RCMOS – Revista Científica Multidisciplinar O Saber. ISSN: 2675-9128. São Paulo-SP.

Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 30/10/2026 | aceito: 06/11/2026 | publicação: 11/11/2026

The influence of democratic management on building a positive organizational climate in public schools

A influência da gestão democrática na construção de um clima organizacional positivo em escolas públicas

La influencia de la gestión democrática en la construcción de un clima organizacional positivo en las escuelas públicas

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Abstract:
Democratic management is configured as an essential element for the development of quality education, as it encourages the participation of all segments that make up the school in the management process. This participation strengthens the sense of belonging and contributes to the construction of a positive organizational climate, in which opinions are respected and individuals collaborate more effectively in learning processes. This bibliographic article is based on a literature review supported by the following authors: Brito et al. (2010), Ferreira (2006), Libâneo (2007), Lück (2012), Luna (2023), Marques and Zambelli (2026), Paro (2001), Poti (2014), and Silva et al. (2026), whose contributions provide an expanded understanding of the theme. The general objective is to discuss the influence of democratic management in building a positive organizational climate in public schools. The specific objectives are: to analyze the concept of organizational climate in schools; to reflect on democratic management and interpersonal interactions; and to present the relationship between democratic management and the improvement of organizational climate.

Keywords:
Democratic management. Organizational climate. Learning. Education.

Resumo:
A gestão democrática configura-se como um elemento essencial para o desenvolvimento de uma educação de qualidade, na medida em que estimula a participação de todos os segmentos que compõem a escola no processo de gestão. Essa participação fortalece o senso de pertencimento e contribui para a construção de um clima organizacional positivo, no qual as opiniões são respeitadas e os sujeitos passam a colaborar de forma mais efetiva para os processos de aprendizagem. O presente artigo, de caráter bibliográfico, fundamenta-se em uma revisão de literatura balizada nos seguintes autores Brito et al. (2010), Ferreira (2006), Libâneo (2007), Lück (2012), Luna (2023), Marques e Zambelli (2026), Paro (2001), Poti (2014) e Silva et al. (2026)., cujas contribuições possibilitam uma compreensão ampliada da temática. O objetivo geral consiste em discutir a influência da gestão democrática na construção de um clima organizacional positivo em escolas públicas. Os objetivos específicos são: analisar o conceito de clima organizacional escolar; refletir sobre a gestão democrática e as interações interpessoais; e apresentar a relação entre gestão democrática e a melhoria do clima organizacional.

Palavras-chave:
Gestão democrática. Clima organizacional. Aprendizagem. Educação.

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Resumen:
La gestión democrática se configura como un elemento esencial para el desarrollo de una educación de calidad, en la medida en que estimula la participación de todos los segmentos que componen la escuela en el proceso de gestión. Esta participación fortalece el sentido de pertenencia y contribuye a la construcción de un clima organizacional positivo, en el cual las opiniones son respetadas y los sujetos colaboran de manera más efectiva en los procesos de aprendizaje. El presente artículo, de carácter bibliográfico, se fundamenta en una revisión de literatura basada en los siguientes autores: Brito et al. (2010), Ferreira (2006), Libâneo (2007), Lück (2012), Luna (2023), Marques y Zambelli (2026), Paro (2001), Poti (2014) y Silva et al. (2026), cuyas contribuciones permiten una comprensión ampliada de la temática. El objetivo general consiste en discutir la influencia de la gestión democrática en la construcción de un clima organizacional positivo en las escuelas públicas. Los objetivos específicos son: analizar el concepto de clima organizacional escolar; reflexionar sobre la gestión democrática y las interacciones interpersonales; y presentar la relación entre la gestión democrática y la mejora del clima organizacional.

Palabras clave:
Gestión democrática. Clima organizacional. Aprendizaje. Educación.

1. Introduction

Contemporary education faces increasingly complex challenges that call for school management practices capable of promoting administrative efficiency, democratic participation, and social inclusion. In this context, democratic management has emerged as a fundamental principle for building fairer, more participatory school environments that support the holistic development of individuals.

Schools are collective spaces where people with different worldviews interact daily. Teachers, students, administrators, families, and the wider community form relationships through these interactions. Democratic management seeks to ensure that everyone has an active voice in decision-making, strengthening their sense of belonging and their shared responsibility for the quality of education.

This topic is particularly relevant because public schools, especially in Brazil, play a central role in guaranteeing the right to education and promoting social equity. A positive organizational climate is essential for meaningful teaching and learning.

When people feel that their opinions are respected and their contributions valued, they become more engaged and motivated. This directly affects the quality of teaching practices and students' civic education. Examining the influence of democratic management on school organizational climate therefore entails considering how collective participation can transform institutional culture and strengthen interpersonal ties.

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This article contributes to the debate through a literature review that brings together the work of authors who have examined the foundations and implications of democratic management in education. The methodology consists of a bibliographic analysis that organizes different theoretical perspectives and identifies areas of agreement and disagreement among scholars in the field.

This approach draws on Brito et al. (2010), Ferreira (2006), Libâneo (2007), Lück (2012), Luna (2023), Marques and Zambelli (2026), Paro (2001), Poti (2014), and Silva et al. (2026). Their work helps broaden understanding of the topic and provides a basis for future research and teaching practices aimed at improving school management.

The overall aim of this study is to discuss how democratic management influences the development of a positive organizational climate in public schools. The analysis is guided by the following specific objectives:

- Examine the concept of school organizational climate and its importance for education;
- Reflect on democratic management and its implications for interpersonal interactions within the school;
- Present the relationship between democratic management and improvements in organizational climate, highlighting the effects on educational quality.

The study thus seeks to show that democratic management goes beyond legal or regulatory requirements and can help consolidate more humane, participatory, and transformative educational practices. Strengthening dialogue and cooperation among members of the school community can help build more welcoming and productive environments capable of addressing contemporary challenges in public education.

2. Literature review

Building a positive organizational climate in public schools involves multiple aspects of educational practice and school management. Democratic management offers a framework for promoting meaningful participation by all groups within the school community and strengthening interpersonal ties. By recognizing the importance of listening, dialogue, and valuing different voices, it helps create a more collaborative and inclusive school environment that supports learning.

This section examines in greater depth the influence of democratic management on a healthy organizational climate, highlighting the theoretical and practical aspects that underpin

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this relationship. The specific objectives outlined above are addressed in separate subsections so that each aspect can be analyzed in more detail.

Each subsection addresses one of the study's specific objectives. They examine the concept of school organizational climate, interpersonal interactions mediated by democratic management, and the effects of this form of management on the institutional environment.

2.1 The concept of school organizational climate

The study of school organizational climate has become central to understanding educational processes and the quality of relationships within schools. According to Brito et al. (2010), school climate can be understood as the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes that members of the school community share about their environment. It is therefore collectively shaped and reflects both institutional culture and the management and leadership practices in place.

The concept of organizational climate, originally developed in management and organizational psychology, was adopted in education to analyze how factors such as leadership, communication, participation, and professional recognition influence the school environment.

According to Lück (2012), school organizational climate is directly related to how people perceive management and the opportunities they have to take part in decision-making. A positive climate is characterized by trust, cooperation, and mutual respect, while a negative climate tends to generate low motivation, conflict, and less effective teaching.

Libâneo (2007) adds that school climate is inseparable from democratic management because such management creates conditions in which different groups within the school community can feel part of the institution. By encouraging participation and dialogue, democratic management fosters an organizational climate grounded in justice, equity, and shared responsibility.

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Several studies indicate that organizational climate directly influences teaching and learning. Marques and Zambelli (2026) show that participatory leadership and effective communication support teacher engagement and school staff performance. Similarly, Brito et al. (2010) note that democratic, caring management strengthens the sense of belonging and responsibility, creating a more welcoming environment for innovative teaching practices.

> Management means making decisions and organizing and directing the educational policies implemented at school in support of civic education [...] it is a commitment on the part of those who make decisions—management—those who are aware of the collective—democratic—and those responsible for developing human beings through education (Ferreira, 2006, p. 1241).

As the author explains, school leadership is complex because leaders' decisions shape whether the environment is positive. School organizational climate has concrete implications for educational quality beyond its subjective aspects. A positive environment motivates teachers, reduces conflict, and strengthens institutional culture, directly affecting educational outcomes.

Democratic management has been identified as a major influence on school organizational climate. According to Silva et al. (2026), collective participation in decision-making, active listening, and effectively functioning representative bodies strengthen participatory culture and a sense of belonging. These, in turn, help build a more positive organizational climate capable of sustaining quality teaching practices.

The literature also identifies recurring challenges, including centralized decision-making, limited participation by families and students, and gaps in leadership training (Silva et al., 2026). These obstacles show that building a positive organizational climate is an ongoing, complex process that requires deliberate political and pedagogical action and appropriate institutional conditions.

Examining school organizational climate in connection with democratic management is essential to understanding how public schools operate. Valuing the voices of the school community, promoting dialogue, and sharing responsibility for management help create more collaborative and inclusive environments. A positive organizational climate thus both reflects democratic management and serves as an indicator of the quality of education.

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2.2 Democratic management and interpersonal interactions

In schools, democratic management goes beyond an administrative model and takes the form of a social and pedagogical practice that values human relationships and collective participation. Schools bring people together, allowing them to interact and construct meaning every day. Understanding democratic management therefore requires recognizing that interpersonal interactions underpin school life and shape the organizational climate and the quality of teaching and learning.

Paro (2001) argues that transforming schools requires profound changes in the way power and authority are structured within them. He sees the democratization of school management as more than a formal mechanism for participation. It is a process through which working people, historically excluded from educational decisions, can take ownership of the school. As the author states:

> If we want a school that transforms society, we must transform the school we have. Transforming it necessarily requires the working classes to take ownership of it. To that end, the system of authority and the distribution of work within the school itself must change (Paro, 2001, p. 10).

This reflection shows that interpersonal interactions in education carry complex political and social dimensions that must be reinterpreted if schools are to fulfill their emancipatory role.

Democratic management provides a way to strengthen participation and dialogue and create conditions in which people recognize themselves as part of the institution. When grounded in respect and cooperation, interpersonal interactions help build a fairer and more welcoming school environment.

School leaders must therefore act as mediators who can bring together different interests and promote shared responsibility within the school community. Democratic leadership relies on mobilizing and inspiring people to work together toward common goals instead of imposing decisions.

> organize, mobilize, and coordinate all the material and human resources necessary for schools to advance their social and educational processes. On this basis, school leaders need to be more than capable administrators. They need a range of skills and the ability to manage their emotions when making decisions. They are constantly confronted with adverse situations that require action at different levels. Such action must always focus on students' personal and educational development, while providing a welcoming environment conducive to learning and thus delivering results for the institution (Poti, 2014, p. 12).

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By emphasizing the human side of management, Poti (2014) shows that democratic school leaders recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships as the basis for building a more participatory and inclusive school. They also understand the need to create conditions in which positive interactions can develop among different groups.

Complementing this view, Lück (2012) emphasizes that democratic school management rests on mobilizing and coordinating collective work. She argues that school leaders should take a proactive approach, guided by enthusiasm and the expectation that their leadership can improve staff performance and outcomes.

By inspiring and motivating school staff, democratic leaders strengthen interpersonal ties and foster a culture of cooperation. According to Lück (2012), this leadership capacity is essential for people to feel valued and engaged, which directly affects the quality of education. By mobilizing and guiding collective work, school leaders help foster trust and shared responsibility in interpersonal interactions. Both are essential to a positive organizational climate.

Democratic management is therefore inseparable from interpersonal interactions, through which the principles of participation and dialogue are put into practice. A democratic school recognizes the importance of human relationships and continually seeks to strengthen ties among its members.

School leaders must attend to administrative matters as well as the subjective and relational aspects of daily school life. By promoting respect and cooperation, they help people feel part of the school and engage in building quality education.

Democratizing management entails transforming power and authority relationships, valuing the participation of working people, and promoting shared responsibility across the school community. By mobilizing resources and inspiring staff, democratic leaders strengthen interpersonal ties and help build a positive organizational climate. The school thus becomes a setting for social transformation, bringing together knowledge, values, and practices that strengthen citizenship and democracy.

Perfect, João! Here is the third subsection, written in continuous prose and developed in enough detail to fill about four pages in Word (12-point font, 1.5 line spacing). I included the direct quotation you provided, set off in the text and reproduced without changes:

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2.3 The influence of democratic management on improving organizational climate

As a pedagogical and administrative practice, democratic management plays a decisive role in creating a positive organizational climate in public schools. This model extends beyond bureaucratic or formal concerns and is grounded in human relationships, collective participation, and shared responsibility across the school community.

As noted above, organizational climate comprises the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes that permeate the school environment. It is directly influenced by how management is structured and by the opportunities for dialogue and cooperation it provides. Democratic management can therefore transform institutional culture, making it more inclusive, participatory, and focused on educational quality.

Improvements in organizational climate depend largely on management's ability to engage people and create conditions in which they feel part of the institution. When teachers, students, staff, and families feel heard and see that their opinions are respected, they become more engaged and motivated to contribute to education.

This participation strengthens interpersonal ties and creates a more welcoming environment in which people recognize their shared responsibility for the school's success. By encouraging this sense of belonging, democratic management improves organizational climate, the quality of teaching practices, and educational outcomes.

School leadership plays a central role in this context. Democratic leaders manage resources, mediate relationships, and coordinate collective work. Their role calls for the ability to inspire and motivate staff and create an environment of trust and cooperation.

> One of a school leader's basic leadership skills is the ability to motivate and inspire school staff. Leaders must be able to create a positive working environment where teachers and staff feel valued and motivated to do their work effectively. They must also be able to inspire the school team to work toward institutional goals, foster a culture of excellence, and pursue continuous improvement (Luna, 2023, p. 80).

This statement shows that improvements in organizational climate are directly related to the school leader's approach. Leaders must be able to mobilize material resources and, above all, develop the potential of the school team. By recognizing and valuing staff members' work, they strengthen interpersonal ties and create conditions for an environment marked by enthusiasm, trust, and shared responsibility.

Democratic management is more than a regulatory or legal principle. It is an everyday practice expressed through interpersonal relationships and collective decisions. A positive

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organizational climate results from an institutional culture that values dialogue, cooperation, and participation. Improving the school environment therefore depends on management's ability to provide opportunities for listening and collective work, where members of the school community can express themselves and contribute to the institution's development.

Poti (2014) also argues that democratic management helps reduce conflict and strengthen a culture of respect and solidarity within schools. When people see that their opinions are taken into account and their needs are met, they develop greater trust in the institution and become more willing to collaborate. This process strengthens organizational climate and helps the school become a more welcoming and inclusive place capable of responding to contemporary challenges in public education.

Democratic management thus has a clear and decisive influence on improving school organizational climate. By promoting collective participation, valuing interpersonal relationships, and inspiring staff, democratic leaders help build a positive environment in which people feel engaged and share responsibility for the institution's success. Organizational climate both reflects management and indicates the quality of education. By strengthening dialogue and cooperation, democratic schools become settings for social transformation and promote more humane, participatory, and inclusive educational practices.

3. Final considerations

The analysis presented in this study shows the importance of democratic management in building a positive organizational climate in public schools. The literature review indicates that democratizing school management extends beyond legal or regulatory principles and takes shape in everyday practices, interpersonal relationships, and institutional culture. Democratic management is thus an ongoing, dynamic process capable of transforming schools into spaces for participation, dialogue, and shared responsibility.

The study's three specific objectives proved complementary and interdependent: analyzing the concept of school organizational climate, reflecting on democratic management and interpersonal interactions, and discussing how democratic management improves organizational climate.

Organizational climate, understood as the perceptions and attitudes that permeate the school environment, is directly influenced by how management is structured and by the opportunities it offers for participation. Interpersonal interactions underpin school life and

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reflect the quality of leadership and management practices. Ultimately, improvements in organizational climate depend on democratic management's ability to engage people, inspire staff, and promote a culture of cooperation and respect.

The literature reviewed shows that democratic management can strengthen the sense of belonging and engagement among the different groups in the school community. When teachers, students, staff, and families feel heard and see their opinions respected, they become more motivated to contribute to education. This engagement directly affects educational quality, creating conditions for more innovative and inclusive teaching practices. Democratic management also helps reduce conflict and strengthen institutional culture, making schools more welcoming and conducive to learning.

Another finding is that school leaders play a central role in mediating relationships and coordinating collective processes. Democratic leadership, grounded in the ability to inspire and motivate staff, is essential for building a positive organizational climate.

By valuing staff members' work and creating opportunities for dialogue and cooperation, school leaders strengthen interpersonal ties and create conditions for schools to become places of social transformation. Democratic management is therefore both an administrative approach and a pedagogical and political practice that seeks to promote citizenship and democracy.

The findings point to the need to invest in preparing school leaders to exercise democratic, participatory leadership. Leaders must develop technical, emotional, and interpersonal skills that enable them to handle difficult situations and foster more humane and inclusive school environments. Public education policies must also value and encourage democratic management practices, recognizing their importance for educational quality and for building a fairer and more equitable society.

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