

# Student Council and School Coexistence: a space for participation and development of the collectivity <sup>1</sup>

## Grêmio Estudantil e Convivência Escolar: espaço de participação e construção da coletividade

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to establish relationships between student participation and school coexistence, with a particular focus on the role of student councils. It is argued that the creation of spaces that broaden students' participation within the school constitutes a key factor for the improvement of school coexistence. The empirical reference of the discussion derives from more than a decade of experience in coordinating an outreach project aimed at fostering the establishment of student councils in public elementary schools. In the first section, a brief description of the project's functioning will be presented, with particular attention to two central initiatives: the Child and Youth Forum and the organization of school assemblies. Subsequently, data from a doctoral research project developed within the scope of this initiative will be analyzed, with emphasis on the role of student councils in shaping student collectivity and their consequent impact on relationships of coexistence within the school. In view of the rise of school

### RESUMO

O objetivo do artigo é estabelecer relações entre participação estudantil e convivência escolar, tendo como recorte a atuação em grêmios estudantis. Defende-se que a criação de espaços para a ampliação da participação dos estudantes na escola é uma das chaves para a melhoria da convivência escolar. O referencial empírico da discussão é a experiência de mais de uma década na coordenação de um projeto de extensão cujo escopo é a formação de grêmios em escolas públicas de ensino fundamental. Em um primeiro momento, será apresentada uma breve descrição sobre o funcionamento do projeto de extensão, com foco na análise de duas ações importantes: o Fórum Infanto-Juvenil e a realização de assembleias escolares. Depois, serão analisados dados de uma pesquisa de doutorado desenvolvida no âmbito do projeto, dando ênfase ao papel do grêmio na formação da coletividade entre os estudantes e consequente impacto nas relações de convivência escolar. Face ao crescimento da violência escolar, postula-se que os grêmios estudantis podem se constituir

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violence, it is posited that student councils may constitute a privileged arena for the enhancement of school coexistence and for the development of a collective ethics.

**Keywords:** Student Council; Student's participation; Coexistence.

como um campo de atuação propício à melhoria da convivência escolar e à constituição de uma ética do coletivo.

**Palavras-chave:** Grêmio Escolar; Participação Estudantil; Convivência.

## 1 Introduction

The aim of this text is establish relations between student participation and school coexistence, focusing on the role of the student councils. We argue that the creation of spaces to expanded student participation in schools is one of the keys to improve the school coexistence. We will take as reference our experience in coordinating an extension project, currently called “Students Councils: the development of the child and youth leadership and democratic management in municipal schools in Bauru”, whose operation has completed 13 years in 2025.

The theoretical basis of the project stands out based on the following propositions: the school function in education for democracy (Paro, 2000); the role of school in the development of the human psyche (Vygotski, 1995); the category of activity in its dialectical unity with the formation of the consciousness (Leontiev, 2021); the collective dimension of study activity (Davidov and Markova, 2019); the socialization based on the collective (Pistrak, 2005).

The work with the councils has raised many concerns and questions for investigation, in an interesting movement of articulation between university extension and academic research. It has generated researches<sup>5</sup> like that at the levels of scientific initiation, master's and doctorate, conceived based on the indivisibility between teaching, research and extension as a constitutional and epistemological principle of the public university. Then, our reflections take as a starting point the analysis of situations experienced with the scope of university extension and also the data produced specifically in Santos (2025) research, whose objective was to investigate the role participation of children in the student council for the formation of study activities.

<sup>5</sup> Some of the scientific publications resulting from the extension project were presented in Asbahr (2021).

We understand working with the student council as a privileged place to break with vertical and authoritarian practices present in school education, as well as to transform the relationship between student and school. In the case of the implementing schools council, it is necessary that they have objective conditions to be free and independent, as recommended by the Free Councils Students (Brasil, 1985). In other words, there should be no direct interference from the management team or teachers in the elections and deliberations of the student council, instead, the autonomy of this student collective should be defended, encouraged, and developed.

We have argued that councils have an important function in education for democracy, in the formation of critical citizens who participate more actively in public life, and in the defense and achievement of rights (Paro, 2001; Asbahr, 2022). The intention of creating spaces for student participation (students councils, school assemblies, class councils, etc.) can contribute to the construction of a democratic culture, producing the creation of experiences of collaborative participation, problem solving, group and democratic decisions, from childhood (Asbahr, 2021).

Mendonça (2024, p. 182-183) produces an interesting synthesis on the role of student participation in the formation of the subject:

[...] Student participation can be a means for developing decision making process. Making decisions that have implications for the school itself requires a diversity of process to the students, such as: understand the school reality, how relationships are organized there, the social function of the school, and the role students play with school relationships; that they are able to dialogue and develop a collective form of organization; that they evaluate their own ideas, motivations, desires and feelings and consider them; that they learn to deal with different opinions that is with the difference, something so valuable in a society that seeks such a uniform and similar way of being in the world; that they learn to deal with the consequences of collective choices and the feelings derived from them; and, finally, that they imagine and create news ways of being and relating to the school as a whole.

In this sense, spaces of collectivity and student participation, such as the student council, have great potential in producing a humanizing school environment, improving the quality of interaction between students and the bond or feeling of belonging to the school reality. Inside the extension project in focus, we have valued that encouraging student participation produces an interesting “side effect”: a reduction in school violence and improved coexistence.

In order to respond the objective in the text, we will first present a brief description of how the extension project works, focusing on the analysis of two important actions that we have developed: the Children and Youth Forum and the holding of school assemblies. Afterwards, we will bring some data from Santos (2025) research, emphasizing the role of the student council in forming a collective among students.

## **2 Student Council Extension Project: thirteen years of history**

The university extension project mentioned here is a partnership between the Public University and the Bauru Municipal Department of Education, and directly reaches around 220 children and teenagers from all sixteen elementary schools in the municipality. Besides this audience, the project's activities mobilize 30 tutors (teaching and non teaching staff at schools who closely monitor supporters) and around 40 extension workers, Psychology students from the local campus, each year.

In its 13th year of existence, the project has had a lot of names, however, without losing its main objective, which is to contribute to the organization of elementary school students through the formation and strengthening of student councils, enabling the ethical and political formation of students, with a view to building a democratic, participatory, and transformative school management.

Born in 2012 from the initiative of a teacher from the municipal education system who wanted to bring students together around common goals and demands, the project took shape through a partnership with the public university that proposed the creation of a student council in each of the schools. Since that moment, each school has held its annual or biannual electoral process, a time when

students learn to organize themselves into groups, to list mandate proposals for the electoral campaign and to carry out the student council election itself. Some schools choose to hold elections for representatives with each class, who, in the same way, need to present their proposals, carry out an electoral campaign and the election in each classroom, thus constituting a group formed by the elected representatives. In this practical process, led especially by tutors, all students have the opportunity to experience democratic participation through the exercise of choosing their representatives.

Thus, the electoral process of the student council in each school is one of the main activities of the project, accompanied by the systematic training of tutors and extension workers and periodic meetings of pairs/trios of extension workers with the student council members elected in each school, whose purpose is to facilitate a continuous training process for student council members for their participation in democratic school management, training that also aims to equip them with tools on topics relevant to the school environment, such as human rights, racism, sustainability and school coexistence, among others, with a view to developing their autonomy to implement proposals that meet the demands of students, which are often raised in school assemblies led by student council members.

Historically<sup>6</sup>, the implementation of the proposals of the elected representatives slates has produced improvements in the school environment, both materially – such as small renovations, improvements and optimization of school spaces – and relationally, represented by the greater integration of older students with younger ones, the creation of guided recess, the holding of reflections and debates about what they experience at school and various campaigns, among other actions. Student councils thus become privileged spaces for student participation and the construction of a sense of community, since the group process established in each council aims to form critical awareness and autonomy in children and teenagers, with a view to the common good.

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<sup>6</sup> Some results of the project can be seen in the documentary "I learned to speak" (Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWDvuEPW8Fc>) and in the book "Council student: from a university extension project to the defense of democratic management at school" (Asbahr, 2022).

Over the years, the project has also ensured the annual meeting of the Children's and Youth Forum, an activity that brings together all the Council members participating in the project to discuss a specific topic each year and hold the General Assembly of the Councils.

## **2.1 Children's and Youth Forum**

The Children's and Youth Forum is an annual project activity that mobilizes council members regarding the importance of the student movement in basic education and the transformations that can be achieved through their actions. As a result of the commitment of the entire team (tutors, extension workers, coordination and staff from the Municipal Department of Education) to the project's objectives, the event is part of Bauru's Municipal Education Week and has been in partnership with the local unit of Social Service of Commerce (SESC) since its 3rd edition, through the provision of space and support from the team of educators from this institution.

Over the course of these 13 years of the project, the Forum has worked on several themes with Council members, such as the school curriculum, cultural content in the science and literature dyad, the role of school in human development, the Hip Hop culture and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this large meeting, through activities related to the Forum's central theme, council students members have the opportunity to interact with peers from other schools, exchange experiences regarding their performance and the achievements of their student council and discuss the difficulties in implementing student participation in their school reality.

In 2025, the theme of the XII Children and Youth Forum was "Student Councils: stories that emancipate" and the program focused on recovering the importance of participation in the student movement from basic education, in order to enable councils members to, based on reports from former councils members and members of the university's Academic Centers, deepen their understanding and strengthen their commitment as Council.

Furthermore, the theme of school coexistence and collectivity was a central element of the activities – workshops, discussion groups, collaborative games, theatrical presentation – and debates of this year's Forum, something that has already been discussed in the training process of tutors and extension workers and worked with the students of each school.

In addition to the expanded repertoire that the Forum provides to Council supporters, the event, which takes place over a day and a half, culminates in a large General Assembly with all Council members, a moment when the main demands of the participating municipal schools are raised. This is a rich activity that aims to encourage students to think about their school's needs and discuss with their pairs, in order to identify the proposals that each student considers as a priority for them.

The result of these debates in small groups materializes in the presentation of this survey at the General Assembly, which subsequently constitutes a Charter from the School Councils of Bauru's municipal schools with proposals discussed and voted on at the Forum. This document is sent to the Municipal Department of Education and the mayor, who are responsible for providing formal feedback to the students.

It is worth to highlight that, over the last few years, there has been a significant movement on the part of the Municipal Department of Education to meet with representatives of the student councils of each school in order to address the needs presented in the Charter, both in terms of resolving some of the demands raised and providing plausible justifications for not addressing others. This demonstrates the Department's commitment to the project and respect for the activities of the student councils.

The General Assembly that occurs annually at the Children and Youth Forum also intend to serve as a model to be replicated in each school, since it is a fundamental part of the process of democratic participation of students in school management.

## **2.2 School assembly as a training activity**

An Assembly refers to “any type of meeting of several people to discuss or deliberate on common matters” (Bobbio, 1998, p.60), therefore, school



assemblies are a decisive tool for students participation in decisions involving the school community.

Held in different ways, school assemblies should constitute a space for dialogue regarding what school members understand as relevant to the school community, so that students have a voice in this process of identifying, voting and forwarding requires.

According to Araújo (2015), there are several types of assemblies such as class assemblies, school assemblies, teacher assemblies and forums. Under the leadership of the school's members, each school can choose to hold an assembly in each class to address specific issues for each class, favouring, for example, the resolution of everyday conflicts and/or carry it out as a school activity, a moment when all school members can come together to collectively discuss issues that go beyond the scope of the classroom.

In any case, studies on student assemblies (Araújo, 2015; Saraiva and Monte, 2020) point to the importance of periodicity in holding assemblies. In addition to mobilizing the school community and even to guarantee it, the establishment of a calendar of school assemblies is, according to Araújo (2015), fundamental for effective democracy participation. Moreover, since the development of specifically human capabilities happen through activity (Leontiev, 2021), we defend that regular assemblies provide opportunities for students to learn, for example, how to express their opinions, argue logically about their interests, and, at the same time, negotiate priorities by putting themselves in the place of others, as well as to commit to collective changes that benefit the school community. In other words, assemblies are space privileged to learn about participatory democracy and coexistence in practice.

However, this type of participation is not common in our society, where representative democracy prevails and, often “the desires or needs of the people are ignored or placed in the background by those who exercise representation” (Saraiva and Monte, 2022, p. 168), culminating in an authoritarian and antidemocratic culture that unfortunately is also present in schools to some extent.



Thus, in the specific case of the student council in Bauru's municipal schools, we believe that this is still an aspect of the council's activities that needs to be improved. Considering that the project's relevance lies in the theoretical and practical contributions of the Public University to strengthening children's and youth collectives in democratic management, we continue to build ways to strengthen this activity through training processes, especially with school management and tutors, with a view to the desired transformation of the school reality/actuality and citizen participation inside and outside the school.

### **3. Research data: “Learning to participate and participating to learn: student council, Collective and Student Activity”**

In this section we will present part of the results of a doctoral research<sup>7</sup> (Santos, 2025), with the same title as this item, which followed, over the course of an academic year, the management of a student council in a public elementary school (early years). Based on Historical-Cultural Psychology, the research try to understand the role of children's participation in the students council for the formation of study activity, analyzing how the experience of this joint and meaningful activity can generate a reorganization of the motivational structure and the child's relationship with the school.

Besides the participant observation in student council activities in classrooms, initial and final interviews were conducted with six 4th year student council members, their respective teachers, and the main and substitute tutors, who are references to the student council.

In this article we will focus on the results found in the second analysis of the thesis, entitled “Collectivity, friendship, and belonging as the basis of study activity”, and we will seek to articulate it with the dimension of school coexistence.

We take a stand that the quality of social relationships experienced at school is a fundamental condition for learning and that the formation of a true collective,

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<sup>7</sup> Authorized under CAAE (Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation) N° 64394722.6.0000.53.98. In order to preserve the identity of the research participants, the names used in the article are fictitious.

understood, with Pistrak (2005), as a group united by shared interests of which they are aware, constitutes the basis for the development not only of democratic participation, but of the study activity itself.

We maintain that thinking about socialization based on the collective, which reinforces democratic management and student participation, has a potentially transformative character for an education that focus on overcome competitive and individualistic values, hegemonic in psychological development in neoliberal contexts (Mesquita, 2018), and can significantly contribute to improving school coexistence.

### **3.1. Building the Collective, Participation, and Belonging in the Student Union**

The formation of a collective is not a spontaneous process, but a social construction that occurs through joint activity and the overcoming of contradictions. The beginning of the work with the student union under study illustrates this journey, from the initial aggregation of individuals to form electoral slates to the formation of a collective identity.

The electoral process, at the school where the research was conducted, occurs as follows: 1) initially, four representatives are elected per class (only fourth- and fifth-grade students can run); 2) each representative must join forces with elected representatives from other classes (one per class), totaling four slates; 3) each slate develops its proposals, name, and campaign strategies so that all students in the school can choose and vote; 4) separate electoral processes take place in the morning and afternoon, but in the end, the slates elected in each period are unified to manage the school's student council.

The first obstacle arose in the formation of the candidate slates. As explained, to ensure broader representation, it was established that the student council needed to be composed of one representative from each class, and the slates should be mixed, uniting students from different classes. However, the students initially showed resistance to this proposal, seeking to group themselves based on

their friendships and belonging to their respective classes, that is, they sought to group themselves with the other candidates elected by their class.

This initial difficulty demonstrates that a collective body did not yet exist; what existed were distinct groups, united by pre-existing affective ties. Overcoming this situation required the mediation of the tutor, who explained the importance of the rule to guarantee the representativeness of all classes in the construction of proposals and in the management of the student council. As a solution, she suggested a method for organizing the groups among the candidates, in which, with all the candidates gathered, one student from each class was called to compose the slates in a more random way, a proposal that was well accepted by the students, demonstrating that the capacity for collective work does not arise naturally, but requires formative mediation.

After this stage, the meetings for developing proposals and campaign strategies took place, it was a moment that constituted the embryo of a genuinely collective activity, in which the students, now in new groupings, needed to negotiate and build common interests.

However, the qualitatively superior step in the formation of the collective identity occurred after the election, at the moment of unifying the winning slates from the morning and afternoon periods. The group's first task was to unify the different campaign platforms into a common plan of action, a process that required the students to overcome particular interests in view of shared objectives.

A moment that deserves a special mention in this unification process occurred at the second meeting of the student council, dedicated to defining a name for the council's leadership which would represent the new group. It was at this meeting, after several suggestions and debates, the students deliberated and unanimously choose the name "100% United". This choice is significant because it not only reflects the overcoming of the initial division, but also constitutes a process of building a common aim that would guide the group's activities. The notion of "union" became the first major conscious interest of the collective, marking the genesis of its identity.

The importance of this moment for the constitution of the meaning<sup>8</sup> of the group's activity is highlighted by the student council members themselves. Student council member Malu, in her interview at the end of the year, when asked about the most memorable moment of her participation, recalled this episode:

Ah, that's when we decided the name of the group.[...] Which was "100% united". [...] Because everyone had to help us find a really cool name for ourselves and we managed to find one. [...] If we hadn't come together, we wouldn't have been able to think better. (Interview with council member Malu, December 2023).

The council member's speech reveals that what marked her memory was not only the name itself (the product), but the deliberation process in which "everyone had to help". The personal meaning of the student council activity, for her, is articulated with the experience of joint construction.

In this sense, the appropriation of collectivity as a central value of the experience in the student council was significantly expressed by the students, such as at the end of the school year, when the student council members were asked to write letters with advice and tips to future participants.

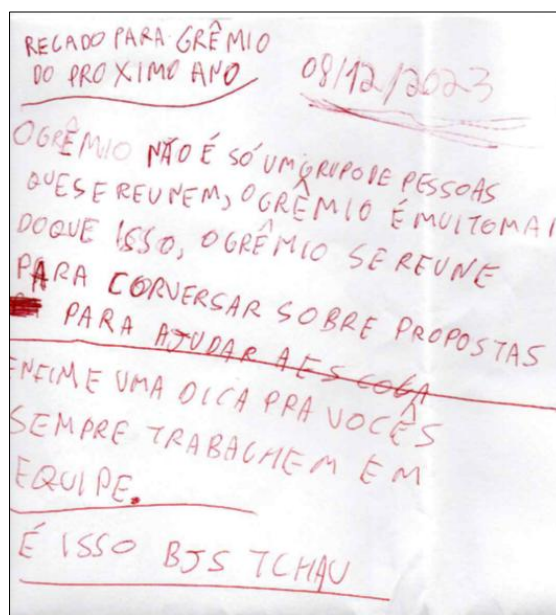
The writings of the 4th and 5th-grade students point to the crystallization of a motif that articulates participation in the student council with the practice of cooperation, with teamwork being the most frequently repeated theme. In one of the letters, a 5th-grade student advises: "One thing you could do to improve the school is to work as a team; in a team we can accomplish much more".

Another student reinforces this same idea, defining the student council based on its collective nature, and not as a simple grouping of people, as we can see in the image below:

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<sup>8</sup> We support here on the understanding of meaning proposed by Leontiev (2021) who, in summary, defines it as that which connects social meanings to the subject's real life, being the subjective relationship that the individual establishes with the world and which generates partiality in their consciousness.

Picture 19 – Letter written by a student council from 5th grade:



Source: Author's collection (12/08/2023).

What these talks demonstrate is the consolidation, at the end of the year, of a personal meaning for the joint activity developed in the student council. The participation, initially justified by the children as a way to "help the school" (the final product), begins to be articulated with the process of being and acting collectively (the activity itself). The meaning of the activity, especially for these more experienced students, lies in the experience of cooperation, deliberation, and mutual responsibility, values that are the basis for the formation of a true collective.

This appropriation of collective values directly relates to the reflections of Makarenko (2005). For the author, a true collective is not just a group of people, but a union of individuals with their own "tone" and "style", organized around a common objective that mobilizes everyone. When a student council member writes that it is necessary to "work as a team" because "as a team we

<sup>9</sup> Alternative text: The image shows a handwritten note on a sheet of unlined white paper. The text is in red. The date "12/08/2023" is written in the upper right corner. The text reads as follows: "Message to next year's student council. The student council isn't just a group of people who get together; it's much more than that. It meets to discuss proposals and to help the school. Finally, there is a tip for you to always work as a team. That's it, kisses, bye". Note: Considering this was written by a child, it was necessary to make occasional corrections to spelling errors in the transcription to improve readability while preserving the original meaning.

can accomplish much more”, or when another states that “if we hadn't been united, we wouldn't have been able to think better”, they are expressing, in their own words, the conception that the strength and effectiveness of individuals are enhanced in organized collective action.

Such accounts reflect the working logic of the student council, as well as the climate of cooperation and friendship within the collective. It is in this process that friendship and the feeling of belonging appear as fundamental elements to sustain joint action.

The construction of this collective, however is not a process free from contradictions. The student Stuart's path illustrates Student Stuart's dialectical tension between the individual and the group. On the one hand, Stuart was one of the student council members who most verbally defended the collective interest in the council meetings. On the other hand, he was the student who demonstrated the most difficulty in sharing tasks and in not centralizing the action on himself.

This contradiction manifested itself explicitly in an activity that occurred at the last meeting of the year, the “island dynamic”. In it, each student council member received a sheet of paper (the “island”) and the objective was for the entire group to cross a space (the “sea”). The solution required that, upon realizing that it would not be possible to cross the “sea” with only their “individual islands”, the students unite their sheets to create a path for everyone. The group quickly found the collective solution, which we consider to be a result of the work developed by the student council extension project throughout the year.

Only Stuart did not want to contribute with his sheet of paper or pass through the path built by the group, saying that he wanted to cross alone. After several attempts, his sheet of paper tore, and he realized that it would not be possible. At that moment, the other student council members went to help him, placing their “islands” within his reach, allowing him to make the crossing.

This episode is a small portrait of one of the challenges of coexistence. Stuart's initial attitude represents the difficulty, common in the school environment, of overcoming individualistic values (often crystallized in the actions

of students, teachers, and even in the organization of teaching), in favor of a common goal. However, the group's response is what stands out. Instead of excluding him or criticizing him for his initial refusal, his classmates acted with solidarity and helped him, even after his individual attempt failed.

This situation demonstrates how the student council also became a learning space for coexistence. The group learned to deal with internal conflict collectively, welcoming the member who disagreed, while Stuart was confronted with the limits of his individual action and the power of cooperation.

Although, on the surface, the contradiction in Stuart's actions may indicate a detriment to the formation of the collective, in essence, this phenomenon points to the complexity of the group process and its formative character in terms of school coexistence.

The construction of a cohesive collective within the student council demonstrated implications that extended to the students' relationship with the school community. The experience of friendship and unity within the group seems to have strengthened the feeling of belonging to the school, a fundamental factor for improving coexistence. School educators observed this change. Teacher Elza, for example, stated: "I think the student takes better care of the school and feels more a part of the school community, and then he sees the school with a different perspective because of the student council." Tutor Mercedes corroborates this perception:

In terms of the student's relationship, their sense of belonging at school, we notice it in everyone. No one leaves indifferent, right? [...] So, even if it's small, we notice this feeling of "what can I do to improve?" So I notice this in everyone. This difference in their relationship with the school [...]. (Interview with tutor Mercedes, July, 2023).

This strengthening of the bond with the institution and with the people who work there can directly impact motivation and the quality of interaction, even leading to more enjoyment in being at school, as in the case of student council member Edith, whose grandmother told the tutor that her granddaughter started to have "more desire to come to school" after joining the student council.



### 3.2 Collectivism and individualism beyond the student union

To broaden the scope of community and participation for all students in the school, holding a student assembly at the end of the year was an important step. The assembly constituted a political and pedagogical space where all students could experience participation, contributing to a culture of dialogue, expression of needs, and student deliberation.

The analysis of the demands raised by the students in the assembly points to an interesting perception of the conditions that affect coexistence. The points raised focused on three main areas:

1. **Infrastructure and material conditions:** the most recurring issue was the poor condition of the bathrooms, with requests for door repairs and the installation of toilet seats. Demands for improvements to the sports court, the playground, and for "air conditioning in the classrooms" also arose, indicating that taking care of the physical structure with a view to well-being is a basic condition for good coexistence.
2. **Leisure and social interaction:** the students valued the student council's activities, such as playing music during breaks and organizing the scavenger hunt, but criticized their low frequency, suggesting that they should occur more often. Proposals for the creation of new spaces and times for play, such as "having toys during recess" and "board games," demonstrate the need for moments of interaction that strengthen friendships and improve the school climate.
3. **The democratic process itself:** the students demonstrate the ability to evaluate the student council, praising the opportunity to vote, but suggesting "more time to analyze the proposals." Some students even proposed a "discussion with the students/classes about their needs" before the proposals were drafted, indicating a desire for more qualified participation that would further legitimize student representation in the management of school life.

The assembly, therefore, functioned as a space directly influenced by issues related to school life, allowing students not only to present complaints but also to propose collective solutions.

In this way, the analysis of the student council's trajectory in this school demonstrated it as a privileged space for the formation of a collective and for learning democratic coexistence. The experience of unity, friendship, and belonging, materialized in joint actions, allowed for the appropriation of values such as teamwork and mutual responsibility, fundamental for a more supportive school environment and oriented towards a collectivist ethic. The student assembly, in turn, presented itself as one of the ways to expand participation and dialogue throughout the school.

However, this experience of collectivity contrasts sharply with the practices that prevail in the classroom. In the analysis of the interviews with the student council members, the teachers, and the participant observation, we identified that, in the experience observed, classroom teaching has been configured as a space where individual tasks and control logics prevail, which have little to do with cooperation and solidarity.

An example of this was the practice observed in one of the classes, where the teacher had to leave the room and appointed a "student monitor" to supervise and record the behavior of her classmates during her absence. Such a strategy, by placing a child in a position of power over others, fragments the class and generates antagonistic interests, undermining the foundations for building a coexistence based on mutual responsibility and camaraderie.

The research also showed that, beyond the student council, spaces for deliberation in which students can decide on issues of daily school life are almost non-existent.

In this way, the experience in the student collective, although significant, shows that the school is a field of competing conceptions. The contradiction between the collective and cooperative logic of the student council and the more individualistic and controlling practices observed in the classroom demonstrates this reality. The student council, therefore, points to a way to the construction of

other forms of coexistence and learning, more democratic and humanizing, but it is important that this experience contributes to the development of a school culture that advances in valuing collectivity.

Thus, so that this experience does not remain isolated, it is fundamental to advocate for the expansion of pedagogical actions that, inspired by practices such as those of the student council, promote conditions for students to learn to act collectively and based on a collectivist ethic.

#### **4. Final Considerations**

Throughout this text, we have sought to demonstrate the relationships between student participation and school coexistence, listing student councils as a tool that promotes the development of listening, collaboration, organization, and joint implementation of proposals of collective interest, thus overcoming bourgeois values such as individualism and competition, which are inevitably present in the school environment, since they constitutes elements of the current mode of production of existence.

The experience of the extension project presented and, more specifically, of the research coming from this project (Santos, 2025) pointed to significant advances in the consolidation of a collectivist ethic based on the activity of the student council, which, contradictorily, is confronted with a school culture that is still autocratic and adult-centered. This indicates the need to continue investing in this formative process for students, at the same time the conscious assumptions of the purposes of the student council by the management and school team presents itself as a challenge under construction.

Given the increase in violence in, against, and by the school (Souza, Fodra and Monarca White, 2025; Rocha and Bernardes, 2025), we believe that student councils can constitute a field of action conducive to improving school coexistence and the establishment of a collective ethic.

## Asociações Estudantiles y Convivencia Escolar: un espacio para la participación y la construcción de colectividad

### RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es establecer relaciones entre la participación estudiantil y la convivencia escolar, centrándose en el rol de los consejos estudiantiles. Se argumenta que la creación de espacios para aumentar la participación estudiantil en la escuela es clave para mejorar la convivencia escolar. La base empírica para la discusión es más de una década de experiencia en la coordinación de un proyecto de extensión enfocado en la formación de consejos estudiantiles en escuelas primarias públicas. Inicialmente, se presentará una breve descripción del funcionamiento del proyecto, centrándose en el análisis de dos acciones importantes: el Foro Infantil y Juvenil y la celebración de asambleas escolares. Posteriormente, se analizarán los datos de un proyecto de investigación doctoral desarrollado en el ámbito del proyecto, enfatizando el rol del consejo estudiantil en la formación de colectividad entre estudiantes y su consecuente impacto en la convivencia escolar. Dado el aumento de la violencia escolar, se postula que los consejos estudiantiles pueden constituir un campo de acción propicio para mejorar la convivencia escolar y el establecimiento de una ética colectiva.

**Palabras clave:** Asociación Estudiantil. Participación Estudiantil. Convivencia.

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