

**Student Unions in Elementary School, is it an option or a prescription?
Study carried out based on the Interactive-Educational Virtual Environment (IEVE)¹**

*Grêmio Estudantil no Ensino Fundamental, opção ou prescrição?
Um estudo por meio do Ambiente Virtual de Natureza Educativa – Interativa (Avnei)*

*Los consejos de alumnos en la escuela primaria, ¿una opción o una prescripción?
Un estudio realizado con el Entorno Educativo Virtual Interactivo (Avnei)*

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Abstract: This article presents reflections on the Student Unions, in a brief historical-legal overview and their prescription in the municipal teaching/education systems of the state of Tocantins. Adopting the actions developed by the Program for the Institutionalization and Management of Municipal Teaching Systems (PRISME) as an investigative scope, we sought to answer the question: to what extent have municipal education systems set up/supported student unions and their possible performance in line with the current National Education Plan (PNE)? Based on qualitative research, the data was collected and processed through an online survey of the municipal secretariats' records in the Virtual Environment of Interactive-Educational Virtual Environment (IEVE), document analysis and the use of a program that generates statistical graphs. It was found that, although essential, student unions are not one of the mechanisms provided for in the legislation to promote democratic management in the municipalities of Tocantins.

Keywords: Primary education; Student Guild; Tocantins; PRISME.

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta reflexões acerca dos Grêmios Estudantis, num breve panorama histórico-legal e sua prescrição nos sistemas municipais de ensino/educação do estado do

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Tocantins. Adotando como escopo investigativo as ações desenvolvidas pelo Programa de Institucionalização e Gestão dos Sistemas Municipais de Ensino (PRISME), buscou-se responder a questão :em que medida os sistemas municipais de ensino constituíram/apoiaram os Grêmios estudantis e sua possível atuação em consonância com o atual Plano Nacional da Educação (PNE)? Assentados no tipo de pesquisa qualitativa; a coleta e o tratamento dados ocorreram pelo levantamento on-line dos registros das secretarias municipais no Ambiente Virtual de Natureza Educativa-Interativa (Avnei), análise documental e o uso de programa gerador de gráficos estatísticos. Constatou-se, ainda que essencial, os Grêmios Estudantis não estão presentes entre os mecanismos previstos pela legislação para promover gestão democrática nos municípios tocantinenses.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Fundamental; Grêmio Estudantil; Tocantins; PRISME.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta reflexiones sobre los sindicatos de estudiantes, en un breve recorrido histórico-jurídico y su prescripción en los sistemas municipales de enseñanza/educación en el Estado de Tocantins. Adoptando como ámbito investigativo las acciones desarrolladas por el Programa de Institucionalización y Gestión de los Sistemas Educativos Municipales (PRISME), buscamos responder a la pregunta: ¿en qué medida los sistemas educativos municipales constituyeron/apoyaron a los sindicatos de estudiantes y su posible acción en línea con el Plan Nacional de Educación (PNE) actual? Según el tipo de investigación cualitativa; la recolección y procesamiento de datos ocurrió a través del levantamiento en línea de registros de departamentos municipales en el Entorno Virtual de Carácter Educativo-Interactivo (Avnei), el análisis de documentos y el uso de un programa que genera gráficos estadísticos. Se constató que, aunque esenciales, los sindicatos de estudiantes no están presentes entre los mecanismos previstos por la legislación para promover la gestión democrática en los municipios de Tocantins.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza primaria; Gremio de Estudiantes; Tocantins; PRISME.

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Introduction

The aim of the present research is to implement Student Unions at early Elementary School years. This collegiate entity represents an extremely relevant union to both achieve effective public policies and concentrate democratic management at education scope, since it encourages the debate about wishes shared by students.

The effective democratic management implementation in municipal teaching systems demands creating and reinforcing students' instances participation in school deliberations. It is not enough approaching democratic management from the perspective of electing managers, of collective development of the Political-Pedagogical Project

(PPP) and of reinforcing School Councils and similar bureaus, without fully addressing student bureaus' constitution and reinforcement.

The present research approaches the following issue by taking the National Education Plan, also known as PNE (2014-2024), as legal reference, as well as actions taken by the Program for the Institutionalization and Management of Municipal Teaching Systems (PRISME), in most municipalities in Tocantins State, to answer the following question: how did municipal teaching system form/support Student Unions and their likely compliance with nowadays PNE? In order to do so, the aim of the present study was to feature actions by Student Unions in municipal teaching/education systems in Tocantins State based on actions taken at PRISME scope, available at the Interactive-Education Virtual Environment (IEVE). It was done by identifying how municipal teaching system formed/supported Student Unions and their likely actions in compliance with PNE.

Besides the present introduction, the final considerations and the adopted references, this study is organized into four sections comprising the legal and historical fundamentals of Student Unions, as well as PRISME implementation, with emphasis on describing IEVE, the methodology adopted for data collection and interpretation, based on the analysis applied to the 19.4 strategy of PNE's target 19, which provides on Student Unions as space for democratic management at municipal scope.

Student Unions: historical and legal aspects

The history of students' movements shows a whole series of processes focused on social-struggle engagement aimed at participation in decision-making about fights to question the hegemonic domain by the State.

Students and the youth have marked their presence in Brazilian history since the Colonial times when students in Rio de Janeiro, in 1710 and 1711 resisted the city's occupation by French pirates Duclerc and Duguay-Trouin after the city was abandoned by the regular Portuguese troops. They studied at Jesuit School of Rio de Janeiro and showed their bravery, which cannot be erased from the memories of nowadays generations. (POERNER, 2004, p. 13)

It is easy to picture what was herein introduced: students resisted political impositions by showing how they acknowledged the relevance of their actions. According to Araújo (2007), students have been playing relevant role in politics to reach social changes at different moments, in different societies, throughout the human history.

Political disruption and transition scenes in the history of Brazilian education point out students' presence and actions in them.

Students' movements did not happen aside the most acute contradiction faced by the Brazilian society (and still faces); on the other hand, their renewing propositions have their own manifestation profile. Students, as they aimed to be 'revolutionary', joined a political-process learning system focused on conservation and changes. (FÁVERO, 2009, p. 18)

Students' struggles in organized movements crossed different political decision-making moments during Germany's unification against Russian authoritarian forces, against French moral standards and good manners, and against the Vietnam War, in the United States. It is common seeing youngsters in demonstrations. Most of them are pacific, but still there is a minority of young individuals who are aggressive. These youngsters fight for both better political conditions and social changes. Poerner (2004) highlights that Brazilian students, different from others, fight and protest for more "tangible and concrete" purposes, as shown over the present section.

Students always play capital part in countries facing authoritarianism, they fight, report, protest, hand out newspapers, face police troops and even carry guns. They seem to be the last front of courage and indignation in many societies. Oftentimes, they are encouraged by voluntarism and they even seem reckless. But, in many cases, this voluntarism and 'recklessness' boosts History. (ARAÚJO, 2007, p. 17)

It is possible herein observing student movements' ability to get organized. Their strength over social changes leads to outcomes seen in society, in the long run. It is not different in Brazil. Students were in important movements throughout history, and they have had significant impact on the Brazilian society.

According to Poerner (2004, p. 39), the Brazilian student "is moved by something other than just the simple anarchist spirit", it is different from students in other nations, because it is unsatisfied with the country's political conduction during authoritarian regimes. It is possible observing, therefore, that struggles were and still are held to seek a more democratic and participatory scenario, including the country's educational context.

Fávero (2009, p. 18) highlights the concern by authorities with "do not overestimating students' strength as autonomous and carriers of a project of changes linked to the social set, as well as with do not underestimate them, but to only take them as maneuver mass in service of the 'right' or of the 'left' in the country".

Students' participation in Student Unions is a milestone. Moreover, it is necessary for students to have their first contact with both the political process and the exercise of citizenship. Law n. 7.398, from November 04, 1985, is a legal milestone that provides on students' participation in students' movements.

Art. 1 – Students, at 1st and 2nd degree education, have the ensured access to Student Unions' organization as autonomous entity representative of high school students' interests, with focus on educational, cultural, civil, sports and social aims.

§ 1 – (Vetoed)

§ 2 – Student Unions' organization, functioning and activities will be set in their statutes, which must be approved in General Assemblies set by the group of students in each teaching institution, and summoned for such an end.

§ 3 – Statutes' approval and the choice of student unions' direction boards and representatives will be set by direct and secret voting by students; it must, whenever possible, follow the standards of the electoral legislation.

Art. 2 – This law is enacted at the day of its publication.

Art. 3 – Provisions to the contrary are repealed. Brasília, November 4th, 1985. (BRASIL, 1985)

Encouraging students to join this management space disregards school direction boards' wills, since it must prioritize the collective and dynamic participation of several social sectors in schools. Students in the early years of Elementary School are at a crucial stage for their identity and values' formation. Student Unions, although often associated with the most advanced teaching levels (High school and Higher education), can also play significant role at the Basic Education stage.

Law 9.069/90 – Statute of Children and Adolescents, also known as ECA – states that students have the right to get organized into students' movements, regardless of their age or Basic Education stage:

Art. 53. Children and adolescents have the right to education, with emphasis on the full development of their persons, on their preparation to exert citizenship and to be qualified to work [...]:

I – Equal conditions to access and remain at school;

II – Right to be respected by their teachers;

III – Right to argue evaluation criteria, they can appeal to upper school instances;

IV – *Right to get organized and to join students' entities* (BRASIL, 1990, authors' emphasis)

Law 9.394/96 (LDB) reinforces and corroborates students' right to join democratic management spaces:

Art. 14. Teaching systems will define the public teaching democratic management standards for Basic Education, according to their peculiarities and to the following criteria:

I – participation of education professionals in the elaboration of the school pedagogical project;

II – participation of school and local communities in school councils or in similar entities. (BRASIL, 1996)

Encouraging democratic management in education is an instrument provided on the Federal Constitution, mainly in provisions in its article 206, which was reinforced by law n. 9.394/96 (LDB) and confirmed this very principle in the National Education Plan (PNE). Thus, an effective democratic management is validated by the participation of both education professionals and local communities in school councils, as well as by incentives for students to join Student Unions.

PNE, law n. 13.005/2014, is the legal apparatus to set national education's targets and strategies by guiding and establishing principles such as making democratic education effective and participatory at all basic and higher education modalities. This apparatus regards a 10-year plan focused on strategies aimed at implementing teaching quality in schools, valuing education professionals and implementing educational policies focused on setting priority targets to improve teaching quality (BRASIL, 2014).

PNE's target 19 states that teaching institutions must

[...] ensure the conditions, within a 2-year timeframe, to make education democratic-management effective; it must be associated with technical criteria about merit and performance, and with public hearing and school community, at public school scope, to predict resources and provide technical support to the Students' Union, in order to do so. (BRASIL, 2014, p. 83).

After that said, if one wants to refer to democratic management, one must open room for a space built for students to join and discuss about school and education. PNE strategy 19.4 provides that democracy at school comes from the construction and reinforcement of students' participation in Student Unions (BRASIL, 2014). Thus, in order to implement this strategy, it is essential enhancing and setting ways for students to better understand how democracy is made, its participatory criteria and, at the same time, to develop skills that contribute to the individual and collective autonomy of students' entities.

Schmidt (2000), by addressing students' participation and organization into students' movements, point out that these movements are a space of participatory,

nationalist and democratic presence favorable to achieve structural changes in society, starting from the school scope.

Student Unions in Tocantins State have legal support by law n. 763, from June 26, 1995, which provides on the free organization of Student Unions and on other issues.

I inform that the State Congress of Tocantins State decrees, and that I enact the following law:

Art. 1. *The free organization of Student Unions as students' representative entities is ensured in public and private Elementary and High School institutions.*

Single paragraph. The expression and circulation of Student Unions' representatives will be broad, and it will cover all levels, public or private, municipal and state.

Art. 2. Student Unions' organization and functioning will be recorded in their statutes, whose elaboration is accountable for students, only.

Art. 3. Student Unions have physical space in all teaching or local institutions aimed at students' gathering in order to allow the conduction of activities focused on these entities.

Art. 4. Any interference by the State aimed at impairing or stopping the free functioning of student unions is forbidden.

Art 5. This law will be enacted at the day of its publication.

Art. 6. Provisions to the contrary are repealed.

Araguaia Palace, Palmas City, at the 26th day of June, 1995, 174th of Independence, 107th of the Republic and 7th of the State. (TOCANTINS, 1995)

The aforementioned laws (at federal and state scope) support the creation of Student Unions and students' participation in these spaces. These laws must guide and ensure the effective existence of Student Unions in schools, regardless of school principals' wills, since it can significantly help the work done by managerial teams regarding pedagogical actions in school environment.

Foundations of the National Students Union (UNE) and the early history of students' movements in Brazil

The relevance of students' movements in Brazil follows the steps of their main entity, the National Students Union, also known as UNE, which always joined the main political moments in the country, such as the fight against "Estado Novo" (*New State*), the petroleum campaign, the struggles for agrarian reform, the movements to cope with the military regime and their participation in the democratic consolidation process (ARAÚJO, 2007).

Students' movements in Brazil emerged prior to UNE's foundation, as it is known nowadays.

From the 18th century to *Estado Novo*, Brazilian students, in most cases outside well-articulated movements, have fought against foreign invasions – the first students’ demonstrations date back to 1710, when Rio de Janeiro was invaded by pirate Duclerc; there was also the demonstration pro-independence, against slavery, pro-Republic and against the dictatorship. Due to the campaigns to support Slavery Abolition and in favor of the republican regime, some of these demonstrations started getting to some degree of organization, and it has twisted their episodic profile into a more systematic activity based on discussions inside higher education institutions, on political rallies, on media propaganda. However, even after the Republic was proclaimed, students’ participation was dispersed and occasional; and it remained like that up to the 1930s. (FÁVERO, 2009, p. 23)

Based on historical records, the Brazilian students’ organization into students’ movements started in the 18th century. These movements focused on political struggles and resistance against the regime, at that time, was remarkable among Brazilian students. Thus, students’ movements are heterogeneous, because they comprise students from different Basic and Higher education modalities.

According to Poerner (2004, p. 53), “the students’ movement is the most up-to-date and organized way embodied by the youth rebellion in Brazil. Just as we understand and know it, this movement only exists from UNE’s creation, in 1937”. It was only in 1937 that this organization got to hold a well-defined structure. Based on his opinion, “UNE is the offspring of awareness about the need of organizing students’ permanent and national political participation” (POERNER, 2004, p. 119-121).

Students’ participation in students’ movements is UNE’s main function. However, most of these movements had “transitory profile”, because they would start, but they would not be able to stand for long and to reinforce themselves as social institution and movement belonging to students.

After UNE’s creation, students got organized around it, and focused on interpreting the ways of thinking not just of the students’ category, “but they held labor claims as theirs and joined several struggles for the declaration of war against Nazism and for the country’s re-democratization; this engagement shines light on the class profile of students’ mobilizations” (FÁVERO, 2009, p. 29).

The rise of youth movements in Brazil took place in early 20th century. Before that, the presence of Brazilian youngsters in the political arena could only be observed in an individual way. In 1934, there was the 1st Congress of the Worker-Student Youth, and this great event led to the foundation of the National Students Union (UNE), back in 1937. This particular event opened room for the organized action by the student

youth, mainly in college *campi*. Students left their footprints on important events witnessed in the national scenario, such as the “Petroleum is Ours” campaign, in the 1950s (SCHMIDT, 2000).

The students’ movement, since its maximum organization within UNE, is marked by ups and downs, by moments of fight, by outstanding social and political participation, and by times of “forced silence”, which was imposed by the Military Regime. This scenario forced students to act in “hiding”; however, this moment was also marked by the movement’s “reinforcement” and participatory growth during the country’s re-democratization process - it remains to present times.

About the rise of the students’ movement in Brazil, back in the 1990s, Schmidt (2000) pointed out that,

[...] at the early 1990s it seemed that the students’ movement would rise up again with all its grandeur. When no one was expecting, millions of students, *mainly the High School ones*, were on the streets, with their faces inked, claiming for ethics in politics and asking for the resignation of president Fernando Collor de Mello. Youngsters were the most viable actors for the impeachment process, which was nationally celebrated in September 1992. But this movement did not last, and the political demonstrations were episodic throughout the decade. On the other hand, youngsters remained active in social movements (Pastorals, women’s movements, landless movement, and ecological movements) and in non-governmental organizations, as well as in cultural events and movements. Fluctuation in students’ movement in the 1990s is only one facet of the complex relationship between youngsters and politics. This complexity must be better understood through the analysis of political opinions (SCHMIDT, 2000, p. 182)

Accordingly, it is noteworthy that students’ organization into students’ movements – and their local representation in school Student Unions – is a space for democratic construction, where political participation exceeds the school scope and boosts political and structural changes in society, which are encouraged by changes themselves. Students’ organization into Student Unions is a relevant instrument to clarify the revolutionary ideal, because such an organization becomes a space for diverse concepts, ideologies and “utopias” that go against the conservative profile imposed by the authoritarianism of some administrations.

Student Unions as space for democratic management

Referring to democratic management in Education and Teaching Units that provide Basic Education lies on clarifying basic concepts, such as autonomy and participation. A management space becomes democratic when it embodies a dynamics focused on breaking up with traditional management modes. It means that several school sectors must be heard and have voice in decision-making processes aimed at pedagogical, managerial and financial actions to be taken. It is worth highlighting that it is necessary hearing and giving voice to students inside school environment – mainly at early Elementary School years.

The difficulty in achieving popular participation in decision-making processes in a democracy (including the school scope) derives, not from its absence or apathy towards public businesses, but from barriers built and placed in front of them by those who want to hold decision-making monopoly (GADOTTI, 2004, p. 26)

It is impossible talking about democratic processes at school scope without approaching democracy, autonomy and participation principles. These keywords surround the whole democratic-school context and are part of all collegiate entities supported by social movements, such as Student Unions. However, situations whose management becomes a linear and unilateral process are recurrent, and only few of them are heard or consulted at the time to make decisions about any relevant matter for those in school environments. Using the management-process triad just reinforces the need of encouraging this dialectical space so it can clarify the reciprocal work by school and local community.

A democratic management at school scope is made concrete by the participation of all individuals involved in the school environment: students, servants (teachers and managers) and local community. The concept of participation points out the need of having students in local, regional and national students' movements. This topic must be introduced, systematically approached and consolidated at all Basic Education stages to help broadening the understanding about democratic and political deeds at practical terms. It is so, because

[...] one does not build a democracy without the conscious and gathered action of their citizens in public life. This preparation must take place from the actions taken by schools, which must reinforce citizenship exercise. [...] when it comes to participation, it still needs to be developed in all spaces of society, mainly in public schools. These [public schools] must reflect the interest of the school community in their management, fight for democratic

access, and seek teaching universalization and social quality for the community as a whole. Based on this historical path, democratic management is featured as the way to manage schools in a transparent way and it only happens when their actors are truly heard and can make important decisions to draw the future of these institutions. (BARBOSA, 2022, p. 40)

Pluralism is one of democracy's features. Student Unions promote and ensure it within their structures, besides being seen as spaces where students feel free to express their beliefs and opinions. Thus, divergent positions within such a diverse body are welcome and help citizens' formation.

Democracy is the sovereign will of the people in decision-making and it has participation as the effective expression of popular wishes. Within this dynamic process one must understand that electoral techniques and the political-party system are instruments for their exercise and that both are the will of the people. As for the education context, democracy rises as political-pedagogical participation. (Barbosa, 2022, p. 36)

From this very perspective, encouraging students' participation in management spaces is a challenge to the whole school team, mainly in early Elementary School years. The dynamism observed in the electoral process set for Student Unions can be a challenge faced by the school managerial team and students. The electoral process is the first contact students at Early Elementary school years have with the political environment and with implications of such a process in their peers.

Political participation and citizen practice are encouraged by awareness and by the representativeness of Student Unions as open space for debate and for the development of actions that facilitate juvenile leadership, and conscious and active citizens' formation in society. The action of Student Unions as instances representative of the will of most students is not always observable, and this collegiate is, oftentimes, only active at times of elections or only under the custody of schools' direction boards or of the State. (BARBOSA, 2022, p. 54)

As democratic space, Student Unions, which are collegiate entities institutionalized by democratic management in schools, must encourage students' participation in school actions, leadership formation and leading roles in students' medium since Basic Education (BARBOSA, 2022).

Democracy, as universal value and reciprocal practice and collaboration between groups and people, is a globalizing process that, in tending terms, must involve each individual, in ones' peak of its personality. There cannot be full democracy without democratic people to exert it. (PARO, 2000, p. 25)

An institution that focuses on democracy must have mobilizing constitutive elements that truly work as instruments to guide the actions to be developed in school environment in order to help reaching the expected goals.

The effective creation of Student Unions does not depend on elements typical of a democratic management. Student Unions' representatives must plan what would be their internal regime, and set their goals and targets. Furthermore, it is necessary organizing the elements that make this practice feasible by having open dialogues, integration opportunities and joint learning. Student Unions must not depend on a formative process involving different institutions for students to get to know their parts, to identify possibilities and to set more humanized relationships, it is also imperative to continuously assess the whole set of these actions.

This is why the present investigation aimed at the following question: how did municipal teaching systems form/support Student Unions and their likely action in compliance with nowadays PNE? The Program for Institutionalization and Management of Municipal Teaching/Education System (PRISME) and the Interactive-Educational Virtual Environment (IEVE) were adopted as empirical field to help better understanding this subject at school environment in Tocantins scope. These empirical fields will be described in the next section.

The Program for Institutionalization and Management of Municipal Teaching/Education System (PRISME) in Tocantins State and the Interactive-Educational Virtual Environment (IEVE)

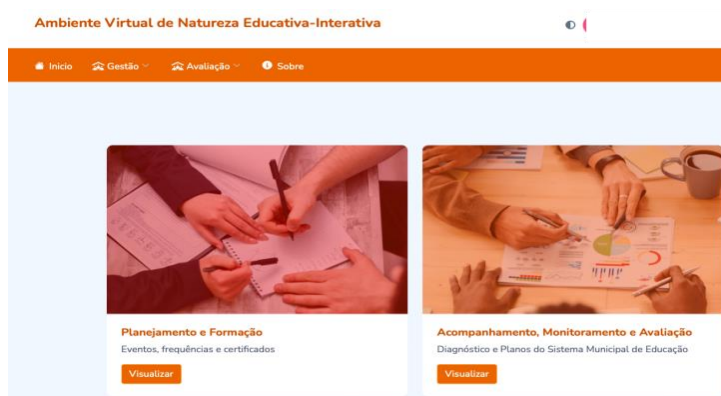
PRISME was created in 2022 to ensure the formation and construction of an IEVE to follow-up and monitor elements constituting the Municipal Education Systems in Tocantins State, also known as SME, to help reaching targets 18 and 19 of the Municipal Education Plan (PME). It aims at encouraging municipalities to build and ensure autonomy to develop active institutions and SME management to meet education obligations in combination to policies and plans elaborated by the Federation and the State (SOUSA *et al.* 2023). The program also has profiles in social networks (Facebook and Instagram) to broaden their space to outspread information and workers' digital records made by coordinators, teachers, fellows and participants.

Municipalities use PRISME to access IEVE to answer questions linked to relative mobilization associated with their institutionalization and democratic management to reach PNE's targets 18 and 19 (2014-2024).

IEVE is featured as instructive and educational interactive digital platform whose usefulness and functionality lies on visual identity, on registering options and on access to the environment of users who represent these municipalities, on descriptive tabs focused on management, on organizing activities to be carried out by participants, and on information about formation schedules focused on in-person and on-line qualification.

This environment counts on specific files, such as follow-up, monitoring and assessment (proposition to diagnose municipal plans per region), management environment (space for management team and meeting records), and a repository of standards and documents (location where documents are submitted to and made available, laws and legal instruments in municipality). Figures 1, 2 and 3 show the previously addressed descriptions.

Figure 1 – Visual identity, access/registration options and descriptive I EVE tabs



Source: I EVE (PRISME), 2023.

Figure 2 – Specific files



Source: I EVE (PRISME), 2023.

Figure 3 – Specific files



Source: IEVE (PRISME), 2023.

Methodological Trajectory and research findings: how Student Unions are approached in Municipal Education Plans in Tocantins State

If one takes into account that investigations carried out in the Education field can happen in different contexts, it is possible assuming multiple observation and analysis forms applied to practices, behaviors, teaching/learning and registration processes. Thus, the present research team agrees with Bogdan and Biklen (2010) when it comes to always having in mind the following elements to make any research: research type, approach, and data collection and analysis instruments, because “nothing is trivial, everything has the potential to provide a tip capable of establishing a more clarifying learning of our research object” (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 49).

Once the goal was to investigate how municipal teaching systems built/supported Student Unions and their likely actions in compliance with nowadays PNE, the following methodological approaches were adopted:

- a) Qualitative research aimed at assessing what contributes to rebuild and understand the very structures of the social field (in the present case, Student Unions) and the latent meaning of social practices (BODGAN; BIKLEN, 2010).
- b) Netnographic approach based on choosing a “network territory” (CRUZ, 2016; KOZINETS, 2014) and on the fact that this approach has emerged as specialized way to mine data/ethnography adjusted to demands of a connected society featured by its information flow and sharing, which is quite evidenced by PRISME actions recorded in the repository and standard files).
- c) Data collection instruments: literature reviews about this subject, access to IEVE, selection of excerpts from plans about PNE’s target 19 posted by the 139 participating municipalities, reading the selected fragments and their records.

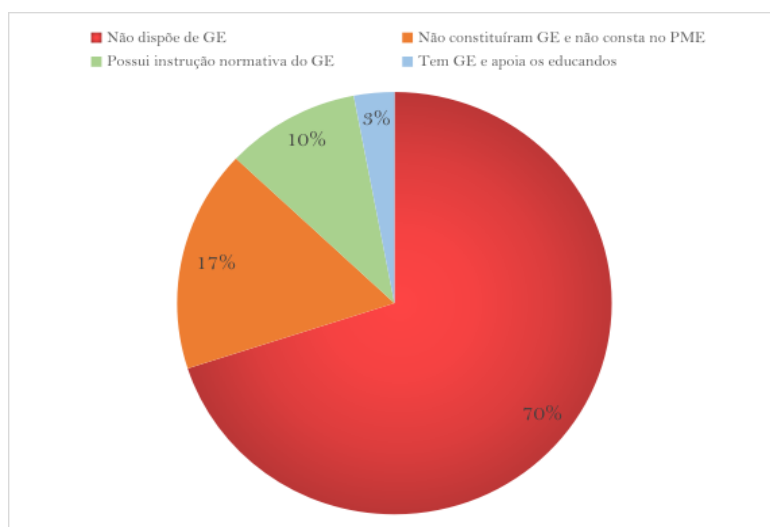
- d) Documental analysis as data-interpretation technique, because the investigated objects (in the present case, municipal plans) set a straight relationship suggested by Flick (2009) as important scientific-assessment criteria, namely: authenticity, reliability and signification. Signification will take place through the shared reading provided on nowadays PNE's target 19.4.

After elaborating the herein exposed methodological trajectory, the present research was developed by taking into account each of the elements described as a stage to be accomplished. It is essential reinforcing the understanding that the analysis applied to strategy 19.4 of nowadays PNE establishes that teaching and education networks and systems have to encourage spaces to Student Unions' construction.

After all, what do municipal education plans in Tocantins State present about Student Unions to suggest straight bound to PNE's strategy 19.4 application in order to ensure the space and conditions to their functioning? What do documents tell about their composition?

The graphic below summarizes findings pointed out by data interpretation based on the herein proposed documental analysis.

Graphic 1 – Student Unions' situation in municipalities in Tocantins State



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on PRISME data inserted in IEVE – 2023.

Data depicted in the graphic above show the need of encouraging and discussing Student Unions' implementation as mechanism to make democratic management effective in Tocantins State along with municipal teaching systems, as set in PNE's strategy 19.4.

Most municipalities in Tocantins State (70%) have stated not to have a Students Union or the policies to encourage and support their implementation. Excuses presented by some municipalities point towards the perception that it is unfeasible creating and reinforcing

Student Unions because they exclusively fulfil child education and early Elementary School years; however, based on studies developed at PRISME scope:

[...] all enrolled and frequent students in the school unit, regardless of their age or grade, can join Student Unions, according to school reality. The Student Union must be established based on its respective statute; however, it is important taking into account that this organization represents students' interests and that their members must act in educational, cultural, civil, sports and social fields. Thus, as representative entity, it is interesting that it must, at least, comprise the following positions: president, vice-president, secretary and representatives of the respective action fields often held by directors (SOUSA *et al.* 2023, p. 28)

Another presented particularity of the herein gathered data lies on the fact that 70% of municipalities joining PRISME do not make it possible creating Student Unions and do not predict this element in Municipal Education Plans elaborated based on PNE. This finding is justifiable, because PNE does not have any strategy focused on Student Unions' implementation.

The number of municipalities that have stated to support Student Unions' institutionalization corresponds to 10% of the total. These municipalities point out initiatives and actions focused on this matter; however, they do not add evidence of such an action. Finally, 3% of the total number of municipalities involved in PRISME formation that have answered the survey have a Student Union based on defined standards and on records of their actions, such as strategies recorded in PME, meeting minutes about the Student Union and its internal records.

Final Considerations

As exposed, Student Unions' implementation in Brazilian public schools is the very basis for students' community participation in schools' daily routines as provided on PNE's target 19. Implementing a Student Union in the Municipal Teaching System in Tocantins State remains a challenge, because it allows students at early Elementary School years to broaden local communities' communication and involvement.

This action is essential to the development of citizenship practices, since it allows students to autonomously join local decision-making processes, and decision-making and collective processes observed in municipalities' daily routines.

The action by students in Student Unions is ensured and guaranteed by law, as provided in target 19.4, in nowadays PNE. It forms a potential space for democratic and

participatory education. Data provided by PRISME/IEVE about municipal educational policies point out that Student Unions' implementation is a challenge to municipal education rulers, to school managers and to students, themselves.

Public education policies involving the community, mainly Basic Education students in Tocantins State, remain incipient because a set of municipalities do not show programs or projects to encourage this practice or to make it feasible, at scopes that exceed the present one.

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