

Democratic management as a political project and the municipal education system¹

Gestão democrática como projeto político e o sistema municipal de ensino

Gestión democrática como proyecto político y el sistema municipal de enseñanza

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Abstract: The article aims to analyze, at the interface with the idea of socialization of political participation, institutional conditions of participation established by municipal education systems. This documental study focused on the legislation of cities in Santa Catarina with their own education systems. The results allow us to observe the prevalence of a sense of participation as presence and autonomy as freedom of organization. In the face of a set of conditions that tends towards the minimum, disfavoring the socialization of political participation, it concludes that the outline of democratic education management, as a political project in the researched education systems, is both a challenge and a reason for the struggle for democratization.

Keywords: Education democratic management; Municipal education system; Socialization of political participation; Participation spaces.

Resumo: O artigo tem por objetivo analisar, na interface com a ideia de socialização da participação política, condições institucionais de participação estabelecidas por sistemas municipais de ensino. Serve-se de pesquisa documental, cujo exame incidiu em legislação de municípios de Santa Catarina com sistemas de ensino próprios. Os resultados possibilitam constatar a prevalência de um sentido de participação como presença e de autonomia como liberdade de organização. Diante de um quadro de condições que tende ao mínimo, desfavorecendo a socialização da participação política, conclui que o delineamento da gestão democrática da educação, enquanto projeto político nos sistemas de ensino pesquisados, é tanto um desafio quanto uma razão de luta pela democratização.

Palavras-chave: Gestão democrática da educação; Sistema municipal de ensino; Socialização da participação política; Espaços de participação.

Resumen: El artículo tiene por objetivo analizar, en la interfaz con la idea de socialización de la participación política, condiciones institucionales de participación establecidas por sistemas municipales de enseñanza. Se sirve de investigación documental, cuyo examen incidió en legislación de municipios de Santa Catarina con sistemas de enseñanza propios. Los resultados posibilitan constatar la prevalencia de un sentido de participación como presencia y de autonomía como libertad de organización.

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Delante de un cuadro de condiciones que tiende al mínimo, perjudicando la socialización de la participación política, concluye que el delineamiento de la gestión democrática de la educación, como proyecto político en los sistemas de enseñanza investigados, es tanto un desafío cuanto una razón de lucha por la democratización.

Palabras clave: Gestión democrática de la educación. Sistema municipal de enseñanza. Socialización de la participación política. Espacios de participación.

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Introduction

A foray into the subject of democratic educational management, as a political project³, requires, in our opinion, placing it in the context of educational policies. In the field of practice, the reasons supporting this understanding are anchored in justifications such as the one put forward by Bordignon and Gracindo (2006, p. 148), when they state that "there is a very strong link between them, because management transforms educational goals and objectives into actions, giving concrete form to the directions set by policies." However, it should be remembered that in a specific social formation, the determination of educational policy is due to the stage of development of the productive forces, of the relations of production (NEVES, 2007). It's also worth remembering that education policy and management are disputed fields, an emblematic example of which occurred in the 1980s, in the action of the movements for the democratization of the country, in the face of the clash between different educational proposals. The prevalence of aspects consistent with one interest or another will therefore be related to the correlation of forces taking place.

Once the possibility of the meaning that educational policy can take on the present is understood, at the cutting edge, school education is coated with the same possibility: of reproducing the social relations of production, "of subordinating the social function of education in a controlled way to meet the demands of capital" (FRIGOTTO, 2003, p. 26) or their transformation, since we are dealing, as Ponce (2010) points out, with educational goals that are no longer implicit in the overall structure of the community

Therefore, the definition of educational policy, which we understand as the result of "the economic and ethical-political repercussions of the productive applications of science in the work process under the machine system" (NEVES, 2007, p. 208) and which alters the way society is

³ Here it is understood as a set of values that gives meaning to and guides political action.

organized, the social relations of production, the concept of man, work and education, is subjected to a complex set of determinations, including the relationships between science and labor, and the demands of the working class for the socialization of power (NEVES, 2007). This is why it is possible to say, as Neves (2007) points out, that the development of educational systems in contemporary times occurs from the industrialism-democracy binomial, a binomial that is taken differently from the point of view of capital and labor. While in the former it translates into expanded reproduction and the production of consensus around a world view that is in line with capital, in the latter, the binomial translates into the possibility of transforming social relations of production, thus, as a technical and ethical-political possibility. Consequently, in order to think about the definition of educational policy - within it, the management of education - it is necessary to analyze the elements that make up this range of determinations.

Consistent with this understanding, in this study we focus on one of these elements, in view of a specific circumstance: the socialization of political participation, taken at the interface with the organization of municipal education systems and, within them, with the institutionalized spaces for participation aimed at the democratic management of public education. In this sense, bearing in mind Gramsci's concept of an expanded state, the idea of the socialization of political participation (COUTINHO, 1979, 2008)⁴, in the sense of broadening the participation of the masses - mass struggle - is taken here in association with the struggle in the institutional field. But, in doing so, we do not lose sight of the limitations imposed on the spaces for the socialization of politics by socio-economic conditions, which result, as is well known, in impossibilities for the processing of the socialization of political decision-making power (PAULO NETTO, 1990).

The institutional dimension that we are dealing with here, at the level of the municipal education system, takes into account the fact that, in Brazil, it is up to the education systems - states, municipalities and the Federal District - to define the rules for the democratic management of public education in basic education. This includes establishing spaces and mechanisms for participation. Therefore, the issue of socializing political participation is joined by options in the institutional field, related to spaces and mechanisms for participation. In other words, definitions of the rules of the "game" regarding participation, the definition of who participates and decision-making processes.

⁴ It is worth noting that, in the expanded state, the "[...] state functions of hegemony or consensus and of domination or coercion, exist in any form of modern state; but whether a state is less coercive and more consensual (or imposes itself less through domination and more through hegemony), or vice versa, will depend above all on the relative degree of autonomy of the spheres, as well as the predominance in the state in question of the apparatuses belonging to one or the other. And this predominance, in turn, depends not only on the degree of socialization of politics achieved by the society in question, but also on the correlation of forces between the classes vying for 'supremacy'." (COUTINHO, 2008, p. 57).

The aim of this paper is therefore to analyse the institutional conditions for participation established by municipal education systems, at the interface with the idea of the socialization of political participation. To this end, it uses the results of documentary research on the principles of democratic management and spaces and mechanisms for participation in municipal education systems in Santa Catarina organized until 2023, obtained by examining the legislation of the respective municipalities.

The article is organized into three sections. In the first of these, we address the subject of democratic management of public education in Brazil as a historical construction and revisit aspects of its configuration at the regulatory level, in a field of disputes, connecting this field to the regulatory action due to municipal education systems. Next, in order to support an analysis of institutional conditions in municipal systems in Santa Catarina and the issue of socialization of political participation, we present and examine data from the research carried out. Finally, in the last section, the concluding remarks are made.

Democratic management of public education: a historical construction

A quick revisit to the historical and political milestones of the 1980s - a concrete social formation - invites us to highlight the criticism of the economic situation in which the country found itself, resulting from problems that were not only poorly diagnosed, but also poorly resolved by the military government. As well known, despite the defeat of the "Diretas Já" movement, the hope for democratization persisted and the flag of change became the emblem of those mobilized.

At the same time, a critical movement was growing in the country calling for changes in the education system, including proposals for education put forward by opposition parties, as well as by the newly created scientific and trade union associations in the area. Noteworthy examples include the National Association for Post Graduate Studies and Research in Education (Anped), the National Association of Higher Education Teachers (Andes) and the National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE). Their role was fundamental in the fight to defend rights in the constituent process.

In defence of the eradication of illiteracy and the universalization of public schools, i.e., universal, free and quality public education (NEVES, 2002), the list of changes demanded included improving the quality of education, valuing and qualifying its professionals, increasing resources and using them exclusively for public schools, expanding compulsory education and democratizing educational management (SHIROMA; MORAES;

EVANGELISTA, 2007). In the latter case, it was a case of defending the democratization of the educational system's administrative bodies, ensuring the transparency of their actions, as well as defending the administrative and pedagogical decentralization, the participation of society, the direct election of school managers, the installation of education collegiate bodies, among other aspects.

The Goiânia Charter, born out of the IV Brazilian Education Conference (CBE) held in 1986, carried principles dear to the movement. Its dissemination also played the role of advocating for the inclusion of these principles in the constitutional text, then under development. According to Xavier (2003), in addition to demonstrating unity in mobilizing for the democratization of public education, the Charter was also an instrument for expressing the need to respond to the serious problems facing education in Brazil. In other words, it was a double challenge for educators: "to increase their spheres of action without, however, neglecting to build a minimum consensus around general principles and common axes capable of uniting the permanent struggle for Education for Democracy" (XAVIER, 2003, p. 26).

With regard to the management of education, seen as one of the levels at which democratization mechanisms must be put in place, it is worth highlighting two of the Charter's principles:

19. The state must guarantee civil society control over the implementation of education policy at all levels (federal and municipal), through democratically constituted collegiate bodies;

20. The state shall ensure democratic forms of participation and mechanisms that guarantee compliance with and effective social control of its obligations regarding free, high-quality public education at all levels of education.

Luiz Antonio Cunha (1986), at the opening conference of the IV CBE, described the perspective of democratic education as being "exercised by the interested parties, either indirectly, through the intermediation of the State (which we need to make democratic), or indirectly, through the principles of representation and collegiate administration." (p. 3). And what was the result of the demand for democratic management?

Having been echoed in the constituent process of 1987 - which took place with the important protagonism of the educators movement, identified by the National Forum in Defense of Public Schools (FNDEP) - and resulting from an intense process of negotiations in that sphere, the legal basis given to the matter found its place in the Federal Constitution of 1988, more precisely in art. 206, subsection VI, which establishes the principle of *democratic management of public education, in the form of the law*. (NARDI, 2016, p. 22).

It should be noted, however, that the scope of the principle was diminished during the legislative process, given the correlation of forces at the time, especially by the action of a supra-party group (*Centrão*). This is because, as Tavares (2003) comments, the negotiations led to the principle being restricted to public schools, as opposed to being taken in a general sense, so that it was a principle of "democratization of access and permanence in schools and management of education with the participation of teachers, students, staff and community representatives." (p. 28). Clearly, "repairs" like this demonstrate the fact that the democracy assumed and defended by liberalism is, at the same time, reduced and minimized by it, impoverished in its determinations, in other words, "conceiving it in a clearly reductive way". (COUTINHO, 2002).

Taking into account circumstances such as these, there is evidence of advances, but also limitations, in the content of the Federal Constitution approved in 1988. On one hand, the text covered aspects that had been demanded under the banner of educational change in the country; on the other, it also remained silent on certain issues, given the dispute that was taking place over different education projects for Brazil. It is in this context of dispute that the issue of democratic management was placed, given that this was a process - the Constituent Assembly - "of mobilizations and counter-mobilizations." (BEHRING, 2008, p. 143).

The debates that took place on the subject during the legislative process revealed the dissonance that existed regarding the meaning given to it (ADRIÃO; CAMARGO, 2007). The active presence of the National Forum in Defense of Public Schools in the constituent assembly echoed the defense of the right of parents, students and the local community to participate in the definition of public educational policies. The assumption of the segment represented by the Forum concerned the centrality of training citizens to fully exercise their role and to build a participatory and egalitarian society, which is why the democratic experience at school is a fundamental aspect. There was therefore a need for participatory management spaces and mechanisms within schools, as well as in the education systems to which they are linked.

In clear contrast to this perspective of democratizing management, another segment, markedly made up of education entrepreneurs, and therefore imbued with the defence of private interests, opposed that formulation, advocating for a more delimited interpretation: understanding the possibility of families and educators being able to collaborate in school management. In Mendonça's (2000, p. 99) summary, these were notably demands from two different vectors:

[...] the vector centered on concerns with the social and political meaning of education, with the achievement of a quality public school open to all and primarily focused on the non-dominant layers; and the vector centered on corporate and economic concerns, which manifested more concretely in teacher strikes (MENDONÇA, 2000, p. 99).

Although the committee responsible chose the definition defended by the Forum for the content of the preliminary draft of the Constitution, this formulation would be altered in a plenary vote, by an amendment from the conservative wing of Congress, which would impose a more restrictive content on the subject, making it a partial achievement (ADRIÃO; CAMARGO, 2007), as happened with the document as a whole, with advances in some aspects and the preservation of conservative traits (BEHRING, 2008).

The principle would be approved with the following wording: "Art. 206 - [...] VI - democratic management of public education, in the form of the law;". "Firstly, the adjective 'public' was added to the word education, excluding the extension of democratic management to private education. Secondly, the generic expression 'in the form of the law' delegated its enforceability to complementary legislation." (ADRIÃO; CAMARGO, 2007, p. 67). In other words, there is a lack of clarity regarding how the principle will be materialized, with the definition depending on interpretations that may prove not only ambiguous but, above all, biased. Depending on the political and practical implications, the detailed specification of the provision can come into conflict with certain interests.

It is worth mentioning, for an analysis of outcomes as described, that this was a time when, alongside the mobilization advocating for political, economic, and social changes, Brazil was opening itself to the global capital. The country was deeply marked by years of stagnation generated by the military regime and served as the stage for the shaping of the neoliberal sense of capitalist structural adjustment that would unfold in the subsequent decade (BEHRING, 2008). It is also worth saying, based on Wood (2010), that in such contexts - under economic liberalism - civil society efforts are made to minimize the harmful effects of capital, but they are often fragmented and sectorized. This leads to a loss of specificity in concepts such as democracy and freedom, so that those efforts, under those conditions, end up favoring capitalist ideals. Remember:

if the basic principles of liberalism predate capitalism, what makes it possible to identify *democracy* with liberalism is capitalism itself. The idea of "liberal democracy" only became thinkable [...] with the emergence of capitalist social property relations. Capitalism has made it possible to *redefine* democracy and reduce it to liberalism (WOOD, 2010, p. 201, emphasis added).

The author adds that "liberal democracy leaves untouched the whole new sphere of domination and coercion created by capitalism, its transfer of substantial powers from the state to civil society, to private society and the pressures of the market." (WOOD, 2010, p. 201). After all, as the author reminds us, it is the separation between the economic and the political in capitalism that makes it possible to shape the current conception and practice of democracy. However, even if the rule of capital triggers mechanisms that limit people's participation, referring to capital's constant dependence on the support provided by national states, Wood (2006) points out that real democratic forces, inside or outside the state, can make a real difference.

Returning to the constitutional provision, it must be said that even in the face of the unpredictability that has surrounded and, to a large extent, continues to surround the principle of democratic management of public education, its introduction in a constitutional text was a historic and unprecedented achievement. As a principle, it translates into a fundamental value of the legal order and cannot be neglected. The challenge remains to ensure that its regulation, at the infra constitutional level, does not result in a weakening of the conditions for the concrete practice of this commandment.

Before addressing the role of education systems in the aforementioned regulation - in this study we will focus on municipalities - a mention of the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDBEN) is in order, as it contains some detail on the previously mentioned principle. In fact, without neglecting the fact that the process of drafting and deliberating on the text of the LDBEN was also a stage for disputes, the approved text deals with the issue by first reiterating the principle of democratic management of public education, adding the words "under the terms of this law and the legislation of the education systems."⁵ (Art. 3, VIII). Following are articles 14 and 15, dealing with the responsibility of educational systems to respectively establish norms for democratic management of public education in basic⁶ education and ensure progressive levels of pedagogical and administrative autonomy as well as financial management for schools. In addition, Article 12 states that schools are responsible for drawing up and implementing their pedagogical proposals. In general, according to Paro (2007), there have been no structural changes in the way power and authority are distributed.

⁵ This last passage has been modified by the National Congress in 2023, becoming the "legislation of the respective States and Municipalities and the Federal District (BRASIL, 2023).

⁶ Again, in 2023 there were changes to part of the wording and some additions. These basically apply the inclusion of school council forums and details of the composition of these and the school councils themselves (BRASIL, 2023).

It is worth remembering that the time of the deliberations around the LDBEN was close to the time of the neoliberal policies in the country, which, as well known, deviated from the purposes of the Constitution in order to better converge politically and ideologically with the interests of capital. For this reason, the LDBEN itself also mirrors this circumstance, it is an expression of the correlation of forces determined by the structural and conjunctural changes (SAVIANI, 1997) that took place in that context.

Now that the new LDBEN is in force, another significant development in the national regulatory field regarding the issue of democratic management can be attributed to the approval of the current National Education Plan (PNE) - Law n. 13.005, of June 25, 2014. The law established that states, the Federal District and municipalities should regulate the democratic management of public education through specific laws within two years from the federal law's approval, i.e. by July 2016. In parallel with the progress of the bill addressing the National Education Plan (PNE), initiatives in the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate sought to make progress on regulating the democratic management of public education in basic education in the post-LDBEN period, whether for progressive or conservative and regressive purposes. In this regard, Nardi (2016, p. 39) pointed out that,

from a broad and distinct set of proposals that aimed to define rules for the dynamics of the principle of democratic management of public education over two decades - showing the connections, appropriations and meanings intended for the subject in the LDBEN - we see a change in the scenario, especially with the new PNE coming into force. Although we can't say that the different intentions previously informed by the various proposals to alter and add to the LDBEN's provisions have been dissipated, it seems possible to admit that, to a certain extent, some proposals have been met by the PNE, just as it seems to have set references that have imposed certain limits on certain intentions.

In the PNE, in addition to the command to states, the Federal District and municipalities to regulate the democratic management of public education, through the adoption of specific laws, as well as adjustments to legislation already in place, where appropriate (art. 9). Meta 19 calls for the implementation of this management perspective to be associated with "technical criteria of merit and performance and public consultation with the school community."⁷ (BRAZIL, 2014).

⁷ The association of these criteria with the realization of democratic management refers to people, more precisely to the choice of school managers, although it is possible to suppose that they could also apply to the choice of representatives of segments to act in institutional spaces of participation, although it is less likely in this case. It is worth remembering that in the bill submitted to the Chamber of Deputies (PL 8.035/ 2010), the wording proposed by the government for Target 19 was "To guarantee, by means of a specific law approved within the scope of the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities, the commissioned appointment of school

Having set out the pieces of the situation- a constitutional principle and the need for it to be regulated at the level of education systems - and the debate proposed here on the democratic management of public education as a political project of municipal education systems, we turn our attention to the concrete institutional conditions defined by these systems, organized based on the current LDBEN, more precisely, the spaces for participation aimed at the democratic management of public education.

The understanding that guides the reading of these conditions is that the struggle for the socialization of political participation also involves the institutional field, through participation in the spaces and mechanisms of the education systems, although it is not detached from the larger project of social life as a whole. To do this, we used data on Santa Catarina's municipal education systems, obtained through an investigative process, based on documents⁸, carried out between 2015 and 2016, with updates from 2022 to July 2023.⁹

Socialization of political participation: institutional conditions in municipal education systems in Santa Catarina

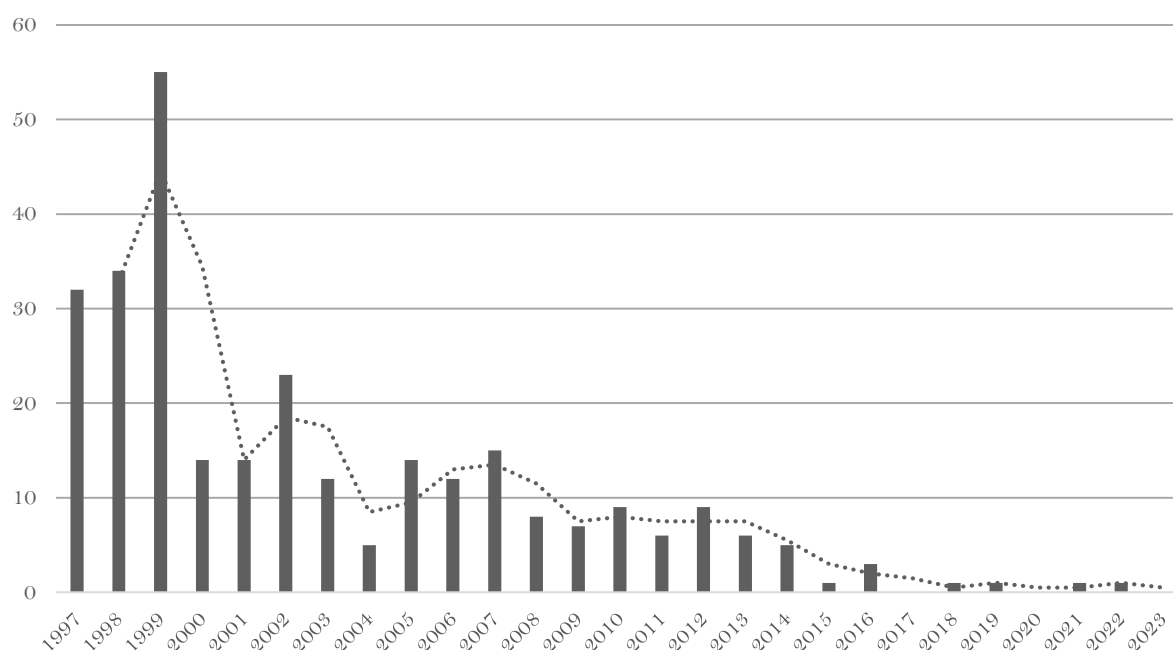
We begin this section with a brief overview of the organization of municipal education systems in Santa Catarina in the post-LDBEN period. Data from the aforementioned surveys show that, from the 295 municipalities, 288 have their own organized education systems (97.6%). The temporality of the organization of these systems is indicative of the existence of basically three stages, as illustrated in Graph 1.

principals linked to technical criteria of merit and performance and to the participation of the school community." (BRAZIL, 2010).

⁸ The documentary research focused on the Municipal Organic Law, the municipal education system law and other legal documents that deal with public education management and institutionalized spaces and mechanisms for participation.

⁹ They derive from the state stage of a nationwide research network - Rede Mapa - on the democratic management of public education in municipal education systems, which was supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq - Brazil.

Graph 1 - Chronology of the institutionalization of municipal education systems in Santa Catarina - 1997 to 2023

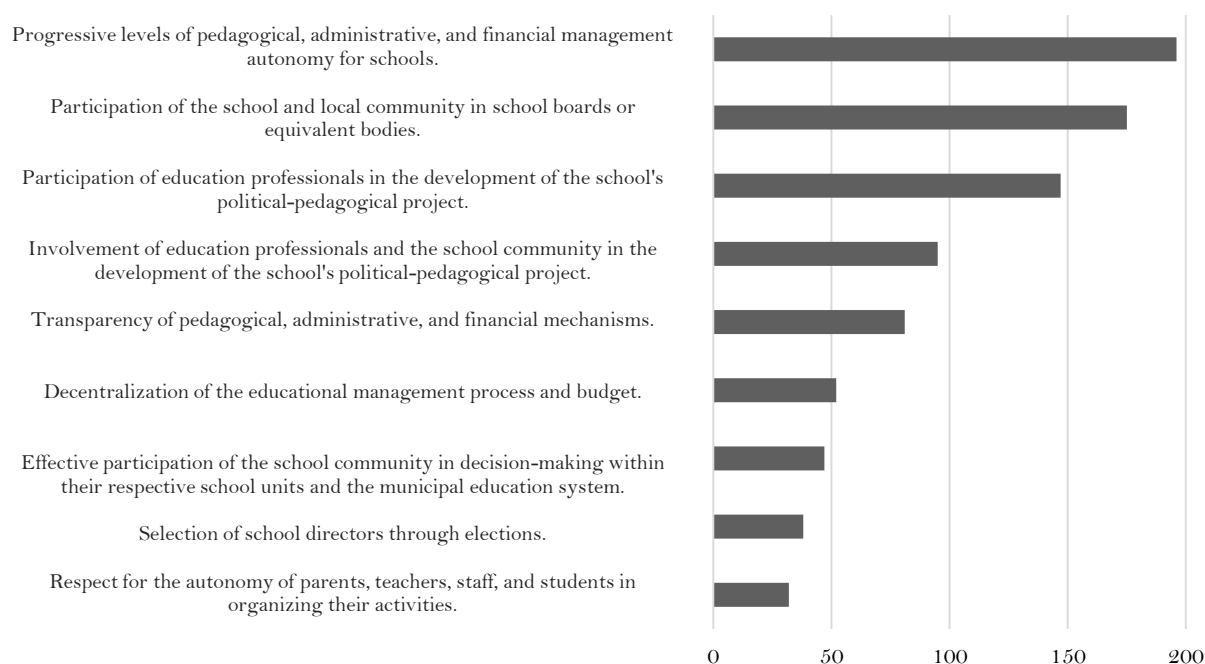


Source: Municipal legislation – Pesquisa Rede Mapa e atualização (2023).

Graph 1 shows that the first stage is bounded to the period from 1997 to 1999, when 42% of the systems were organized. The second stage covers the period from 2000 to 2014, when 55% of the systems were organized. This period is characterized by continuity in organization, but with a lower annual frequency compared to the first stage, and also by variable impulses and drops in annual quantitative, although 68% of the total for the period is concentrated in the first eight years of this stage. Finally, a third stage can be attributed to the period starting in 2015, when just under 3% of the organized systems in Santa Catarina were created.

In this universe of municipal education systems in Santa Catarina, considering the task of the respective governments to regulate the democratic management of public education - the composition of a political project - what principles are formally declared? In the extend of these, given their nature of also guiding conditions for the practice of this management, what spaces and mechanisms of participation are evident? To find answers to these questions, let's start with a picture of the nine most recurrent principles of democratic management in the documentation (between 32 and 196 mentions), as shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2 - The most frequent principles of democratic management of public education in basic education in the legislation of municipal education systems in Santa Catarina - 1997 to 2023



Source: Municipal legislation – Pesquisa Rede Mapa e atualização (2023).

Of the majority of principles identified in the legislation of Santa Catarina's municipal education systems, it is possible to identify *participation*, *autonomy* and *transparency* as the main ones, although the first two stand out. To a large extent, they themselves are involved in the other two fronts of principles illustrated in Graph 2: the decentralization of the educational management process and the budget; and the choice of school principals through elections. Taken together, we can say that these principles, when combined, are closer to the idea of distributing power. The fields of influence and the different compositions formalized by the education systems are aspects to consider in order to better gauge the political potential of the principles.

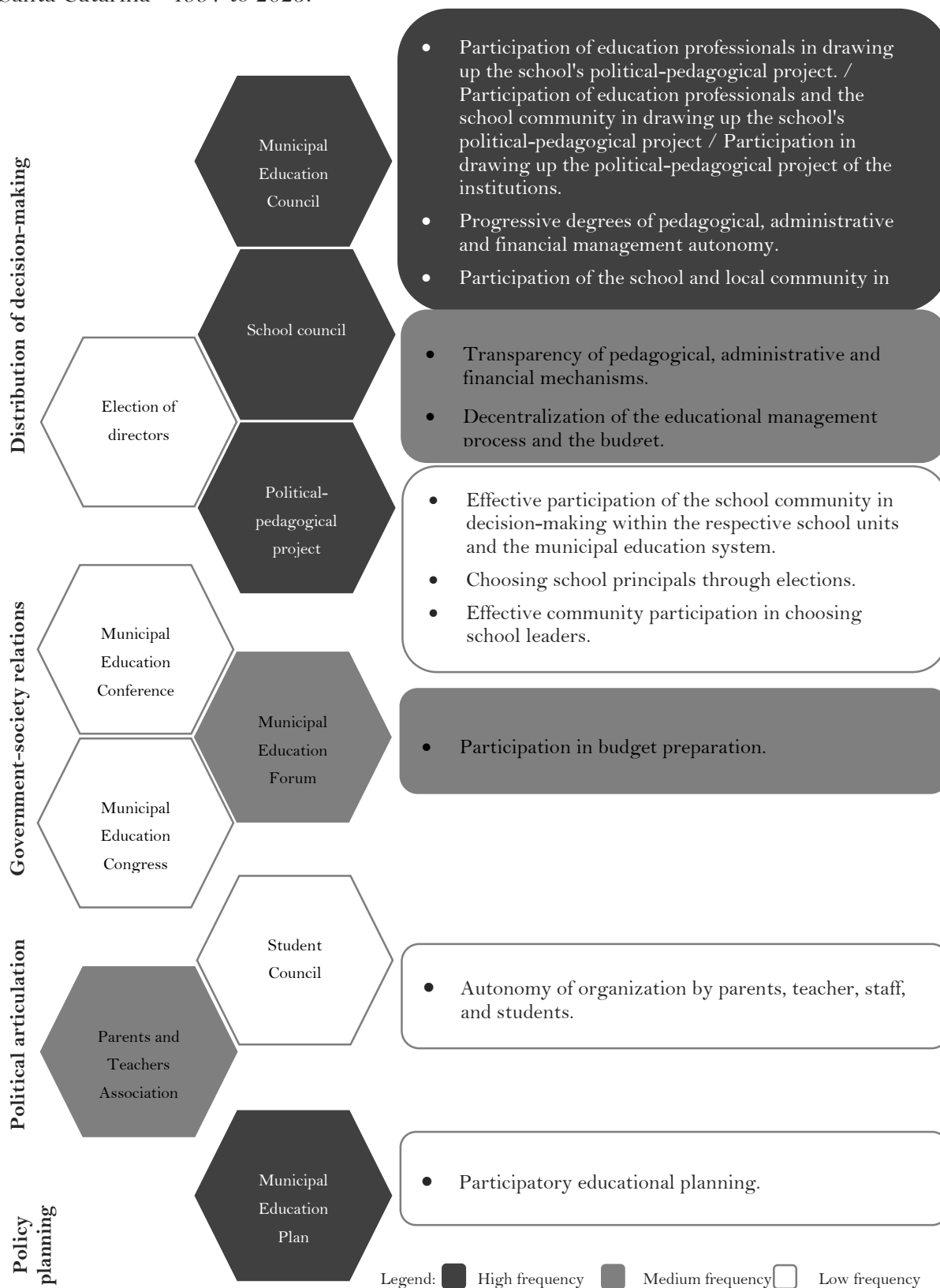
The other principles, which complete the list of 37 and are much less frequent (between one and 17 times), also highlight, in this order, *participation* (in planning, in associations and councils, in choosing leaders and representatives, in building budgets), *autonomy* (in the definition of pedagogical projects and financial management) and *freedom* (of organization by the segments of the school community), among others.

This general picture allows us to point out that the incidences of the principles pointed out here, which are commanded by the terms *participation and autonomy*, are mostly around fields or actions already established in national legislation and which basically involve

drawing up the political-pedagogical project and participating in school councils, as well as school autonomy in certain areas. Seen as a whole, the inference is that the less frequent the principles are, the more specific and innovative they are. So, although this is a diverse list of principles, few education systems take on board several of them, especially those that are innovative in political terms.

As we proposed, another aspect to investigate concerns institutionalized spaces and mechanisms for participation. Thus, also on the basis of an examination of the documents, it was possible to identify the formalization of a set of types and their frequency, as well as establishing their correlation with the principles mentioned. From this correlation, four fields of reference are pointed out (Diagram 1), which can be taken as a synthesis of this correlation.

Diagram 1 - Fields of reference and correlation between spaces and mechanisms for participation and principles of democratic management - Municipal Education Systems in Santa Catarina - 1997 to 2023.



Source: Municipal legislation – Pesquisa Rede Mapa e atualização (2023).

According to Diagram 1, the spaces and mechanisms for participation and the principles of democratic management are identified by the frequency criteria: high, when they appear in 70% or more of the municipal education systems; medium, between 30% and 69%; and low, when they occur in up to 29% of the systems. From the correlation of the spaces and mechanisms with the principles raised, based on the core aspects of each principle, it is possible to identify four fields of reference: distribution of decision-making power; relationship between government and society; political articulation; and policy planning.

The field of *distribution of decision-making power* is correlated with a set of four spaces or mechanisms for participation, three of which have a large presence in the institutional arrangements of municipal education systems, and a fourth with a low incidence. As for the guiding principles of these spaces and mechanisms, the emphasis is on *participation*, especially in the sense of access and involvement of people (education professionals, school and local communities). Principles suggesting a more direct implication of participation in decision-making processes - *decision-making*, *choice* - are much less frequent. Transparency and decentralization are added to the mix, although in these cases the political tone gives way to a more executional approach, limited to a few areas.

Demarcated by a set of three spaces for participation – Forum, Conference and Municipal Education Congress –, the reference field *between government and society* also has basis in the idea of *participation*, although in this second block the low potential for political guidance is evident, as this is just a principle, of medium frequency. The fact that two of the spaces for participation are low frequent in education systems accentuates this tendency towards an emptying of the political meaning of participation, as it extends to the institutional conditions for it.

Finally, the reference fields of *political articulation* and *policy planning* have in common a relationship with principles that are low frequent in the systems as a whole. In the first case, it refers to *autonomy* (for the association of segments of the school community), while in the second it refers to *participation* in the planning of education in the municipality, in this case, the relationship was established with the municipal education plan, an instrument that has a large presence in all of Santa Catarina's education systems.

In view of the correlation established, although it can be considered that greater or lesser coherence between spaces or mechanisms for participation and the principles of democratic management is due to different factors - from reckless attitudes to strategic choices that arise in the context of the correlation of forces and disputes, making it impossible for political decision-making to be socialized (PAULO NETTO, 1990) - the picture presented

here allows us to point out the prevalence of a sense of participation as presence, that is, *being part*, as opposed to the sense of *taking part*, acting in decisions (BORDENAVE, 1994). Some indicators of this other direction are found in a few principles, whose frequency in the set of documents is low.

The notion of *autonomy*, another valuable element to think about the political quality of decision-making processes in institutional spaces, according to the command coming from the principles that deal with it, is equally weakened in its political potential. In this case, the greatest political value of the term lies in the affirmation of the organization of segments of the school community, an organization that we understand here from the perspective of the autonomy of collective political individuals (COUTINHO, 1979), and not in the autonomy that concretely implies the distribution of power and authority (PARO, 1997), for which structural changes are necessary.

Some final notes

Focusing on the situation of the socialization of political participation (COUTINHO, 1979, 2008), conceived as an expansion of mass participation that includes struggles within the institutional field, we aim to analyze the institutional conditions of participation established by municipal education systems in a specific context – municipalities in Santa Catarina, where the organization of their own systems has been achieved by nearly all of them, with the vast majority having provided it between 1997 and 2014 – in pursuit of democratic management of public education. As mentioned above, these conditions were analyzed by examining educational policy documents, based on the principles of democratic management and the spaces and mechanisms for participation established by the systems.

By the present analysis, it is clear that the theme of *participation*, which tends towards a sense of presence or involvement, rather than a more incisive political evocation, so as to imply decision-making power, is paired with the term *autonomy*, which seems to suffer from the same limitation. In addition, the small presence of other foundations (principles) and, among those that are present, the flagrant low frequency in all education systems, are indications for us that, in the organization of these systems, conditions for democratic management have tended to be minimal, with a tendency to favor "old" conditions that end up taming those that are new.

Therefore, under the premise that the socialization of political participation implies the search for an expansion of the socialization of the spaces and processes of government of the

whole of social life, although aware of the marked contradiction in capitalist societies between the socialization of political participation and the private appropriation of power¹⁰ (COUTINHO, 2000), we understand that this clear challenge is reflected in municipal education systems, in terms of the democratic management of education as a political project. Although municipal systems are new in the current model for organizing national education, the results of the study show that the principles and conditions established in order to guide participation and decision-making continue to flirt with marks of the past, such as those that motivated historical mobilizations of Brazilian educators under the flag of building another public education in the country, with democratic management. Hence the conclusion that this struggle continues.

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¹⁰ Along with the contradiction between the socialization of labour and the private appropriation of socially produced wealth.

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