective work, representativeness.

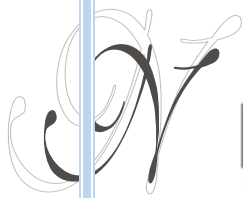
It is important to remember that, in daily practice, the school manager overcomes several challenges arising from pedagogical administration, resource management, and the dynamics of the school space, besides taking care that the team does not lose the main focus of its practices, which is the quality of education. In this aspect, Lück highlights that

Educational management, in comprehensive character, of the education system, and school management referring to the school, constitute structural areas of action in determining the dynamics and quality of education. This is because it is through management that unity, direction, impetus, consistency, and coherence to educational action are established based on the paradigm, ideology, and strategies adopted (LÜCK, 2006, p. 15, our translation).

The manager is expected to establish unity and direction in the educational activity. As the person responsible for the organization and functioning of the school unit, their performance would depend on promoting the quality of education and overcoming the problems faced locally. In this sense, the implementation of democratic management fundamentally fell to the actions of this professional, who faced countless challenges. The administrators report that

We do it, but the way it happens, according to the difficulties, with the insecurity of elaborating something different, so this is a range we go according to the need. [...] So, according to the reality of our school, we adapt and adapt ourselves to use this plan (SILVA, 2021, p. 100).

When questioned about how the plan was implemented in practice and what the challenges were in fulfilling its strategies, some expressions indicated "difficulty," "insecurity," and adaptation to the reality of the school. On the other hand, "we'll do it as needed" may show a prioritization of the demands of the school's daily routine and the sidelining of more strategic and rational planning that interferes with the school's routine, its know-how, and its thinking. It is worth noting that the democratic management model was not something completely new at the time of implementation of the PME in Astorga, according to the interviewees, this model was already being talked about in some school institutions, but it was not something hegemonic, and its opposite could occur with the presence of more authoritarian postures. Thus:



In this period, we have already heard a lot about democratic management, which is not a new subject, right we already tried, but of course, after the implementation of the Municipal Plan, we tried right, is to expand this democracy within the institution, but before we already tried too and I believe that after the LDB a lot has been changing right, within education, then we see so, we see having progress not as it should, but certain progress has been having yes. [...] We a, yes, remember the principal, he would order the teachers around, and that was it, he would give an order, it wasn't like today a democracy, I see it like that. We didn't even have elections at the time, the principal was in charge, and it was the same at our school (SILVA, 2021, p. 100-101, our translation).

It is important to note that, in the perception of some managers, although the change process in school management is slow and needs to be more agile, it has been supported by the LDBEN in some institutions. It is worth pointing out that the context in which the Law was approved was that of mobilization in favor of participation and democratization of Brazilian society, a political practice to be developed in a country that was coming out of a military and dictatorial government, and with a culture that for a long time excluded the great majority of the subjects from political and social participation. As previously mentioned, democratization presupposes the decentralization of educational management, involving the participation and decision-making of school subjects. Thus, the school manager's understanding that 'after the LDBEN, a lot has been changing' lets us see the more general movement that was taking place within Brazilian schools.

Suppose the LDBEN, as the Law of general guidelines for national education, provoked changes inside the school. In that case, it is necessary to understand that the education plans act at another level in structuring these changes. The elaboration of education plans, particularly the Municipal Education Plan of Astorga, set the Law in motion, bringing the rational intentions and the legal principles of democracy in the school to the practical and objective ground.

The process of preparing the plan, which involved different subjects from the school community and representative entities, if, on the one hand, it represented the development of democratic practices, on the other hand, it acted at the level of society and developed more engaged and participatory social behavior. Participating in the definition of actions for the school can mean a more significant commitment to what is planned. On the other hand, the debate generated by the plan's elaboration strategy can provoke greater awareness of the educational needs and the desired management model. The fact is that, after preparing the municipal plan, the involvement with the theme and the implementation of such a



management model ceased to be a more dispersed initiative of the schools in the municipality and became a more hegemonic practice.

The PME contributed to changing the power relationship in the school from an "I command, by becoming a law and obligatory, and you obey" attitude to collective decision-making. In this aspect, the managers clarify that

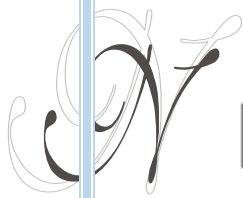
Everything is decided collectively in a meeting, but in a very democratic way, the group decides what is best collectively, everyone is questioned, and everyone puts their ideas forward, it is very nice (SILVA, 2021, p. 101, our translation).

"Everything is decided in the collective". This principle stands out in the statement of the managers, revealing the change that stood out in the implementation of goal 19 of the Municipal Education Plan in Astorga. And it continues:

He opened horizons, right our mentality, and took away that question, that the principal there is, needs the participation of everyone in the school community... [...] Goal 19 of the plan is what we live inside the school because it will talk about the collegiate bodies and democratic management if I have effective democratic management. It will cover all the other sectors I have inside the school, when I understand that I am a manager, I should look for information look for ways to solve problems that involve other people along with my decision, I need to be based on a document and this goal 19 of the plan already gives way and is supported by law to be doing that, so speaking of my institution and my management I believe that 100% of goal 19 of the plan contributes to my management (SILVA, 2021, p. 124, our translation).

The collegiate discussions and the engagement of the different school subjects in the decisions were the elements most administrators remembered when discussing implementing the democratic management model in school. As Rossi (2021) argues, collective participation involves turning to local specificities and thinking of the educational system as subsystems since the local community, which wants to be engaged around a common cause, defines choices and takes co-responsibility for change. Such engagement requires democratic practice and subject cooperation in constructing common alternatives. For example, the testimony of a female manager shows that new behaviors had to be adopted in the working relationship between the school subjects.

The idea of democratic management is very challenging, but it is positive if it can articulate everything. It is a question that we discuss a lot with teachers, employees, and parents. We are always talking about dialogue, trying to do things together, and working as a team, so it is a question that we try to do all the time, the use of goal 19 is in the day-to-day, like I said, in the dialogue with the teachers. [...] Management that lives Goal 19 in the



school is difficult because it is much easier for me to decide alone, so I want this, and because I am the school principal, I think, that's it, it's over! Unlike me, being the school manager, just knowing that yes, I am the person who makes the decision, but supported by other decisions that support me, and there is the official documentation, one of our documents is the municipal education plan that in our goal 19 talks about all this (SILVA, 2021, p. 124-125, our translation).

"Seek to do together, work as a team" is a new demand in the context of educational changes at the end of the 20th century. Its relationship with the democratic management model, one can say, is found in the principle that drives these transformations, that is the engagement and cooperation among subjects. Thus, the problems of the school and the student's learning concern all the issues involved, and this requires a different posture from the educational professional. It is understood that constructing solutions requires confronting ideas, strategies, approaches, techniques, and models. In this way

The practice of management with a democratizing purpose visualizes the development of political participation, from which subjects assume a critical and active position since the school space strengthens the construction of the collective, able to participate in all spheres of public life since educational issues go beyond the school universe and become public problems (ANDRADE, 2011, p. 306, our translation).

In this aspect, school practices have changed since the different segments of the school and community participate in the definitions and search for alternatives for the development of the school. This model, which articulates teachers, students, administrative and pedagogical staff, parents, and the local community, has produced, in the view of the Director of the Municipal Department of Education of Astorga-Pr, greater security and legitimacy in the actions of the administrators.

The managers felt stronger with the management, with the choice of the community, with the community that chose them, and with the democratic way, they were chosen. I think the strengthening was the main thing because, in the sense that, besides being a choice that strengthens them to make decisions at school, it was also a choice that they had, I think they felt good because they didn't make decisions alone, maybe the most important decisions, decisions that they weren't so sure could solve, they had the school council, the APMF, and the teachers on their side to help in the decision (SILVA, 2021, p.127, our translation).

There is an understanding that the participatory management model would strengthen the manager's practice given the engagement of the school community and representative entities. Community participation was made possible through collegiate instances: school



councils, the school association, and the APMFs (Parent-Teacher-Staff Associations). These instances participate mainly in elaborating the Political Pedagogical Project, monitoring the application of resources and the transparency in the rendering of accounts, the institutional evaluation of the school, and electing the principals. Thus, the participation of the community in the school is by representation and is restricted to the spaces that make up the management structure of a school institution.

It is identified, however, as a paradox between the openness and the demand for the school community's participation and the objective conditions for this to occur. The statements of the municipal school managers in Astorga reveal that the engagement and participation of the subjects are increasingly scarce and that the justifications for lack of time for such involvement are recurrent, requiring the school manager to mobilize the community to participate in the school context. For female managers, this is one of the challenges they face. Thus, the new model:

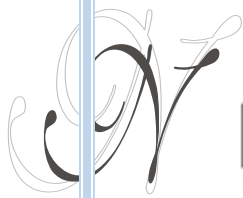
It demands much participation from the council and the community, but we have a big challenge, which is the question of the participation of this community, it was complicated before, right. Due to the work schedule, people are not available to participate as much as possible we try to bring the community into the school (SILVA, 2021, p.104, our translation).

And he continues:

The school council and the APMF we pass to them and request this participation many times we don't get the return right, but we always try to pass everything and invite them to be participating, but we do not always get it (SILVA, 2021, p. 105, our translation).

According to the interviewees, the participation of families in collegiate instances is something challenging to achieve, and, in general, as managers, they would have sought to expand the role of the community and overcome the limits imposed. They report that "most parents have their jobs and can't participate, but there is one or another that can" (SILVA, 2021, p.105, our translation). Statements like this are repeated, showing that participation is not decreed but built. It is a cultural change in the school and the community.





## Conclusion

The re-democratization of Brazilian society, after 21 years of military dictatorship, was completed with the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution. However, another phase opened for democratization. For the educational field, it meant a long process of change in school culture. The management of public educational institutions with a democratic principle was established by the Federal Constitution of 1988, regularized by the new Law of Directives and Bases of National Education, Law 9.394 of 1996, and articulated in the organization and goals of the National, State and Municipal Education Plans. This research investigated how the goal of democratic management, instituted by the PME, was appropriated and implemented by school principals in the municipality of Astorga.

Astorga's municipality began drafting the PME in 2014, approved through Municipal Law 2,725 of 2015. The process of preparing its initial proposal was carried out through a committee that involved the participation of different subjects from the educational community, the municipal government, and organized civil society. This team studied the National Education Plan and diagnosed the municipality's education, which involved historical and economic aspects and a survey of quantitative data on municipal education. The diagnosis and the planning of the strategies for the municipality were discussed in the scope of the Municipal Education Conference and involved the participation of several segments of the school and local community, aiming to build a document in which the wishes and needs of this group were represented.

The first change was the election of the school board, which reduced the influence of local power in the school administration. Implementing the democratic management model established by the PME required adaptations to the school's reality. The municipal administrators have knowledge of and access to the PME, but not all perceive its use in routine school situations similarly. They report that there were difficulties and insecurities in its implementation. The democratic management model, brought about by the PME, was not new to the administrators. The change had been occurring slowly in some institutions that relied on the LDBEN, although its use was not hegemonic. Preparing the municipal plan meant a greater involvement of schools with the theme and a more hegemonic practice supported by law.

According to the testimonials, the democratic management model has changed the power relationship at school from an attitude of "I'm in charge, and you obey" to more



collective decision-making. The collegiate discussion forums and the engagement of the different school subjects were the elements most remembered by the school managers when they talked about implementing the democratic management model in the school. Community participation was made possible through collegiate instances such as school councils and APMF (Parent-Teacher-Staff Associations). In turn, these instances participated, mainly in the preparation of the Political Pedagogical Project, monitored the application of resources and transparency in the rendering of accounts, the institutional evaluation of the school, and elected the principals.

However, although the opening for participation has occurred, the interviewees reveal that the engagement and participation of the subjects are increasingly scarce and that the justifications for lack of time for such involvement are recurrent. This fact requires the school managers to mobilize strategies to reach, even partially, the goal of community participation. For the school managers, community participation would be one of the challenges they faced, showing that the engagement depends on a cultural change, not being possible to decree it by law.

The analyses carried out here explored the documents and testimonies of school administrators from a municipality in the state of Paraná, and its extension to other municipalities and regions would allow a more secure analysis of the changes that have occurred in school culture, as well as of the challenges faced by administrators with the implementation of democratic management in schools.

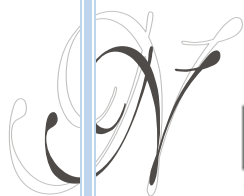
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