

## Democratic Management at school: in search of participation and leadership

Gestão democrática na escola: em busca da participação e da liderança

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### Abstract

The article is the result of studies performed in the Research Group in Education and Management (known as GPEG), certificated by the Vale do Sapucaí University and registered in the CNPq Directory. The study aims to expand the view about the so-called “democratic management” and the “participation” in the in the administration of school educational work. For this, are articulated theoretical and legal fundamentals to the challenges and issues that, normally, the managers face in the exercise of their function in daily school considering the contradictions and challenges, which they are exposed. Passing between the given power and the real power, the managers are pressed, on one hand, by the accountability and evaluation of results and, on the other, by the lack of autonomy and proper conditions for a democratic school management.

**Keywords:** Education. Democratic Management. Participation.

### Resumo

O artigo é fruto de estudos realizados no Grupo de Pesquisa em Educação e Gestão (GPEG), certificado pela Universidade do Vale do Sapucaí e registrado no Diretório do CNPq. O estudo objetiva ampliar o olhar para a denominada “gestão democrática” e a “participação” na administração do trabalho educativo da escola. Articula-se fundamentos teóricos e legais aos desafios e questões que, normalmente, os gestores enfrentam no exercício da sua função no cotidiano escolar em face de contradições e desafios a que estão expostos. Navegando entre o poder outorgado e o poder real, os gestores são pressionados, por um lado, pela responsabilização e avaliação de resultados e, por outro lado, pela falta de autonomia e condições propícias para uma gestão escolar democrática.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação. Gestão democrática. Participação.

### Initial considerations

At first, it is necessary to consider that the so-called democratic management of public school, to which we are referring, brings in an implicit way the discussion about democracy and it is a result of struggles and movements accomplished in the 1980s for the democratization of the country and the education. Considered by researches as a historic achievement, since the 1990s, legitimated by legal acts, as the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Nacional Education Law of Directives and Bases (known as LDBEN), nº 9.394, from 1996, the democratic management

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is also understood as utopia for a great part of education professionals in exercise, as revealed in the narratives of enrolled teachers of the Specialization Course in Educational Management, at an university localized in the South of Minas Gerais, in the period from 2008 to 2016.

The National Plan for Education (known as PNE) 2014-2024, recommends in the goal 19 to assure conditions within 2 (two) years (BRASIL, 2014), that is, until 2016, for the accomplishment of the democratic management in education, associated with technical criteria of merit and performance, in the context of public schools, providing resources and the Union technical support. The reflections shown in this text seems appropriate, considering what it represents in the face of the challenges that the socioeconomic and political context propose to the educational task. Next to the final deadline established by PNE, what we currently have in the formal structure of public school is a system almost absent of “prediction of horizontal human relations” (PARO, 2006, p. 100), emphasizing that democratic management cannot be reduced to the principal’s election. Without knowing the meaning of the term management instead of administration and, in the same logic, manager instead of school principal, the scholar community and the educational professionals still wait for the real democratic management, especially at basic level schools, Elementary I, that are more affected by the municipality, as well as complain about its lack.

It is possible to observe that, in this way, the term management has also received other adjectives, such as participative management; democratic management; shared management; learning management; career management, among others. These expressions were originated from the business field, which are much more linked to administrative processes, organized around the problems to be solved or to administer in the educational scenario, than to real pedagogical performance of school and the teaching and learning conditions, including teacher qualification, who make the educational work happen.

In this scenario, ideologically, it is sought to create consensus that everyone can and should participate in the school decisions and results in order to achieve the quality desired of education through the democratic and participative management. However, as analyzed by Cury (2002), the democratic management presents itself imbued with meanings related to the citizen rights and their freedom of expression. This means an education for democracy, in a democratic environment where everyone is included – students, all education professionals, and the parents, including managers, being able to express themselves and participate in school decisions.

Everything seems simple in theory, however, in practice, there is no simplicity and are involved several factors and instances that go beyond a legal act or a recognition as a right. Due to the constant changes in society, which result directly in more challenges for basic education, the situations of anguish and uncertainty grow increasingly among education professionals. For this reason, oftentimes, the school community considers the democratic management with a unilateral meaning, as if it could be a magic formula for the school problems, disregarding a series of conditions that pervades in it, from social conditions of school actors to political factors that are still rooted in educational institutions. In the classroom and in the school administration routine the education professionals are challenged all the time by new educational and administrative policies, students with undesirable behavior problems, lack of material and human resources and even other factors related to

their own qualification. Therefore, it is possible to consider that the manager has many challenges that go beyond a democratic management for which, sometimes, he is not even prepared and has not leadership for such, because in most cases he assumes the position by indication and not by merit.

Nowadays, another factor to consider is the emphasis on educational outcomes and the accountability. Since the last two decades, the education professionals are pressed by performance assessment and the accountability for the Development Index of Basic Education (FREITAS, 2012). Better known as IDEB,<sup>3</sup> introduced by National Institute for Educational Studies and Research “Anísio Teixeira” (INEP), in 2006 (MEC/INEP, 2013), the IDEB has been considered as an unilateral indicator of education quality, being originated from external assessments, in large scale, becoming the prime way and, frequently, the predominant criterion to evaluate the Brazilian basic education.

The IDEB weighs as a sword under the heads of all education professionals in the school routine, once it is seen as performance indicator of the school and of the education professionals, including the manager. In the last two decades, the management of educational work began to revolve around the IDEB, becoming the reason and the end of all pedagogical activities. This represents direct interference in the curriculum, in planning of contents, in management of pedagogical and human processes. This charge has led, in several municipalities, to the interference of private institutions through consultancy and/or contracts of didactic materials. Relatively to the manager’s function, of which it is expected to perform a democratic management, this situation is very complex considering the role he occupies both in pedagogical and administrative context as political, once the demanding of results, through goals, and the retaliations, in case of non-compliance of goals by the school, has nothing of democratic. This because it keeps under pressure, the educational workers paying bonus for those who increased the school score in IDEB, as has been denounced by syndicates of education workers and by the own teachers.

In this study, we tried to articulate some theoretical and legal fundamentals of the researched literature about democratic management, confronting them with questions based in the school routine and in the challenges faced by the manager in the daily school, regarding the relation between management and community in which the school institution is inserted and also, the group of teachers. Nowadays there is an abundant literature, especially periodicals, about the theme democratic management, with emphasis to the works published by the Brazilian Journal of Policy and Education Management (known as Rbpae), but is still limited a literature that discusses the management fundamentals, independently of new adjectives.

This reflection is based on experiences and observations in the teaching practice of state schools and in the discussions undertaken in the classroom of the Specialization Course in Educational Management, from a university located in southern Minas Gerais, as teachers and course coordinators. Since 2008, this course assembles students, being most of them teachers who already work in public and/or private schools, originated from several cities of southern Minas Gerais. Brought by us to the research group GPEG, Research Group in Education and Management, from the Master’s Degree in Education, these questions and anguishes reported here in

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3 IDEB is an educational quality indicator which articulates performance information of students in the Brazil Test (Prova Brasil) with information about school performance, measured by approval indexes obtained through the school census.

these initial considerations, were discussed in the light of some theoretical frameworks and then, transformed in this article under the following inquiries: To what extent the manager is responsible for the democratic and participatory process in schools? The school community, teachers, students and parents, what they know about democratic and participatory management? What is the meaning of a real participation in school decisions? Considering these questions, the objective is to question the democratic management at school and point out some alternatives and questions, which allow new perspectives about the manager's role as a teaching professional in this new institutional and educational context, regarding to the various questions connected with democratic management of school.

This study is analytical descriptive-dialectical and is a result of research works undertaken in the Research Group in Education and Management (known as GPEG), certified by the Vale do Sapucaí University (Univás), with registration in the CNPq Directory. The theoretical support is given, mainly, in Lück (2008, 2009), Lück et al. (2007, 2011), Libâneo (2008), Cária (2015) and Paro (2000, 2006).

The relevance of this study is justified because it constitutes a reflection and a reference for those who, somehow, are involved with the educational work at schools, especially the public ones, and believe that "Education for All" must have quality, as a right of citizens. That is why, democratic management is a theme that needs to be thought, discussed and questioned in the light of education democratization and as a condition for citizenship.

### **Democratic school management: in search of participation**

Initially, it is important to emphasize that the democratic management is a constitutional principle. Legally based on the Federal Constitution (FC) of 1988 (BRASIL, 1998), democratic management of public education won a core position in academic discussions, but the practice is still a becoming, being part of the goals to be met by the current National Plan for Education (known as PNE).

Goal 19: Democratic management: To secure conditions, within two years, to the realization of education democratic management, associated with technical criteria of merit and performance and a public consultation to the scholar community, in the context of public schools, providing resources and technical support from the Union for such (BRASIL, 2014).

The inclusion of the democratic management principle in the Constitution of 1998 was influenced by the atmosphere of movements for the country's new democratization and happened along with a new legal order, anchored in a federal pact that raised the municipalities and states to the condition of federal entities, with political, administrative and financial autonomy, to whom the Magna Carta has given the right to organize their own education system (ARRETCHE, 2002). Consequently, the municipality was responsible to define standards of public education democratic management, according to the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBEN), n. 9.394, from December 20, 1996, in the article 2, item VIII.

Therefore, the public education democratic management, according to the law, is one of the basic principles that should guide the education. In the LDBEN, among the principles related to the democratic management, is the participation of edu-

cation professionals in the elaboration of the school pedagogical project and the participation of school and local communities in school councils or equivalents. Besides that, the LDBEN also emphasizes in the Art.3, that teaching will be conducted with bases in several principles, among them; there is the public education democratic management, in the terms of this Law and the legislation of education systems. The participation category appears as the main vector to achieve the democratic management.

According to Bordignon e Gracindo (2000), the education management is a political, administrative and a contextualized process and, in this direction, is liable to various conditions, as social, political, economic. Almost twenty years have passed and the democratic management is not effective yet and, furthermore, has been reduced to charging for the participation of society and school actors. As mentioned by Barroso (2000), under a democratic guidance, is implied people participation in decision-making processes, considering the construction and the autonomy exercise in a context of relationships and interdependencies. As force fields that confront and balance (BARROSO, 2000), the autonomy here referred is not an end, but a process, a construction.

Secondly, we should identify of which school we are dealing in this study. Seeking support in Libâneo (2008), it is a political space and not neutral, where the objectives and school functions are interdependent and the types of organization and management have a strong pedagogical character for all involved professionals or users,

The school is a social institution with explicit goals: the development of student's potential through contents (knowledges, skills, procedures, attitudes, values), to constitute themselves in participative citizens in their society. The basic aim of the school is teaching (LIBÂNEO, 2008, p. 106).

Considering this school conception, the principle/manager is considered a central figure nowadays at the school institution and the responsible to manage people and the resources in order to promote better work conditions. In processes of institutional assessment, from municipal and state departments, training institutes, universities and the own Education Ministry (MEC), the principal, now manager, assumes a major role, regarding education results.

What we have today, according to Paro (2006), is a hierarchical system that apparently places all the power in the hands of director, who is considered the highest authority inside the school. However, the author points out that this director, now transformed in manager, lives a double contradiction. The director, on one hand, is considered the highest authority inside the school, what would give him enormous power and autonomy; but, on the other hand, he constitutes, in fact, a mere representative from the State, to enforce the law and to maintain the order at the school.

The second contradiction, evidenced by Paro (2006) refers to the administrative technical competence of the manager who should master a range of content, principles and methods needed to a modern and appropriate administration of school resources, which are determinant elements for a good management. However, on the other hand, there is no autonomy from the higher echelons, adding up also the precariousness of school concrete conditions.

As Libâneo (2008) describes, directorate is a principle and a management attribute, where occurs the conduction of the team work, directing people and integrating them in the objectives' direction; the directorate puts into practice the decision making process in the organization, and guide, in a way that, the work are executed in the best possible way. Every and each professional, in the function exercise of manage, performs a range of functions associated with each other and, for this function, are required knowledges, abilities and attitudes, specific and articulated to each other, not being different when the position is the school management.

The director figure has significant importance for the institution in order to be respect by the community (LIBÂNEO, 2008). The author emphasizes that the autonomy and democracy does not mean the distance of responsibilities, because, as the decisions are taken collectively, they need to be put into practice. At the time of decision-making, the school must be well coordinated and managed, which does not mean, that the director is the responsible for the school success, emphasizing that the success cannot depend only on the manager.

On the contrary, the mentioned author says that it is necessary to understand the director's role as a leader, a person who can reunite aspirations, desires, and expectations of the school community and articulate the decision and participation of all school segments in a management of a common project. As school manager and leader, the director has a sight set and a performance that captures the school in its educational, cultural, administrative, and financial (LIBÂNEO, 2008). Based on these assumptions, the choice of manager requires a lot of responsibility of the education system, as well as the community. However, what usually happens at the public schools is still the arbitrary "nomination" of directors to meet conveniences and political interests placing the director as a representative of this convenience, which inhibits his role as coordinator and articulator of the teaching staff. Therefore, the democratic management that should be implemented until 2016 is very important, but it should not be reduced only to election processes for director.

### **Manager's leadership and the construction of democratic school**

One of the main characteristics attributed to the position of school principal is the leadership. Lück et al. (2011) emphasizes that the manager's work is based on his capacity to lead, in other words, to influence the participation of people at work, in learning and at knowledge construction. In addition, the main function is to promote educational objectives through a management which constitute itself in a mobilization action and organization of human talent. The practice, many times, individualist and competitive of the manager, appearing in a camouflaged way, according to Lück et al. (2007), should be gradually overcome in the name of an action, that is collective, where everyone wins in the end.

In the author's conception, the collective participation in the management improves the democracy exercise and the socialization allowing, reciprocally, the development of both institution, collective and contributors individually. Going even further and based on the different realities that involve the director's performance, Lück et al. (2007) emphasize as well, how important it is that the manager is someone who, in addition to direct, manage the education institution, being a dynamic manager, meets the current changes, welcomes opinions, even of those who dis-

agree with his way of thinking since there is always learning and something that can contribute to the work.

Therefore, based on the authors cited, it is up to the director to mobilize the involvement of education professionals and community in the school management. For this, it is needed flexibility in the decision-making processes, teamwork, delegation of functions and no centralization, in a way that the participants perceive the importance of the collective, besides other advantages. So, the principal in the manager function of the scholar institution, in the pedagogical and administrative dimensions, is the main responsible for the development of a propitious environment to occur a better education and to provide an environment that encourage the school community participation. In this way, “participation” is an important category for any and each school that aims to an effective management.

### **In search of participation**

Participation in the school management process has been until the current days only a rhetoric, but, however, necessary for the management called democratic, hence, the expression democratic participative management. The meaning of management is characterized by the recognition of the importance of conscious and informed participation of people in the decisions about the direction and management of the work. It is associated with the strengthening of the democratization idea in the pedagogical process, understood as participation of all in the processes of decision and realization (MARTINS, 1999).

According to Diaz Bordenave (1994), there are active forces in the dynamic of participatory process and, although the participation is a basic necessity, man is not born knowing how to participate: “Participation is an ability to be learned and perfected. That is, the several forces and operations that constitute the dynamic of participation must be understood and dominated by people” (DIAZ BORDENAVE, 1994, p. 47).

About participation, Diaz Bordenave (1994, p.16) emphasizes that:

[...] participation has two complementary bases: an affective basis – we participate because we feel pleasure in doing things with others – and an instrumental base – we participate because doing things with others is more effective and efficient than doing it alone. [...] These two bases – affective and instrumental – should be balanced. But, sometimes, they conflict and one of them passes to overlap the other.

According to Paro (2006), democratic management must necessarily involve the community participation in regard to not only the activities execution, but also the decisions. He also emphasizes the numerous obstacles to have this kind of participation. As shown by Paro (2000), without disregarding the importance and the participation capacity of school actors, it is necessary to analyze in what conditions this participation occurs, or not, and how has been understood the democratic management.

Referring to schools and the education system, Lück (2008) refers to the democratic participative management concept as the one that presupposes the involvement of teacher, employees, parents, students and any other community represen-

tative who cares about the institution and the improvement of pedagogical process. According to the author's arguments about democratic management at school, these modifications extrapolate curricular changes, methodological changes or modernization of equipment and resources to support the educational process.

Besides these aspects, they demand a new relationship style in educational institutions with the society in general, a new guidance regarding the meaning of education, school and learning at the knowledge society, in addition to the effective mobilization of cultural forces present at the community and school to construct a competent educational project (LÜCK, 2008, p. 22).

In this direction, we use Libâneo (2008) to argue in defense of the need to reconcile the emphasis on human relations and participation in school decisions with effective actions to achieve successfully the specific school objectives, in order to install at the school environment, the conception of democratic participative management. In accordance with the author, the internal elements of the organizational process are valorized – planning, organization, management, assessment – since the decision-making process is not enough: “it is necessary for them to be placed in practice in order to promote better conditions enabling teaching and learning processes” (p. 125). The author also says:

[...] the participative management is a way of democratic management exercise and a citizenship right, but implies, also, duties and responsibilities, therefore, the participative management and the effective management. If, on the one hand, management is a collective activity implying the participation and common objectives, on the other hand, it also depends on abilities, individual responsibilities, and a coordinate and controlled action (LIBÂNEO, 2008, p. 125-126).

For that reason, to achieve its purposes, the institutions define roles and responsibilities, way in which they understand the distribution of tasks and responsibilities and the connection among the various sectors that determine the organizational structure that hardly escapes from the bureaucracy, even because the public school integrates an educational system, as states Libâneo (2008).

Considered a strong influence in the management process, Lück (2008) emphasizes the commitment factor as an important act to accomplish the goals, because many times, the results can be presented in a more negative way than positive when there is no commitment of the people involved with the goals, which interferes in the effectiveness and quality of the educational goals. Consequently, it verifies that the participative approach in educational management requires greater commitment of all. It is necessary that the people involved are interested in participating at the school decision-making process and, for that, they need to be mobilized/stimulated, because each one, according to the author, has the power to influence the context where they are, in the same way, in the execution of multiple actions of management.



### **The management concept: between democratic and managerial**

The term management is relatively new, introducing in the business scenery in the last decades of the twentieth century, coming rapidly to the educational scene in the mid-1970s, in a context of discussions for democratization of public education (OLIVEIRA, 2010). However, it is from the 1990s, in a context of reforms, that the expression gains emphasis and acquires a connotation linked to managerialism, business management model (CÁRIA, 2015). There is still a lack of literature on the management subject, although there is abundant literature on democratic management, as pointed out in this text. What is observed is that the generic sense of the term is connected to the contemporary administration process. The origin of the term comes from the Latin word *gerere*, administer; act of managing; lead; management; administration; administration or management (CHIAVENATO, 2003).

In the dictionary, the meaning of management is presented as administration, which, in its turn, means to plan, control, lead and control people to achieve in an efficiently and effectively manner the objectives of an organization. In other words, etymologically, the management and administration terms mean the same thing and, in most cases, have been perceived likewise, but are not. As stated by Montana and Charnov (2001), administration is the act of working with and through people to accomplish the goals both of organization as of its members, therefore, it is important in any context of resources use, whether individual or collective, and has influence on the performance of people and organizations.

However, based on Chiavenato (2003) and Cária (2015), management is a function and not a position. As such, based on information collected, the management involves a whole set of procedures that are carried out to solve situations, make decisions, implement projects (DRUCKER, 2001). Thus, management means also, to lead or administer a company or business, regardless of the area. As described by Cária (2015), the terms are different, but there is no consensus in the literature on the concept.<sup>4</sup>

Martins (1999), more than two decades ago already has discussed this question of the use of management as being the same as administration. According to the author, the sense of management as a new way of administering a reality was understood in a wrong way, being, by itself, democratic, since it translated the idea of communication by collective involvement, through discussion and dialogue. Martins (1999) ascribes for administration more traditional concepts from the administrative theory “administration is the rational process of organization, command and control”. She assigns to management, meanings that are more contemporary related to the theory of human relations, characterizing the management by the recognition of the importance of conscious and enlightened participation of people in the decisions about guidance and handling of their work; associating the term to strengthening the democratization idea of pedagogical process.

Several authors, such as Lück et al. (2007), Krawczyk (2010) and Oliveira (2010), analyze the democratic management within the reform and decentralization of the teaching system and democratization of school management where this represents a movement already started in our country, in the experience of overcoming the

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4 About this issue, see CÁRIA (2015), In: CÁRIA, N. P.; OLIVEIRA, S. M. S. S.; CUNHA, N. B. *Gestão educacional e avaliação: perspectivas e desafios contemporâneos*. Campinas/SP: Pontes Editores, 2015.

procedures that are traditionally based on corporatism and clientelism. This movement has been providing very significant improvements to the school as the involvement of the school community in the selection process of school director, implementation of school boards that present deliberative authority, decision-making power and control of financial resources by the school.

For Krawczyk (2010), the model of organization and management of education, which introduces the educational reform in Brazil, is defined by the decentralization in three dimensions that complement each other, creating a new logic of governance of public education: 1) Decentralization between different instances of government-municipality; 2) Decentralization to the school - school autonomy; 3) Decentralization to the market - social responsibility. It does not fit here dealing with all of these dimensions; however, it is worth highlighting that the focus to participation in democratic management process, including the so-called participatory democratic management, is linked to the third dimension: decentralization to the market.

### **Democratic management and legal foundations**

Democratic management is legally supported by both Federal Constitution (FC), 1988, Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (known as LDBEN) of 20 December 1996 and, by Law No. 13,005 of 25 June 2014, which approves the National Plan for Education (PNE) and makes other provisions. In the FC, Chap. III, entitled “of Education, of Culture and of Sport”, art. 206, item VII of this law guarantees the “quality standard” for education. Therefore, it is not enough any management and nor any type of education. In this context, it has been attributed to democratic management the improvement of education quality.

Resorting to Articles 14 and 15 of Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBEN), No. 9394, of 1996, it is stated that:

Art.: 14 – The education systems will define the standards of public education democratic management in basic education, according to their peculiarities and in accordance with the following principles:

I. Participation of education professionals in the elaboration of school pedagogical project;

II. Participation of school and local communities in school boards or equivalent.

Art.: 15 – Education systems will ensure to public school units of basic education that it integrates for them progressive degrees of administrative pedagogical autonomy and financial management, in compliance with the rules of public financial law (BRAZIL, 1996).

The democratic management in education seems institutionally to reduce itself for the participation of education professionals and community in preparing the school pedagogical project. However, when analyzing the autonomy principle at LDBEN,

it is observed that, in this regulation, the principle of autonomy is delegated. The law decrees the democratic management with vague principles, in the sense that it does not establish guidelines well defined to outline the democratic management, only pointing out the logical, in a macro manner, the participation of all involved, where the deliberative character of autonomy takes on a positioning articulated to the State.

In this context, it is worth highlighting as well the conquest opportunities of democratic management in the Federal Constitution (BRAZIL, 1988) and LDBEN (BRAZIL, 1996). It is essential to fight in order to keep the constitutional democratic conquests, being necessary to commit to a daily democratic construction not only in public schools, but also in private schools and in different sectors of society and State. Thus, everyday practices have reinforced the school practices being able to be constituted in a horizon for the emergence, growth and consolidation of an alternative democratic project, along the citizen training process.

Given the above, it is necessary that managers implement mechanisms to ensure the participation of all, with involvement and commitment in order to make possible new perspectives on how to manage the social and educational reality, freeing themselves from the shackles of authoritarianism and power centralization and glimpsing more quality in educational activities. Thus, it is necessary that educators and managers re-educate themselves in an ethical and political perspective that creates new ways to participate in public school, that is, listening, recording and disseminating what students and the community think, say and write. Thereby, collectively, the critical conscience will be awakened, along with the desire of building a new reality.

Finally, considering the meanings of democratic for the management of public school, presented herein, we resorted to Freire (1983, p. 136), in his arguments, which defend that only the discussion and critical reflection will take the teacher to reflect on “the role of men in the world and with the world, as beings of transformation and not of adaptation”. These arguments are in accordance with those defended by Paro (2006 - inside cover): “In order for the school to be really public, it is essential the creation of mechanisms that make it democratic.” Therefore, it is possible to infer that, in the same way that one only learn to swim into the water, also only the living with a management with democratic characteristics will propitiate conditions of a democracy learning.

### **Leadership and participative management: a continuous learning process**

The exercise of leading in order to realize educational objectives, according to Lück (2008), requires knowledge, special skills and attitudes, requiring special attention of all who are part of the educational work, especially their managers, who take joint responsibility and influence the school environment. For the author, reports as “teachers who do not want to cooperate, parents who do not share with the school the same training goals of their children, student groups that do not value the studies, among others”, make school managers to feel perplexed and even without action, or in other words, without noticing “a light at the end of the tunnel” (LÜCK, 2008, p. 19).

The author states that every time this professional is faced with this kind of reality, he feels himself helpless, compromising and even denying his leadership. Thus, it is important the perception of the manager in relation to the conditions presented in the testimonies such as forms of representation of natural challenges of their work where it is necessary to recognize that the lack of leadership contributes to such occurrences. Hence the need for appreciation of some definitions of what is the act of leading in order to not taking the restriction risk of the word as a simple feat of being ahead but rather, as an action of great value for the manager's figure.

According to Lück et al. (2011), the literature on the word leadership is quite abundant, being highlighted for several decades in the context of the business administration. For having, recently, gained strength in the context of a set of ideas from institutions with a focus on social human development and in the learning, the term is being increasingly used in education as a necessary condition to determine the quality of teaching and of effective student training, emerging a proliferation of studies in the context of education, in this regard. However, it is noteworthy that the concept of leadership, in the classical approach of Administration, was understood as a way of domination or control. In this approach, the role of leader was to establish and enforce performance criteria to achieve organizational goals.

It is important to consider that over the years, gradually, the concept of Administration has evolved, receiving new meanings to adjust itself to new times and changes. As reported by Chiavenato (2003), in the 20s of the last century, the sociologist Max Weber has identified bureaucratic leaders, equity holders and charismatic. In the 1940s, there was a strong development of studies on leadership with the US Army support which have used them in the selection of their officers. In the 1950s, many other studies have emerged in the behavioral sciences, with emphasis on the Theory of Human Relations, leading the leadership approach to other scopes. The leadership is then considered vital element to the success of an organization and, in this wake, the leaders come to be considered as change agents, whose main function is to facilitate the achievement of objectives along with their team members and provide opportunities for growth and personal improvement.

Currently, there is a vast literature on leadership and the theme is widely emphasized in several areas of knowledge, but still linked to the achievement of objectives and goals, results and performance being the level of efficiency of a team almost always attributed to its leader. For a long time, the characteristic of leadership was discussed as something that already was born with the person until the moment when Peter F. Drucker has theorized in the preface of his book "The Leader of the Future" (1996) that a born leader can exist, but leadership can and must be learned. This finding motivated a series of studies on the part of teachers and consultants and, since then, the question of leadership was demystified. The author brought down several myths about leadership, among them, the one that an effective leader is not someone loved and admired, but rather someone whose followers do the right things. In his understanding, popularity is not leadership, results are.

According to Vergara (2000), the leadership process influences the motivation of people, both individually and in groups, to carry out the mission, vision and objectives, referring to talent mobilization and human energy to accomplish something more, to go beyond what it is and what is done commonly. For this to occur, the author points out that it is necessary that the leader discovers in himself the power to

envision a new future and new alternatives within the role he plays and the mission attributed to him, where the clear vision of the mission, alternatives and the ability to communicate them accurately, serve as a stimulus and source of confidence to his subordinates, who are part of the collective enterprise.

Analyzing the leadership in the school environment, Lück (2009) states that the issue of leadership is committed to creating strategies in order that teaching and learning processes happen and successfully, and that school, as a whole, be fortunate and fosters goals that seek growth, prosperity and victory. Thereby the act of managing a school can and should be learned, not as a way to bring about privileges but rather responsibilities.

The author also argues that although it is essential to every teacher, especially for the school manager, to have leadership, it is verified that a great part of them is devoid of abilities, attitudes and comprehensions sufficient and appropriate for exercising this competence, or even when they have it, they fail to apply it properly.

According to Lück (2009, p.76),

The leadership is expressed as an influence process accomplished in the context of people management and social processes, in the sense of mobilization of talent and efforts, guided by a clear and comprehensive view of the organization where it lies and objectives that must perform, with the perspective of continuous improvement of the own organization, its processes and the people involved.

Thereby, for the purposes of this study, the arguments presented allow saying that leadership is an act which seeks the integration of all for the best results, being built by the joint work of individuals and requiring from true leaders an action that articulates influence, delegation of responsibilities, observation and reflection of reality in order to achieve the expected or planned, not by power, but by commitment and involvement of all those who were joined by a leadership. In the case of school, this leader should be the manager. Therefore, the efficiency of school management is linked to the management of these actions through the manager's leadership in a democratic, participatory, and, above all, active and responsible.

### **Final considerations**

We hope that this study can contribute to a reflection on democratic management, in the sense of people integration in the educational environment, so there is more dialogue and collective planning, through an ideal management model: the democratic management. These people are the director / manager, teaching experts, teachers, staff, parents and students, under the leadership of the manager and with the responsible participation of all. It is not about a simple thing, since a democratic management is something complex.

As active workers in public schools, it still surround us the feeling that transforming the school into a collaborative environment where everyone shares the same goals, ideals and challenges; being responsible for the achievements and results obtained, as a great team, seems, in principle, still a dream or utopia. To overcome these barriers, overcome some old paradigms that hinder the improvement of education quality, face the bureaucracy itself of the system that, throughout history,

used the clientelism and indication of politicians for manager positions is still a major challenge. Mainly because there was not historically, in Brazil, a learning process for such and currently, it is demanded participation, leadership, commitment, to face an educational scenario considered of crisis, of all nature.

In the last two decades, at least, a list of prerogatives have been presented to education professionals, which project an education quality desired under the democratic perspective. However, in practice are implemented cost adjustments policies on all sides and diverse regulatory mechanisms based far more on criteria of rationality than in pedagogical principles, as noted in the literature mobilized in the preparation of this paper. It is attributed to the manager the responsibility of getting the participation of internal and external community in school management, putting the participation as a grail, able to work the miracle in education, disregarding other constraints, as already criticized by Paro (2000).

In this sense, the great challenge of democratic management should be the fight to ensure the constitutional right of students to quality education, as a public good, what highlights the manager's role, regardless of the circumstances, so much at the political level, strategic or tacit. Therefore, the manager should not be seen as a God, a hero or a villain, but as a professional in a leadership function of a legitimated team and responsible for an intentional work, planned, and supported in the organic relation between coordination and participation, what does not exclude professional competences for such, nor does qualification. It is highlighted, therefore, the need for the training of managers to a new educational reality that requires new models of management and leadership.

We have noted that there is, currently, a rich literature relevant to the topic that, in common, considers the manager, in the position occupied at school, a leader and as such, he should be able to stimulate the educational community to be active and participatory, as well as committed. However, in practice it can be said that there is a long way to go, due to an educational reality that historically was marked by centralized and authoritarian management models. Therefore, the overcoming of this model shall not be in a simple and fast manner.

The research, herein developed, has mobilized a theoretical referential consisting of specialists and researchers in the field of educational management, but in our experience, in public schools, from cities in the South of Minas Gerais, some questionings are sharpened when placing face to face the manager's ideal and the real one of school. Especially in the case of municipal teaching networks, where predominates yet the political indication of managers. In many cases, behind the shields of power, are hidden people unprepared for the management position, which end up using the imposition by fear. This leads us, at the end of this study, to much more inquiries about the school management than answers. However, it is worth highlighting the hope deposited in the current PNE, regarding the democratic management, contemplated in the Goal 19 (BRAZIL, 2014), since the PNE 2014-2024 is a State policy.

It is urgent a new perspective, which proposes to the manager the development of a democratic management in education. Not only as a new way to administer the school, but rather a new conception for the work of teaching and administering educational services, that are so specific in the scenario of a new governance in education that have been installed since the late 1990s, as pointed out by Krawczyk (2010). This implies facing historical challenges, so far unresolved, and problems of

the present time. It is important that everyone to be provoked and provocateurs of disquiet in order that the changes represent discoveries and opening of new opportunities in education.

Thereby, we emphasize the need for a constant search of new ways of looking at education and its management, because the school is a living organism. Thus, we hope to have evidenced in this study, the greatness of the democratic management possibilities, as well as its weaknesses and challenges, since, as pointed out by Paro (2000, 2006) the manager does not have much autonomy. For this reason it is not enough to say that the school has democratic management if becomes stagnant, with loss-making educational outcomes, and does not allow seeing beyond what is ahead, without considering that between the power relations that nourish the educational systems and, the teaching institution itself, there is the student right.

Lastly, from the discussions presented throughout this text, we point out that the path of school democratic management does not happen in a vacuum nor can be seen in isolation, because what is at stake is a legitimated space of citizens training. It is like a political space that the school needs efficient management, manager's leadership and, participation of the school community and parents, as well as integration of the other government bodies. Therefore, it urges to be addressed in the government agenda as a public policy that can ensure the participation of all education professionals and school community in the decision-making processes, including those that define the application of the school's financial resources to, "perhaps" in this way, be possible to obtain results that are more promising, in the educational work.

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