Democratic Management in Public Schools in the Municipality of Soyo, Province of Zaire: Advances and Setbacks in Educational Policies

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SUMMARY

This scientific article analyzes democratic management in public schools in the municipality of Soyo, Zaire Province, Angola, in light of the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System (Law No. 17/16, of October 7). The research aims to identify the main advances and setbacks in educational policies aimed at promoting school community participation, as well as to understand the challenges faced by administrators, teachers, students, and parents/guardians in the process of democratizing educational management. The study adopts a qualitative approach, based on an exploratory methodology and case study, through data collection in selected public schools in the municipality.

The theoretical framework draws on Angolan authors such as Isaac Paxe, Cândido Gunza, and Ricardo Canepa, and Brazilian authors such as Vitor Henrique Paro and Ângelo Ricardo Souza. The results point to advances in the institutional discourse on democratic participation, but also reveal practical setbacks, such as administrative centralization, limited training in school management, and weak community involvement. The study recommends public policies that strengthen school councils and promote the autonomy and training of school administrators to improve their practice in this area.

Keywords: Democratic Management and Educational Policies.

ABSTRACT

This scientific article analyzes democratic management in public schools in the municipality of Soyo, Zaire province, Angola, in light of the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System (Law no. 17/16, of October 7). The research aims to identify the main advances and setbacks in educational policies aimed at the participation of the school community, as well as to understand the challenges faced by managers, teachers, students and parents/guardians in the process of democratizing educational management. The study adopts a qualitative approach, based on an exploratory methodology and case study, through data collection in selected schools in the municipality. The theoretical foundation is based on Angolan authors such as Isaac Paxe, Cândido Gunza, Ricardo Canepa, and Brazilian authors such as Vitor Henrique Paro and Ângelo Ricardo Souza. The results point to advances in the institutional discourse on democratic participation, but also reveal practical setbacks, such as administrative centralization, scarce training in school management and weak community involvement. The study recommends public policies that strengthen school councils and promote the autonomy and training of school managers to improve their practice in this area.

Keywords: Democratic Management and Educational Policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic management in the educational context is considered one of the fundamental pillars to strengthen the quality of education and build more inclusive societies participatory. In Angola, particularly in the municipality of Soyo, Zaire province, the implementation of democratic practices in public schools has been influenced by educational policies shaped after peace and the consolidation of the State, highlighting the Law of the Education and Teaching System – Law No. 17/16, of October 7, amended by Law No. 32/20, of 12 August.

However, despite the existence of possible legal and regulatory paths that value the decentralization and the participation of the school community, in practice, a series of obstacles that compromise the effectiveness of democratic management. However, this article proposes to analyze such advances and setbacks, in light of the experiences lived in the municipality of Soyo2 .

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature, with an exploratory focus, based on a study of case. The research was carried out in five (5) public schools in the municipality of Soyo, selected by convenience, and involved questionnaires, according to Gil (2008), although this is widely used in quantitative research, nothing prevents its use in research qualitative, especially when constructed with open questions, enabling the researcher explore subjective aspects and interpret meanings to management members and teachers. For methodological purposes, it is acceptable not to reveal the name of the place specifically, when:

ÿ Confidentiality is necessary to protect participants (research ethics)3 ;

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2 Within the geographic context of Zaire Province, the Soyo Municipal District is bordered by the Zaire River, the municipalities of Nóqui, Atlântico, and Tomboco. When the first Portuguese entered Angola in 1482, it was through Soyo, where they entered via the mouth of the Zaire River, led by the Portuguese navigator Diogo Cão. At this time, Soyo was already an administrative entity, its administrator holding the title of Mwene y'e Soyo (Lord of Soyo). Many others came to "reign" Soyo after Mwene y'e Soyo, and for a long time it was under Portuguese rule, until the Battle of Kitombo, in Nfinda Ngula, where the Portuguese forces were defeated by Soyo. Today, the political regime by which Angola is governed predominates in the territory in question (Leandro, 2020).

3 According to Babbie (2014), confidentiality is essential in social research to ensure that information provided by participants is not used in a way that exposes them to risk or embarrassment. The author emphasizes that preserving anonymity and data confidentiality is a way to protect the dignity and integrity of research subjects.

ÿ The location has sensitive characteristics (such as internal conflicts, complaints, issues

ethics);

ÿ The study was approved by an ethics committee that requires institutional anonymity.

researcher chooses a fictitious name (institutional pseudonym), informing this during the course

of the text.

A documentary analysis of school meeting minutes was also carried out. The methodology

exploratory was chosen because it allows for an in-depth investigation into a phenomenon that is still

little addressed in local academic studies.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Democraticity in legislative logic

In the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System (Law No. 17/16, of October 7, 2016,

amended by Law No. 32/20, of August 12), the principle of democracy is found

expressed in Article 10, being defined as a central element of school management: the

system must favor equal access, active participation of all actors (teachers,

students, guardians, community) in solving problems and processes

educational.

Based on this, the members of the school board, due to the strategic role they

play in the management of educational institutions, are called upon to materialize and

operationalize the protocols and guidelines previously established by the policies

national and local educational institutions. This responsibility goes beyond simply fulfilling

administrative standards: this is a conscious exercise of pedagogical leadership and

organizational, which requires commitment to the principles of democratic management, such as

participation, transparency, equity and co-responsibility.

Taking on this role therefore means responding effectively to the multiple demands

placed in public schools, especially with regard to the construction of environments

more inclusive, participatory schools focused on improving the quality of education.

In this sense, the active involvement of management is not only recommended, but

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Creswell (2010) highlights that ensuring the confidentiality of participants is an ethical requirement that aims
to protect their privacy and avoid any form of personal, social or professional harm resulting from participation
in the research.

fundamental to ensuring the real and transformative implementation of educational policies

from day to day.

Education is recognized as a public good, as established by current legislation,

specifically in Article 79.1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (CRA). This

means that access to education is a fundamental right of all citizens and a

responsibility of the State, which must ensure that this right is exercised fully,

fair and egalitarian.

Since education is a public good, it should not be treated as a privilege of a few,

but as a right of everyone, regardless of their economic, social,

cultural or geographical. The State, in this context, assumes the role of promoter and regulator of

education system, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to learn and develop.

In this sense, the democratization of education is essential. Democratizing education means

guarantee universal, free and quality access to education, from the most basic levels

to the most advanced. This process must be guided by public policies that eliminate

barriers to entry and permanence in school, such as social inequalities, discrimination,

poverty, geographical distance, among others.

Furthermore, it is important that the beneficiary of the education – that is, the student – does not see the

education only as an obligation or a means to obtain a diploma, but rather as

a powerful tool for personal and social transformation. He must realize that, by

studying, you are exercising an act of active citizenship, as you are preparing to participate in

conscious, critical and constructive way in society.

Education should contribute not only to the intellectual development of the individual, but

also for their ethical, moral, civic and professional formation. In this way, the citizen

formed by the educational system will be able to act with suitability, responsibility and

competence both in social interaction and in the world of work and production.

Therefore, the right to education must be seen as a fundamental pillar for

construction of a more just, equitable and developed society, where everyone has the

same opportunities to grow, contribute and live with dignity.

3.1. Democratic management in Angola and its impact

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Paxe (2014) argues that democratic management in Angola must consider culture
organizational structure of schools, often marked by vertical structures inherited from
colonial period and the years of post-independence centralism. The author highlights the need
of training policies for school managers.

This vision presents promising indicators that we consider fully compatible with
the current reality. In other words, contemporary institutions are increasingly able to
adapt to the different profiles and needs that surround us. The essential thing, in this context, is
ensure both the guarantee of people's rights and their full satisfaction.

For this to happen, it is essential that there is constant dialogue between institutions and
citizens. Organizational structures must listen carefully to the demands of
communities - from issues of legal security and accessibility, to aspects related to
to social and cultural rights. Legal instruments are adaptable and effective. Laws,
regulations and public policies need to be flexible, without losing solidity, to
keep up with constantly evolving social dynamics. This implies periodic reviews and
monitoring mechanisms capable of quickly identifying gaps.

The promotion of equity should be considered a priority. So that rights and satisfactions
are truly universal, it is necessary to reduce inequalities - whether of income, gender, race
or access to services. Putting equity at the center of policies strengthens trust
collective in institutions.

It is also important to invest in transparency and accountability. Only with
clarity in processes and clarity in accountability is how people will feel safe and
valued. Transparency breeds trust, and the more confident people are in the
integrity of institutions, the greater the public or user satisfaction.

In this approach, Gunza (2023) is also called upon to discuss school management practices
in Luanda and notes that, although the board members demonstrate knowledge of the
importance of democratic management, practice reveals resistance to structural changes,
especially with regard to the effective participation of school councils.

Next, Canepa (2021) highlights the role of families and board members
direction in the democratization of school, highlighting the importance of active listening and respect
to community knowledge in the Angolan educational environment, Manuel (2025) understands that
currently, transformations are manifested in all aspects of social inquiry,

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political, economic and cultural. This is justified by the fact that, with each passing day,

scientific and technological development considered as primordial elements of the said

changes, tends to consider better ways, in order to establish a

fair, impartial and attentive framework in all the spheres mentioned.

As if that weren't enough, it is a country that experienced a long period of civil war, of almost

30 years, which according to history began in 1975, having achieved peace and reconciliation

national on April 4, 2002, a memorable moment that saw a set of

transformations highlighted in the context of the transition to a socialist-oriented economy

for the market economy, the approval of the Constitution of the Republic of

Angola, in 2010, and the institutionalization of the democratic rule of law, with

holding of regular general elections in the years 2008, 2012, 2017 and concurrently, in

2022 (Manuel, 2022).

Neto (2018) argues that there is a deficit in the institutionalization of democracy in schools

public, requiring an administrative reform that favors pedagogical autonomy

of school units.

It is in this logic that Paro (2001) argues that public schools should be institutions

service of citizenship and democracy, with democratic management being an instrument of

social transformation.

This process is structuring for the consolidation of true democratic practices in

school environment, forming active citizens and transforming the school into a community

autonomous, plural and responsible educational system according to its designs and creation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As already mentioned, the present study aimed to analyze the advances and setbacks

of democratic management in public schools in the municipality of Soyo, province of Zaire, from

the perception of school board members. For reasons of ethics and academic confidentiality, the

respondents' names have been kept anonymous. The following analysis is divided between the

vision of the management and the teachers, enabling a clearer reading of the challenges and

achievements in the field of educational policies.

1. School Community Participation in Management

According to the data collected, 80% of management members believe that there is a

limited participation of parents and guardians in school decisions,

restricted mainly to sporadic meetings. Only 20% recognize progress

consistent in implementing active school councils. On the other hand, in the view of

teachers, 70% say they have never participated effectively in decision-making

on the pedagogical functioning of the school, signaling a deficit of democratic practices.

Whereas, 30% the opposite.

2. Transparency and Accountability

Regarding transparency in the management of school resources, 60% of board members

claim that financial reports are presented biasedly to the community

school, while 40% indicate that there is no institutional culture of accountability.

This perception is corroborated by teachers, 75% of whom said they did not know how

financial resources are managed. 25% accepted the allegation positively. This scenario points to

for one of the main setbacks in democratic management policies in the municipality.

3. Leadership and Organizational Climate

Regarding leadership and organizational climate, 100% of the board members

said they adopted participatory leadership practices, promoting dialogue with teachers and

encouraging teamwork. However, 50% of teachers said they did not

feel heard in curricular or administrative decisions, 50% responded positively,

which reveals a discrepancy between institutional discourse and everyday practice.

4. Training and Capacity Building for Democratic Management

Data shows that 80% of management members recognize the lack of training

continuous questions about democratic management, while 20% responded satisfactorily.

complementary form, 90% of teachers stated that they had never participated in any

training aimed at strengthening democratic culture in schools. In the latter,

only 10% accepted positively. This data is worrying, as it highlights the fragility of

public policies regarding the training of school agents aware of their role

participatory.

Furthermore, board members reported that pedagogical decisions are still made

centrally, often in response to macro-level guidance, rather than

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dialogue with the community that directly participates in the process in question. In addition to these setbacks, advances were identified, such as:

ÿ Implementation of high-scale social impact projects in the schools analyzed, under

supervision of the Municipal Education Directorate of Soyo;

ÿ Occasional meetings with parents and guardians;

ÿ Openness to student and cultural initiatives at local and international levels.

However, observed setbacks include:

ÿ Lack of training for managers in recommended participatory practices based on the

designs of the current millennium;

ÿ Lack of financial resources for autonomous projects;

ÿ Low involvement of the local community, often due to lack of knowledge of their

rights.

The data reinforce the arguments of Paxe (2014) and Gunza (2023) about the persistence of hierarchical models in schools. They also confirm the analysis of Paro (2001) and Marques (2021) on the transformative role of initiatives by schools when there is real democratic commitment.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Democratic management in public schools in Soyo is a field under construction, with more or less sophisticated advances and significant challenges. The existence of a legal basis (Law No. 17/16) favorable to participation is a positive point, but its practical application is hindered in institutional culture, lack of specialized training and administrative centralization.

Purposefully, the approach presents Brazilian perspectives, a kind of comparison with local experience, thus enriching the analysis and pointing out possible paths, respecting the particularities of each country. Democratic management is more than a legal procedure; it is a political practice that requires commitment, training and a culture of participation of all in current organizations.

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