

# MENDIVE

REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

Translated from the original in Spanish

## Perceptions of principals and teachers on democratic management processes

### Percepciones de directores y profesores sobre procesos de gestión democrática

### Percepções dos diretores e dos professores sobre os processos de gestão democrática

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**Received:** October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**Approved:** March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.

#### ABSTRACT

The study carried out made it possible to diagnose the perceptions of principals and teachers about some democratic management processes in the schools of a Pedagogical Influence Zone of the municipality of Chitato in the province of Lunda-Norte in Angola. This is a mixed investigation in which bibliographic and documentary review were used as methods and interviews were applied. The theoretical references focused on democratic management. Regarding the potentialities, the diversity of experience of the professionals; the fact that all schools are close together, which facilitates the interaction of school actors; the possibilities of exchanging experiences throughout the trainings; among others. As needs, the question of meetings and training activities in the Pedagogical Influence Zone can be pointed out. They focus only on some pedagogical aspects, putting aside relevant discussions in relation to the action plans of teachers and managers, evaluative and didactic practices and new methodologies that can improve school quality, among other sections; the fact that few meetings of the school councils occur in the Pedagogical Influence Zone during the year and, in this way, contribute little to the democratic management of schools. In conclusion, the research subjects presented diverse profiles and needs and potentialities in some processes of democratic management, which form a particular representation of a Pedagogical Influence Zone of the municipality of Chitato, in the province of Lunda Norte in Angola, which cannot be widespread.

**Keywords:** democratic school management; Pedagogical Influence Zone; directors; professors.

#### RESUMEN

El estudio realizado permitió diagnosticar las percepciones de directores y profesores sobre algunos procesos de

gestión democrática en las escuelas de una Zona de Influencia Pedagógica del municipio de Chitato de la provincia de la Lunda-Norte en Angola. Se trata de una investigación mixta en la que se utilizaron como métodos la revisión bibliográfica y documental y se aplicaron entrevistas. Los referentes teóricos se centraron en la gestión democrática. En cuanto a las potencialidades se destaca en los sujetos la diversidad de experiencia de los profesionales; el hecho de que todas las escuelas estén próximas, lo que facilita la interacción de los actores escolares; las posibilidades de cambio de experiencias a lo largo de las formaciones; entre otras. Como necesidades pueden ser apuntadas: la cuestión de las reuniones y las actividades de formación en la ZIP se concentran solamente en algunos aspectos pedagógicos, arrumbando discusiones relevantes con relación a los planes de acción de docente y de gestores, las prácticas evaluativas y didácticas y nuevas metodologías que pueden mejorar la calidad escolar, entre otros apartados; el hecho de convocar a pocas reuniones de los consejos de escuelas en la Zona de Influencia Pedagógica durante el año y, de esta forma, aportar poco para la gestión democrática escolar. Como conclusión, los sujetos de la pesquisa presentaron perfiles diversos y necesidades y potencialidades en algunos procesos de la gestión democrática, que forman una representación particular de una Zona de Influencia Pedagógica del municipio del Chitato, en la provincia de la Lunda-Norte en Angola, que no puede ser generalizado.

**Palabras clave:** gestión democrática escolar; Zona de Influencia Pedagógica; directores; profesores.

#### RESUMO

O estudo foi realizado para diagnosticar as percepções dos diretores e professores sobre alguns processos de gestão democrática nas escolas numa Zona de Influência Pedagógica no

município de Chitato na província de Lunda-Norte em Angola. É uma investigação mista em que foram utilizadas como métodos a revisão bibliográfica e documental e entrevistas. As referências teóricas foram centradas na gestão democrática. Em termos de potencialidades, as disciplinas destacaram a diversidade de experiências dos profissionais; o fato de todas as escolas estarem próximas umas das outras, o que facilita a interação dos atores escolares; as possibilidades de mudança de experiências ao longo da formação; entre outras. Como as necessidades podem ser apontadas: a questão das reuniões e atividades de formação na ZIP centra-se apenas em alguns aspectos pedagógicos, deixando de lado as discussões relevantes sobre planos de ação de professores e gestores, avaliação e práticas didáticas e novas metodologias que podem melhorar a qualidade das escolas, entre outros; o fato de convocar poucas reuniões de conselhos escolares na Zona de Influência Pedagógica durante o ano e, assim, contribuir pouco para a gestão democrática das escolas. Em conclusão, os temas da investigação apresentaram diversos perfis e necessidades e potencialidades em alguns processos de gestão democrática, que formam uma representação particular de uma Zona de Influência Pedagógica do município de Chitato, na província de Lunda-Norte, em Angola, que não pode ser generalizada.

**Palavras-chave:** gestão escolar democrática; Zona de Influência Pedagógica; diretores; professores.

#### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is undergoing profound social, political, economic and cultural transformations. These transformations are native, inter alia, of the world of work and are situated within the context

of neoliberal policies. They are developing and implementing social policies, especially in the field of education.

In the Republic of Angola, transformations are present in society, in general, and in education, in particular. According to the second of the Constitution (Assembleia Nacional, 2010), Angola is a Democratic State of Law and has principles based on popular sovereignty, the rule of law, the separation of powers and interdependence of functions, national unity, pluralism of expression and political organization and representative and participatory democracy.

In the field of education in Angola, management policies and regulatory development starting from an intense process of change, substantively originated, by the rise of new social relations and the world of work, much of them mediated by the technologies that occurred at the beginning of the 21st century. In this context, the school has been a privileged institution for new learning and to guarantee the development of children and young people.

The Democratic Management (GD), according to several authors, is essential for the development of school and improving their quality (Garcia, Costa & Zanutto, 2018).

For Libâneo (2015) the democratization of public school needs to be understood as the expansion of educational opportunities, dissemination of knowledge and its critical re-elaboration and dedication of school educational practice aiming at the cultural and scientific elevation of the popular strata. In this sense, the improvement of people's lives is sought.

The Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System (Assembleia Nacional, 2016) has democratic management as a

public value defined in its principles, where all subjects included in the teaching-learning process and the school community has the right to participate in the organization and management structures, modalities and related institutions to education.

Democratic management, proposed as a condition of rapprochement between the school, parents and the community to strengthen a quality education, provides for collective channels of participation (Rodrigues Costa & Garcia, 2019), including the school council, grade council, educational project, among others. Due to its importance in public schools, democratic management in the Pedagogical Influence Zone (ZIP) of the municipality of Chitato in the province of Lunda-Norte in Angola was selected as the central theme for this article, the objective of which seeks to diagnose, in detail, the perceptions of principals and teachers about some of their processes in educational institutions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study sought to understand, through in-depth knowledge of the ZIP, the perceptions of principals and teachers about some processes of democratic management in educational institutions.

The choice of the most appropriate methodology for the problem to be analyzed is a success factor in the investigation (Coutinho, 2015). In this study, the orientation towards understanding a specific phenomenon fits with the qualitative perspective.

The qualitative researcher always seeks to achieve a complete understanding of the reality that interests him, combining his own knowledge with existing theories (Coutinho, 2015). In this research, the thematic nucleus is the

perceptions of directors and teachers about some democratic management processes, in a ZIP of the municipality of Chitato, Angola.

The use of the qualitative method in this study occurred in two different phases, but they were complementary. In these stages, evidence was collected in order to meet the specific objectives of this research.

The first phase was characterized by a documentary analysis. According to Barbato, Alves, & de Oliveira (2020), this type of research is characterized by investigating information in documents that did not receive any scientific treatment, such as reports, newspaper reports, magazines, films, recordings, photographs, among other disclosure matters.

In this context, the Basic Law of the System of Education and Higher Education, plus some law -decree and norms emitted by official bodies such as the Rules of the Schools of General Teaching, the Legal Regime of the General education Subsystem, the Methodological Guide to Support the zones of Pedagogical Influence were analyzed. Even with regard to documents, the reports of activities occurred in the school year 2019 were analyzed.

The analysis of these documents is highlighted, which aimed to broaden the understanding of the Education and Teaching System, its legal regime, the functions of its professionals, among other issues.

In the second phase of this study, the collection of data occurred in the ZIP 2 through interviews with a script beforehand established. This ZIP was selected for being one of the largest in terms of schools (seven), teachers (387) and students (13,739).

Information were processed about:

1. School: teaching modality; period and hour of operation.
2. Personal and professional information (profile): sex; age; civil status; number of children, stranded in education, time in the direction of the same school; weekly workload; initial training; participation in continuous training activities in the last two years; post-graduation and salary band.
3. Zones of Pedagogical Influences:
  - a) Composition of the ZIP;
  - b) Post-election training for members;
  - c) Disclosure to the directors' circles, in advance, of the meetings;
  - d) Dissemination of the decisions of the circle of directors to accompany the school;
  - e) Meeting pattern;
  - f) Participation in schools management;
  - g) Participation of members in meetings;
  - h) Awareness of the community (parents, students, teachers and employees) about the function of the ZIP and monitoring of the actions;
  - i) Operation;
  - j) ZIP support for management;
4. School Council:
  - a) Composition of the school council;
  - b) Post - election training for members;

- c) Disclosure to the directors, in advance, of the meetings;
  - d) Disclosure of the decisions of the grade council to accompany the school;
  - e) Meeting pattern;
  - f) Participation in school management;
  - g) Participation of members in meetings;
  - h) Awareness of the community (parents, students, teachers and employees) on the role of the school board and accompany the actions;
  - i) Operation;
  - j) Support of the school council to the management;
- 5-Educational Project:
- a) The existence of the document in the school;
  - b) Time in which it was prepared or revised;
  - c) Who participated in the preparation or review?
  - d) Knowledge by the community;
  - e) Consulting it;
  - f) By whom the document is consulted;
  - g) The existence of the plan of action;
  - h) Evaluation of the plan of action;
  - i) The document as a reference for the improvement of the school;
- j) The document as an auxiliary instrument in school management;
6. Grade Council:
- a) Who participates;
  - b) Meeting pattern;
  - c) Operation;
  - d) Council contributions;
7. School problems and management difficulties:
- a) External interference in management
  - b) Support from higher levels;
  - c) Exchange of information with directors of other schools;
  - d) Community support for management;
8. Community involvement in the school:
- a) How they would like it to be the community participation in school management;
  - b) Suggestions for the school to have an increasingly democratic management;
  - c) What the interviewees know about democratic management and school management

For the data analysis, the indications of the Grounded Theory theory (Alves, Martins, Pinho & Tobias, 2017) were used. It is a theory that is developed, inductively, from a set of data. In this sense, the approach was initially translated by the open coding of the results through their segmentation and the use of codes and descriptors. From that, the filtering technique was used, looking for qualities, similarities and

differences and creating and recreating the study categories.

## RESULTS

In this part of the work, the results of the profile of the study participants are initially presented. Subsequently, the data of the interviews are shown dealing with the management of the schools, the participation of the community, the indications of the professionals in relation to democratic management, their knowledge on the matter, the characteristics of the school council, the project education and degree council, in order to diagnose, in a detailed way, the perceptions of directors and teachers about some of their processes in educational institutions.

### Directors' data

The profile of directors ZIP 2 is formed by professionals who are aged between 37-52 years, with average age 43. It was found that the 28.6 % of these professionals had time service in the education sector that was between 9 to 12 years, the 42.8 % were over 13 years, of which 28.6 % had experience in education over 16 years.

The directors had different working hours, with 42.9 % serving 16 hours and 57.1 % working 24 hours a week. All of the professionals studied in undergraduate courses. It is also observed that all attended courses in the branch of pedagogy and 14.3 % of them had some type of specialization in Special Education.

Regarding the experiences in the management functions, two of the professionals had less than two years in the position, two more than two years, one had five and two have experience of more than six years acting in schools.

In connection with the data of democratic school management, Directors noted that there are external interference management (for example: the fact that schools receive guidance preconceived and just run, as in the case of the educational project), that there is a lack of support from higher authorities (more support of the actions by higher levels of management was expected, for example: systematic participation in meetings and monitoring of the educational project); occurring changes of information with other directors from meetings, and generally community does not support management.

Regarding the participation of the community in the school, it was present in the desire of all the principals. Of them, it was stated that the community should be "more active, with more determination in accompanying the students and in collaboration with the school" (Director A). Another professional indicated that he would like parents to follow all the actions that have been carried out in the school, in the sense that they are aware of the complexities that the school experiences (Director C).

Another subject pointed out the importance of "community participation in supporting the administration in all policies for the improvement of the school" (Director B). One of the principals stated that he believed that "it would be better if the pupil caregivers had more possibilities to participate" (Director D).

In relation to the directors' indications for a more democratic management, opinions were divided. One director pointed out that "more open management was necessary for a good democracy" (Director B). Another principal, the need for a more "elaborated management through collective construction and that through training there must be the strengthening of the school council" (Director C).

One of the directors indicated the need for greater support from everyone on the activities carried out by the school's management and, in this sense, for parents to notice and present themselves more actively to improve the functioning of the institution ( Director F).

There were still two other indications. The first related to the need for more "autonomy so that the director can choose teachers and employees" (Director A), and the second, of greater "effort to make everyone aware of development possibilities to contribute in a more creative way" (Director E).

Regarding democratic school management, the study made it clear that the principals knew about the matter. One director claimed to be a management model that obeys the principles of the participation of education professionals in the elaboration of the educational project and the participation of the school and local community in school councils (Director B).

The other professionals related the democratic school management to the processes of participation in the school: "participatory and open" (Director A); "Open management that has freedom of expression for all who are members of the board of directors" (Director D); "Democratic management, seeks union, collaboration and have a single decision" (Director F).

In this sense, it is highlighted that the directors conceived democratic management to a more active, concrete and effective participation and with a greater number of subjects. The effectiveness of participation, according to these professionals, would be linked to actions and decision-making, responsibilities, involvement and transparency.

In relation to the school council, the principals indicated that this body was made up of teachers, deputy principals, principals, parents, and other members of the local community; however, the students were never part of it. The aforementioned members participated in the training actions, previously scheduled, and the dates of their meetings and decisions taken were disclosed.

According to the participants, the school council participated more in the pedagogical management and less in the administrative management of the schools. All members attended council meetings, but deputy directors and directors were present at all meetings. The principals indicated that, for the most part, the school community knows the role of the council and follows its actions. The prompts revealed that the council works, represents the people, and is valued by everyone.

Regarding the educational project, the data indicated that the document was consulted throughout the school year, had an action plan and was monitored. Regarding the consultation, it occurred, most of the time, by the school team and by the teachers. But the evaluation happened, mainly, by the teachers of the school. In the study, it was agreed that the document was an auxiliary instrument for the improvements of the school, in the pedagogical part and in school management.

In relation to the grade council, the directors, in almost the majority, understand that the aforementioned body contributes more with pedagogical management. Among the three issues that often were part of the meetings, professionals cited the "poor school performance, achievement levels and excessive absences" (Manager A); the "little accompaniment of parents and those in charge of education, punctuality of students and hygiene of the school" (Director C); the "school performance,

excessive absences and discipline" (Director D).

As it can be verified, pedagogical matters concerning the evaluation and indiscipline of the students were the most present and predominated in the meetings of the board of the grade, which involved mostly the teachers, students and officials and, according to directors, functioned by contributing to school management.

Regarding participation, it is understood, from the interviews, the expectation of the principals that the democratic school management could have a greater number of people involved, among other issues, in the educational project and seeking to improve school quality.

#### **Data from teachers**

In the ZIP surveyed, the 63 % of teachers who were active in 2019 were males and 37 % females. Schools from Barrio Norte are highlighted, where most professionals were women, and the school Central Dundo had a numerical equality in terms of sex.

In the ZIP studied, 31.4 % of the teachers were between 25 and 30 years old, followed by 28.6 % between 37 and 42 years old, and 14.3 % between 31 and 36 years old. The analysis allows us to conclude that the teachers are mostly young; that is, 60.4 % are between 25 and 42 years old.

It was found that only the 20 % of teachers had experience in the education sector over the 16 years of service, 25.7 % of these had experienced between 9 and 12 years and the 17 % among 13 to 16 years, which totals 62.7 % of professionals with more than nine years of service in education.

In relation to initial training, teachers were trained in various areas of teaching, such as Pedagogy, Primary Education,

Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Portuguese Language, and Physics. The majority did not participate in training activities in the last three years (90 %) and did not have any type of postgraduate degree (100 %).

In the opinion of the teachers in this research, the teaching staff of the schools that are members of ZIP 2 in the municipality of Chitato, in the Lunda-Norte province, always expressed interest in participating in school management.

According to the community participation in school management, teachers indicated that it should be more effective "to help the management of the school, knowing it is a public good to develop a new generation" (Professor A1). Another teacher expressed its importance to "support to the direction of in all policies proposed for the better functioning of the school" (Professor A2).

A professional cited the need for "better participation, helping in the training of students, giving guidance and periodically consulting their school performance" (Teacher B2). Another teacher suggested that "there should be support from the community and that way it could produce good results and good school management" (Teacher B5).

A teacher suggested "an intervention participation in the community part, ensuring the solution of problems that lack specific treatment by the school" (Teacher C2). One teacher cited the need for more "regular meetings, analyzing studies about the school, determining actions for social transformation" (Teacher C4), and another that "school affairs were debated in meetings of those in charge of education" (Teacher C8).

An educator described that "the community must have an effective accompaniment in school management, so that there can be harmony in the



success of the students' learning" (Teacher D1). Another suggested "that all parents and those in charge of education actively and continuously accompany the development of the school and its students" (Teacher D4).

Another delineated professional "participation was fair, serious and more participatory" (Professor E2), other than "be inclusive and participatory, transparent and rigor" (Professor E5) and it was mentioned the need that participation were "more dynamic and more open" (Teacher E6).

A teacher indicated that "the participation of the community in school management is important, because it is from these meetings that decisions arise in the organization of the school" (Teacher F1). Another professional pointed out "that it was more effective taking into account the current reality of teaching" (Professor F2), and another that there was "a high commitment to the valorization, resulting in a better and greater support" (Professor F3).

In the interviews, teachers' suggestions were also requested to make school management more democratic. Among these professionals, one indicated that "first, all of us it must participate in all school meetings and no one can be left out, there must be more optimal for a good functioning" (Teacher A1). Another mentioned that "management must be open and inclusive" (Professor A4), and another that "the country needs to have better cadres and trained in the different skills and be placed according to their training" (Professor A5).

A professional pointed out that to improve democratic management "there would be social justice in the salary that make up the certificates, for the satisfaction of public needs" (Professor B1), and another "that before making any decision they would take into account the principle of equality because

it makes our institution stronger and more solid" (Professor B2).

Another teacher pointed out that "the interaction elements that are manifested in each level or area of action are identified and known" (Professor B3), and another professional pointed out that it is necessary "to stipulate an action program where everyone must participate, teachers, parents and those in charge of education" (Teacher B5).

For one teacher, democratic management can be improved if "everyone was heard" (Teacher C1), and for another there was a need for "more meetings with all representatives of all instances of the school community" (Teacher C2). For a teacher, management it could be more democratic if it was directed to "solve problems in a transparent way, establishing exchanges of information between teachers and management" (Professor C7), and for another that "the director must be transparent in terms of total operation between teachers and school assets" (Teacher C8).

A teacher said that management would be more democratic if "the directors and sub directors would have better preparation in the processes they manage" (Professor D1). Another suggested that "management be inclusive, participatory and respectful among members" (Teacher D2), and according to the opinion of another teacher it is necessary "the involvement of all members of the school in the decision-making process and in the functioning of the school organization" (Teacher D3).

In order for the management to be more democratic, a teacher specified that "one must act in a non-authoritarian way in the exercise of power, giving school subjects the opportunity to intervene in the decisions of the school organization" (Teacher D4), and a second one suggested that "criticism and opinions

must be accepted and do not arbitrarily make decisions" (Professor D5).

For one of the subjects surveyed, management becomes more democratic when "students participate in grade level council meetings" (Teacher E1). For another teacher, it is necessary to "study and understand points of view, which may be different, opposite, but only with dialogue" (Teacher E2). Another teacher said that it is necessary "to carry out pedagogical actions supported by other educational actors such as political and social organizations and parents of students" (teacher F1), and a third one said that it is necessary "greater commitment to awareness and appreciation, thus resulting in a better and greater contribution" (Professor F3).

There were many teachers' opinions regarding democratic school management. For a teacher, it can "preserve or safeguard to all of us and participate in meetings and giving necessary opinions in solving school problems democratically" (Professor A1). For another, it is the "union, elaboration and to have a single decision" (Professor A2). Meanwhile, a third teacher said "it is the valuation of each function that an agent assumes with responsibility and purpose of triggering actions that influence in fulfilling the objectives" (Professor B3), and another that it reveals in the school space "where everyone must participate equally" (Teacher B5).

A teacher indicated that democratic management is situated in the attempt to "listen to all the instances of the school community and make decisions to improve the coexistence of all" (Teacher C3). Another mentioned as an example what was already happening in the school where he worked, indicating that "in our school, (the) decisions are made together; there is the participation of all in the actions, everything in a correct and transparent way"(Teacher C5).

Finally, for a teacher, democratic management needs to "be transparent regarding the actions carried out" (Professor C8) and "there cannot be the exclusion of anyone" (Professor D2). For another professional that "all participants have a voice and all opinions are valid" (Professor D5), and for another it is about "living in harmony, respecting the opinion of others" (Professor E2). There was even a teacher who said that it refers to "an open dialogue management" (Professor E4).

In relation to the school council, the majority of teachers (74.3 %) declared that officials and teachers are integral members. About 65.7 % also aimed at parents, and just over a third (31.4 %) indicated that members of the local community and students are also members of that body.

Part of teachers (60 %) identified that most schools did not promote the training for elected members, but divulged the dates of meetings and decisions taken at meetings of school boards. On the participation of school boards in the management of educational institutions, the 74.3 % of professionals understand that it existed in the pedagogical area. About 50 % stated that they also existed in the administrative area, and others in a lower percentage declared that the school councils were still involved in the financial management of the schools.

As for the educational project, it verified that the 51.4 % of teachers indicated that the document existed in schools, containing an action plan, worked and represented all members. The document was monitored by teachers and officials in an equal percentage. It is noted that other teachers (25.8 %) stated that the project existed, but it was working precariously. On its preparation and revision, the teachers had divided opinions; however, the majority declared that it occurred in 2019. It was verified that in ZIP 2 the majority of the school

team and teachers participated in the preparation of the document.

The teachers were unanimous in affirming that the grade council existed, that it functioned and represented everyone in the school context, in which all the teachers participated. It was also identified that in some schools parents, students and officials participated in the grade council. However, it is analyzed that the aforementioned council contributed more with pedagogical management, according to the information provided by the majority of those surveyed.

Finally, despite the fact that the teachers pointed to different expectations of participation, it is observed that, in general, the majority indicated the need for a greater contribution from the community, greater transparency of the process and search for improvement of the school.

## DISCUSSION

The subject discussed offers elements to affirm that the principle of democratic management established by the Constitution (Asamblea Nacional, 2010) has been translated into legal measures and policy initiatives with a view to strengthening it. The analysis of some empirical data from the study carried out, in turn, shows that principals and teachers have sought alternatives for the construction of democratic management in their daily work in schools.

Democratic management implies opening the school to the participation of school actors, without losing sight of educational goals and objectives. The realities of the community and social transformations must still be considered. In public school, community action must be implicit in the process, so as to constitute an integral part of

management and not a factor further to be administered. This perspective coincides with the ideas of do Amaral (2019), when he states that no matter how collegiate the administration of the school unit may be, if it does not include the community, it runs the risk of constituting hardly any more an arrangement between state employees, to meet interests that, for that very reason, will hardly coincide with those of the user population.

The investigation indicates that the school director, together with the members of the Board of Directors, must exercise the role of leader within the school and that their achievements influence all those who act in the school setting. For Rodrigues Costa & Garcia (2019) it should be understood that, in school, there are directors capable of achieving great facts, despite difficulties and challenges and in these, variables, such as power, authority, charisma or attributes are added, influencing in the mobilization of all to achieve the objectives of the school. In other words, directors capable of transforming the school.

You can derive, from the results, that participation is the principal means of ensuring the democratic management, allowing the dynamics of all members of the school in the process of decision making and the functioning of school organization. According to Libâneo (2015), participation provides better knowledge of the objectives and goals of the school, its organizational structure and dynamics, its relations with the community, and fosters a favorable work environment that brings teachers students and parents closer together.

In general, it is observed the deliberative nature granted to the school council, of administrative and pedagogical order, in addition to the attribution of monitoring the performance of the school and the achievement of the established goals. This scenario already pointed to a

more democratic management, through the action of the school council in a participatory way. Rodrigues Costa & Garcia (2019) conceives that the school board can be built collectively, as a place of participation and decision of the pedagogical and political, discussion and negotiation around the needs and priorities of the school and as a channel for the democratization of school management. These are indicators to consider the relevance of this action for the expansion of democratic management in public school.

In general, the school council is the representative body of the community in the public school. It exercises an important channel of communication between the school community (parents, students, and officials), the external community and the management, valuing participation through dialogue in the discussions of the school day-to-day and in its decision-making processes. However, the development of the school council still faces challenges in the search for participation mechanisms that consider, among other issues, learning about the political function of education.

In this regard, Sousa (1998) states that the council school can serve as a tool for true collegial management, articulated with popular interests of the school and the same time to the need for the school to organize democratically in order to achieve its transformation, according to social interests.

The grade level council is one of the collegiate bodies for participation in school management and one of its main objectives is to analyze the teaching and learning processes on different aspects. However, it can be specified in this research that there are distortions between the functions and powers of this type of council: teachers are not evaluated and students are evaluated according to the personal criteria of the teachers. According to Rodrigues, Garcia and Zanutto (2018) it happens that,

many times, the grade council reflects the forms of organization and structuring of school education. In most of them, their decisions are directed to promotion and retention, taking as parameters the annotations or the final concept of the students.

However, the space for discussion of the grade council can provide teachers with an important place of training experience, allowing the reevaluation of pedagogical practice, beyond helping them understand the cognitive, affective and social issues that interfere with learning of the students.

The construction of democratic management in schools requires participatory practices that favor dialogue, contributing to overcome the limits of authoritarian and centralized school management models that have historically characterized Angolan schools. Meanwhile, the School Educational Project favors the creation of discussion spaces for the construction of the identity of the school and the participation of the community in the pedagogical and school management processes and democratic management.

The School Educational Project is a global plan of the school, constituted from a participatory planning, but never definitive, which is perfected throughout the pedagogical process. It has, as one of its main objectives, the construction of the identity of the school, through the participation of the community, characterizing itself as an active channel in school management. For Garcia & Prearo (2016), the School Educational Project, when becoming a participatory decision-making process, is concerned with establishing a form of organization of pedagogical work that veils conflicts and contradictions, seeking to eliminate competitive, corporate and authoritarian relationships, breaking with the routine of personal and rationalized command of

the bureaucracy and allowing horizontal relations within the school.

In the context of the democratization of school management, the School Educational Project constitutes an instrument of collective action by the community, with the aim of seeking a better school and deviating from bureaucratic processes. By breaking with the hierarchical and bureaucratic relationships existing within the school, it establishes a democratic decision-making process, enabling the construction of the autonomy of the public school and outlining its own identity.

Still, principals and teachers had different views on democratic management. A challenge that can be analyzed from these data is linked to the question of the limitation of the speeches of the surveyed subjects. The directors had more elaborate narratives, referring to collective work, transparency, and autonomy and community participation. The teachers related it to dialogue, participation, among other aspects. Such a situation can perhaps be explained by the type of work that each of the professionals performs. Principals are those who act in school management, mobilizing people and resources for the improvement of the school. In this sense, they are, in most cases, closer to the legislation and educational objectives.

Understanding the perceptions of principals and teachers about some democratic management processes allows, among other issues, to advance the discussions on the process of quality development in education. In fact, the data from this present research provide valuable clues for political and educational authorities that can use them in the daily management of schools. At the same time, these results can be taken to initial and continuing training courses for school managers, promoting debate on the subject.

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#### Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflicts of interest.

#### Authors' Contribution:

*Custódio Teresa Cauaia*: Conception of the idea, authorship coordinator, literature search and review, preparation of instruments, application of instruments, and compilation of information resulting from the instruments applied, drafting of the original (first version), revision and final version of the article.

*Reinaldo Meléndez Ruiz*: Conception of the idea, general advice on the topic addressed, literature search and review, translation of terms or information obtained, preparation of instruments, statistical analysis, preparation of the tables, graphics and images, preparation of the database, drafting of the original (first version), and correction of the article.

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