

Municipal Education Councils and Democratic Management: A study in two municipalities of Mato Grosso

Conselhos Municipais de Educação e Gestão democrática: um estudo em dois municípios mato-grossenses

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Abstract

This article looks at democratic management within Municipal Education Councils, focusing on the policies and actions carried out in the Mato Grosso municipalities of Nova Mutum and Rosário Oeste. The study aims to understand how the Municipal Education Councils have contributed to strengthening social participation, autonomy, and democratic control in the context of the Regional Education Directorate of Diamantino/MT. Methodologically, the research has a qualitative approach, based on bibliographic and documentary analysis, as well as semi-structured interviews conducted with council representatives and municipal education management. The data analysis was guided by Stephen Ball's policy cycle approach, taking into account the contexts of influence, text production, and practice. The results show significant differences between the municipalities studied. In one of them, there is greater normative density and a more structured institutional organization, although challenges related to autonomy, ongoing training, and the effective participation of council members remain. In the other municipality, regulatory and structural weaknesses are identified, along with decision-making centralization and low social representation. It is concluded that implementing democratic management requires strengthening the councils institutionally, increasing social participation, updating regulatory instruments, and continuously investing in the training of council members.

Keywords: Democratic management; Municipal Education Councils; participation.

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa a gestão democrática no âmbito dos Conselhos Municipais de Educação, com foco nas políticas e ações desenvolvidas nos municípios mato-grossenses de Nova Mutum e Rosário Oeste. O estudo tem como objetivo compreender de que maneira os Conselhos Municipais de Educação têm contribuído para o fortalecimento da participação social, da autonomia e do controle democrático no contexto da Diretoria Regional de Educação de Diamantino/MT. Metodologicamente, a pesquisa possui abordagem qualitativa, fundamentada em análise bibliográfica, documental e entrevistas semiestruturadas realizadas com representantes dos conselhos e da gestão educacional municipal. A análise dos dados foi orientada pela abordagem do ciclo de políticas de Stephen Ball, considerando os contextos de influência, produção de textos e prática. Os resultados evidenciam diferenças significativas entre os municípios investigados. Em um deles, observa-se maior densidade normativa e organização institucional mais estruturada, embora persistam desafios relacionados à autonomia, à formação continuada e à participação efetiva dos conselheiros. No outro município, identificam-se fragilidades normativas e estruturais, além de centralização decisória e baixa representatividade social. Conclui-se que a efetivação da gestão democrática exige fortalecimento institucional dos colegiados, ampliação da participação social, atualização dos instrumentos normativos e investimento contínuo na formação dos conselheiros.

Palavras-chave: Gestão democrática; Conselhos Municipais de Educação; participação.

INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on Democratic Management within the scope of Municipal Education Councils (*Conselhos Municipais de Educação - CME*) involves considering the challenges of the historical and institutional process that permeate social participation, transparency, and social control of education policies. In this context, CMEs are positioned as fundamental collegiate bodies for the regulation, monitoring, proposal, and evaluation of educational policies, mediating the dialogue between the State and organized civil society. In this sense, it is essential to understand the pathways toward the effective implementation of democratic management and participation within CMEs from a parallel approach that adopts a critical and propositional perspective.

It is important to note that, according to Arelaro (2015), management routines imposed during the Military Dictatorship (1964-1985) were marked by increased centralization; however, these routines were reconfigured in the context of Brazil's redemocratization process in the 1980s, a period characterized by significant changes in the educational sphere. Among these changes, citizen participation in education

policy management processes stands out. In this direction, according to Oliveira, Lino, and Cavalcante Júnior (2017), democratic management in education was a fundamental movement in this process, and its most relevant legal expression was established in the Federal Constitution of 1988 (CF/88), later reaffirmed by the competencies and attributions set forth in the National Education Plan (PNE) 2014/2024 and in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law No. 9.394 of 1996.

Citizen participation in decision-making spaces is a reflection of the demands of social, political, and trade union movements that have marked different historical periods. As one of the symbols of the democratic reconquest in the country, CMEs deserve emphasis in this investigation.

However, it is important to highlight that it was only during the Republic in 1911 that the Superior Council of Education was established, dedicated to higher education, with a technocratic character and serving as an advisory body. In 1925, the National Council of Education was created, encompassing all national education, later restructured in 1937. In the 1960s, with the enactment of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB 4.024/1961), the Federal Council of Education was created, whose role was to formulate the National Education Policy and regulate the Federal Education System and the State Education Councils.

It is also worth noting, according to Bordignon (2009, p. 57), that “only after the creation of municipal education systems by the 1988 Constitution was there an incentive for the creation of municipal education councils.”

According to Scheinvar and Algebaile (2004), in the 1990s the Federal Council of Education was extinguished and the National Council of Education was instituted, which quickly became an education business council, assuming the role of a governmental body rather than a State institution, and coming under strong governmental influence, including the appointment of its members.

The LDB project discussed with the National Forum in Defense of Public Schools, originally presented by Congressman Octávio Elísio, proposed that the CNE should be a state body. [...] That the government could not interfere in the appointment of society's representatives who would have deliberative functions. The executive branch would be responsible for “executing” policies, not defining them.

[...] Education policy should be established by a state council (Scheinvar; Algebaile, 2004, p. 33).

So, in the historical process of the Municipal Education Councils - MEC (*Conselhos Municipais de Educação - CME*), we see many challenges to face, but also significant progress, especially given the remnants of individualism that still permeate our society. These councils emerge from a political context marked by historical struggles that resulted in the consolidation of Brazilian democracy.

According to Calderón and Marim (2007), the legislation of the 1990s expanded its functions to include oversight and social control, proposal and mobilization, in addition to the traditional consultative, normative, and deliberative roles. Like other social councils of the time, the Education Councils began to play a crucial role in public policies. So, CME can be understood as bodies for participation, mobilization, social control, and ideological political debates, putting educational projects and collective interests to the test, while making clear the limits and challenges faced by the council in the pursuit of effective implementation and consolidation.

THE CYCLE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES: AN ANALYTICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Reflecting on the challenges and prospects for strengthening CMEs requires understanding that education policies are not implemented in a linear way, but are produced, reinterpreted, and contested in different contexts. As policy moves from one context to another, it is reinterpreted as actors bring their own meanings and intentions to its implementation (Ball; Mainardes, 2024). The analysis of educational policies therefore demands a critical and dialectical understanding of the multiple influences that permeate their formulation and implementation. This understanding becomes essential for grasping the role of Municipal Education Councils, since these bodies operate directly within the context of practice, where educational policies are materialized (Ball; Bowe, 1992).

When considering policy networks as fundamental in the dispute over meanings and directions of policies, it is possible to identify that CMEs are part of these local networks, formed by administrators, educators, representatives of civil society, and, at

times, external actors such as NGOs or foundations. These networks may, to varying degrees, dispute decision-making spaces and influence educational agendas at the municipal level. The plural nature of councils therefore not only allows but requires them to function as spaces for listening, deliberation, and resistance to exclusionary policies or those that contradict the principles of democratic management.

However, as Mainardes (2006) highlights, many studies on educational policy neglect the articulation between the macro and micro levels of policy, weakening the understanding of the effects of national guidelines on the concrete reality of schools and municipal systems. In this sense, investigating CMEs in light of critical policy analysis allows for the recovery of this articulation, since councils are in a privileged position to translate, challenge, or even reverse policies that do not align with local needs. Thus, strengthening CMEs is also a pathway to expanding social participation and democratizing the process of formulation and implementation of public education policies.

To analyze the production of public policies, it is essential to consider the historical moment in which they were formulated and implemented, as well as the sociocultural, economic, and social contexts that influenced this process. These elements are essential for understanding the implications of policies for society and for the lives of individuals who benefit from or are affected by them. In this sense, the policy cycle offers a relevant theoretical basis for analyzing the data in this investigation. It enables a deeper reflection on the formulation, implementation, and outcomes of policies and actions, as well as highlighting the importance of participation and social control exercised by CMEs in the municipalities of Nova Mutum/MT and Rosário Oeste/MT.

According to Mainardes (2006), this approach is characterized by two moments that can be understood through the following structuring:

The authors proposed a continuous cycle made up of three main contexts: The context of influence, the context of text production, and the context of practice. These contexts are interrelated, they don't have a temporal or sequential dimension, and they aren't linear stages. Each of these contexts has arenas, places, and interest groups, and each involves disputes and clashes (BOWE et al., 1992). In 1994, in the book *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-Structural Approach*, Ball (1994a) expanded the Policy Cycle by adding two more contexts to the

original framework: The context of outcomes (effects) and the context of political strategy (Mainardes, 2006, p. 8).

Because they are more closely aligned with the objectives of this research, efforts were undertaken to understand the contexts of influence, text production, and practice.

The choice of this approach stems from a rejection of mechanistic and linear analyses, which conceive the political process in a rational and ordered manner. This theoretical framework adopts a dynamic and flexible approach in seeking to characterize the political process in the field of education, understanding it as a cycle that involves multiple interwoven policy arenas, outlining the rationality of both management processes and teaching-learning processes.

When referring to each context, Mainardes (2006) synthesizes the perspectives of Ball and Bowe (1992; 1994), understanding the policy cycle as a continuous and non-hierarchical analytical method. The context of influence is the moment in which public policies and political discourses are initiated; groups with distinct interests and conceptions articulate themselves in order to influence the direction of education and the definition of its social purposes. In this context, social networks permeate political parties, government, and the legislative process, disseminating and circulating ideas in the organization and determination of education policies. In this sphere, concepts gain legitimacy and form foundational discourses.

In this investigation, the context of influence encompassed the regulations that presumably establish democratic management (CF/88, the PNE 2014/2024, and the LDB), integrating the legal and normative framework for the organization and functioning of CMEs, as well as community participation in the implementation of education policies.

Intertwined with this structure is the context of policy texts, which encompasses their formulation and articulation in the language of the broader public interest. In this sense, one observes the interests, agreements, and disputes of specific groups that influence policy and reflect the aspirations of the population. These texts may be contradictory, confusing, and even incoherent. Policy is not concluded at the legislative moment; rather, it must be understood in relation to the formulation of texts, considering the time and place of their production.

Thus, texts are a reflection of the political movements exercised in the context of influence, which generate responses to demands. Based on municipal documents, official legal and policy texts, and formal interview exchanges, we sought to understand the possibilities and limitations of the texts that guide Democratic Management and CMEs in a contextualized way, taking into account the specificities of each municipality. It is in everyday practice that conflicts emerge, especially because policies in certain places are designed without considering the realities of their territories, resulting in legal texts, such as municipal laws, that, in many cases, do not reflect local conditions, revealing gaps in relation to community needs.

This entire process of attempting to control policy representations is reflected in the context of practice. The context of practice is the arena where policy texts seek to materialize; however, this process is subject to interpretation and re-creation. Texts can be recontextualized by the actors who implement these policies in everyday life, producing effects and consequences that may, at times, generate significant changes and transformations in the original policy. In other words, the interpretation and reinterpretation carried out by educators and other involved agents strongly impact the policy implementation process.

It is within this scenario of disputes, negotiations, and multiple voices that pluralism gains central importance, as educational practice is constituted through different conceptions, interests, and forms of participation.

In this sense, pluralism, as a concept, refers to the coexistence of different values, beliefs, practices, and identities within a society, without the imposition of a single viewpoint. In the educational context, pluralism not only recognizes but also values the diversity of thoughts and experiences, promoting a space in which different voices can be heard and respected. This is fundamental to democratic management in education, which, according to Paulo Freire (2001), should be grounded in the active participation of all those involved in the educational process.

From Paro's (2001) perspective, pluralism is not limited to the recognition of diversity, but involves the creation of educational practices in which different voices can influence the school environment. Thus, democratic management becomes a field of political and ideological dispute, in which diversity is not merely tolerated but celebrated, contributing to the formation of a more just and inclusive educational environment. In this sense, Ball and Mainardes (2024, p. 37) emphasize that "[...] local

conditions, resources, histories, and commitments will differ and, therefore, policy enactment will also differ.” This understanding highlights that policy is established in distinct contexts, marked by specificities and different actors. In this direction,

Thinking about the kinds of people and voices that inhabit the analysis of political texts, it's also necessary to think about engaging with the social and collective identities of the research subjects - the teacher, the parents, the policymaker; their genders, class, race, sexuality, and physical ability (Ball; Mainardes, 2024, p. 47).

Thus, democratic management should not be interpreted solely on the basis of normative principles, but rather as a process permeated by disputes, contextual specificities, and power relations that cut across education policy.

It is important to briefly note, within the scope of this article, that the methodological path was characterized as exploratory, with a qualitative approach, developed through a bibliographic and documentary review and semi-structured interviews articulated with Stephen Ball's policy cycle theoretical-analytical framework, in order to understand the contexts of influence, text production, and practice. The documentary research involved the analysis of municipal legislation, ordinances, internal regulations, and other documents related to CMEs, collected through different channels: in Nova Mutum, they were obtained from the official municipal website and via email; in Rosário Oeste, they were provided via email (scanned copies) and during interviews, since the law was not publicly available, copies of the analyzed documents were provided.

Data analysis was conducted through narrative research, seeking to understand the meanings attributed by participants to their experiences and practices in democratic management within CMEs. Data interpretation was carried out through reading, organization, and thematic categorization of narratives, considering recurring patterns, convergences, and divergences in the discourses. The empirical field comprised the municipalities of Nova Mutum/MT and Rosário Oeste/MT, selected based on the Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI), aiming to encompass different educational realities.

Participants in the research were municipal education professionals, namely: in Nova Mutum, two council members; in Rosário Oeste, the municipal education manager and two CME representatives. For ethical reasons, the interviewees will be

identified as follows: Nova Mutum - NM1 and NM2; and Rosário Oeste - RO1, RO2, and RO3.

APPROACH OF MUNICIPAL CONTEXTS

The municipalities selected as the research field present contrasting realities. The municipality of Rosário Oeste, located in the Baixada Cuiabana region, has its initial occupation dated to 1871; however, it was only elevated to municipal status in 1918 and, in 2025, completed 107 years of emancipation. According to IBGE data (2022), its population was estimated at 15,543 inhabitants, with an economy based on agriculture, cattle ranching, and fish farming.

On the other hand, the municipality of Nova Mutum, located in the region known as “Nortão,” had its first settlers as migrants from the southern region of Brazil, from Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, in 1981, and was emancipated in 1988, completing, in 2025, 35 years of emancipation. It is a relatively new municipality in terms of its expansion, being considered one of the major grain production hubs in the region, strongly driving its industrial, urban, and population development.

When analyzing the multifaceted context of CMEs, it is possible to perceive how educational policies intertwine with the challenges and potentialities of each community, shaping the ways in which democratic participation is manifested and directly influencing the quality and equity of the education provided.

The CME of Nova Mutum was established by Municipal Law No. 1,279, of May 18th, 2010, whose regulation defined its functions, competencies, and a diversified composition. Based on this law, the councilors’ activities are governed by its Internal Regulations, which define their competencies and responsibilities. Regarding the selection of representatives, members of non-governmental entities/organizations are nominated through a participatory and elective process among their peers, to serve a three-year term, with the possibility of reappointment of up to $\frac{1}{3}$ (one third) of the members. The law also provides that all members must be over 18 years old and residents of the municipality. The internal regulations also define the organizational and functional structure. The elected president, if employed within the municipal

education system, is guaranteed remuneration without loss of salary or career benefits, provided they are fully dedicated to the presidency role.

The CME of Rosário Oeste, in turn, established by Municipal Law No. 1,089, of November 5th, 2007, recognized as a collegiate consultative and deliberative body, aims to participate in planning, guide, and regulate public education activities, exercising normative, deliberative, consultative, and supervisory functions.

In theory, based on normative instruments, the council's structure seeks to reflect the diversity of different segments, with its composition providing for 14 full members and their respective alternates, appointed by the mayor among individuals of unquestionable reputation and extensive experience in the educational field. The council's structure is defined in its Internal Regulations, as well as its competencies. However, over the years, no changes or updates have been made to the legal instruments governing the councils.

The empirical data obtained in the investigation were analytically systematized by adopting the three contexts of Ball's policy cycle, context of influence, context of text production, and context of practice.

In Nova Mutum, within the context of influence, the council's diversified composition reflects an attempt to democratize decision-making in the educational sphere, ensuring that different segments (parents, teachers, representatives of the executive branch, and civil society organizations) participate in the planning and implementation of educational policies. Alongside representativeness, parity within the collegiate body is presented as a fundamental principle aimed at ensuring equity in the representation of different segments. However, one of the challenges in this context is the coexistence of civil society representatives and entities with employment ties to the executive branch, which may generate conflicts of interest. In Nova Mutum, it is observed that, among representatives from civil society and entities, only two CME members have employment ties to the executive branch.

Even within this diverse scenario of representatives, interviewee NM1 noted that the final decision-making regarding council deliberations is centralized in the Municipal Education Secretariat, which holds the power to decide based on its own convictions or the interests of the municipal administration.

Although representation of different groups is present, the role of parents in the council, especially regarding the effectiveness of their voice, is a critical aspect to be

discussed. In this sense, “The quality of participation can be measured by the degree of information (or misinformation) contained in participants’ opinions” (Gohn, 2011, p. 47). Therefore, expanding information and understanding of CME roles and responsibilities is essential to qualify participation and strengthen social control. It is therefore necessary to create mechanisms that strengthen parental participation, promoting training and continuous dialogue so that they feel capable of contributing effectively (Mentges, 2022).

In Rosário Oeste, when analyzing local influences, a strong dominance of council actions centered on the figure of the Municipal Education Manager is observed, based on her own convictions or interests, restricting participatory, democratic, and decentralized spaces.

In this scenario, the interviews highlight significant gaps regarding influence and representativeness among council members. Such aspects can be observed in RO1’s statement, when addressing the processes of selecting council members:

[...] People have to try to choose the professional profile to join this council... How am I going to invite a teacher to participate in the school meals council if, inside the school, he doesn’t have, let’s say, a role related to meals? He’s just a teacher, a classroom teacher... So, what are we looking for when forming this council? The profile within the school, because they don’t like that, they want to cover all the segments, right! Then I go more towards the technical staff (Interviewee RO1).

The representatives are chosen for convenience, prioritizing professionals close to the municipal management, an initiative that weakens the diversity of perspectives and reduces the democratic nature of the CME, limiting the inclusion of key voices, such as those of parents and civil society, and even disregarding valuable contributions from people with different roles. Indeed, the composition of the council is not free from influences and disputes. As Gohn (2006, p. 9) points out:

[...] Issues of representativeness and parity are crucial problems to be better defined in management boards in general. The problems stem from the lack of criteria that ensure truly equal conditions among participants.

Among the barriers to the full exercise of democratic governance within CMEs, Ordinance No. 45/2024 reveals that, out of the 13 council members, only the representatives of Special Education teachers and Secondary Education are not municipal employees. Furthermore, the “parents and teachers” segment is represented exclusively by teachers, who are also municipal employees, characterizing a predominance of government representatives, which impacts the representativeness and democratic nature of the CMEs.

This understanding highlights that the constitution of the council is shaped by a bias stemming from relations of power and specific ideological and political interests; in this sense, the context of influence intersects with the context of text production.

On the one hand, influence expresses affinities of interests; on the other, it is in the context of text production that policy formulations are produced, articulated in a language oriented toward broader public interest, reflecting the very dimension of politics (Mainardes, 2006). Thus, such formulations are materialized in official documents, which must be analyzed in light of the historical moment and context in which they were produced.

In the municipality of Nova Mutum, considering governmental negotiations and interpretations across different municipal political administrations, four complementary amendments to the council’s founding law were enacted between 2010 and 2024, regulating its functions: normative, consultative, deliberative, mobilizing, supervisory, propositional, monitoring, and social control functions, ensuring the principles of autonomy, participation, transparency, and shared responsibility, as well as defining the council’s attributions, composition, and representativeness. In 2017, the Internal Regulations were also drafted and approved, providing further regulation of the council and defining in greater detail its responsibilities, organization, and functioning.

A noteworthy aspect in Nova Mutum, which directly affects the context of practice, is the way in which the council adapts to an outdated legal framework, without updates aligned with contemporary demands. Regarding this issue, NM1 states: “We cannot do anything that is not within the legislation, within what the legislation allows.” This reveals a challenge for the council in interpreting and applying norms that no longer fully correspond to the current reality of the body, since, according to NM1, “[...] sometimes the law does not encompass our reality, in some situations it does not.”

Thus, although the scenario indicates the need to reorganize the legal framework, there is, according to NM1's account, no indication that this situation will change in the short term. Another challenge faced by council members lies in the drafting of legal instruments essential to their responsibilities. Despite the importance of these regulations, the council lacks specialized technical legal support, which may compromise the precision and quality of the documents produced. Nevertheless, the CME includes a council member with legal training who partially helps to fill this gap, although this does not replace the need for systematic and institutionalized technical support.

The context of text production in Rosário Oeste presents the current legislation governing the CME, which has remained unchanged since its establishment. However, it was observed in practice, through the 2008 Internal Regulations and appointment ordinances for council members, that the composition and representation of the Council differ significantly from what is foreseen in the original legislation. When questioned about this change, RO3 stated that it was merely the choice of an odd number of members, a measure adopted to avoid tied decisions. However, the most recent ordinance presented inconsistencies in relation to legal provisions, such as the absence of alternates for some entities and the presence of two full members and only one alternate in the "parents and teachers" segment.

It is worth noting that policy texts may contain elements that either meet or fail to meet the expectations of social actors, and may be accepted, rejected, or ignored, since interpretation is also an arena of disputes linked to power and interests (Bowe et al., 1992). However, the changes introduced are not supported by the original legislation, raising concerns about the legal compliance of such alterations and indicating the need for appropriate legal backing. This situation becomes more complex given that the drafting and revision of regulations are the responsibility of the municipal legal department, limiting the autonomy of the CME and intensifying its dependence on municipal administration.

Policy texts generated through conflicts and compromises among their authors are not limited to their original form and must, in practice, be recreated and reformulated (Ball; Bowe, 1992). Thus, the context of practice is shaped by the material opportunities and constraints that emerge within school settings and other educational spaces where teachers, administrators, and education governance bodies operate.

From the perspective of practice, in Nova Mutum, NM1 highlights that “there are challenges in promoting active participation,” even though the CME has an annual schedule; however, strategies of flexibility and organization are used in meetings. In the same direction, NM2 states that “[...] we have a participatory council; it is even difficult not to have a *quorum*... usually we do; sometimes people have other commitments and do not attend.” These elements indicate that, although there are challenges regarding effective participation, council members seek to maintain a participatory dynamic in meetings.

The analysis of participation necessarily leads to another key element of CMEs: autonomy. In this regard, council autonomy is a field marked by intense disputes, as becomes clear in NM2’s statement: “[...] it is not that management has to grant autonomy... the institution itself already has autonomy, it is already autonomous.” However, there is a dependence on the ratification of decisions by the municipal executive, which compromises the body’s independence and generates possible limitations to its capacity to deliberate in an agile and impartial manner.

Still within the context of practice, infrastructure constitutes another essential element for the development of the council’s activities. In discussing infrastructure, it became evident that structural conditions, as well as the availability of adequate equipment and administrative materials, are fundamental to the proper functioning of the council’s practice. However, the effectiveness of the Council does not depend solely on material conditions, but also on articulation with other councils.

In this sense, the need for greater articulation between CMEs and other education-related councils, such as school feeding and school transportation councils, is evident, and the absence of systematic dialogue may create gaps in the implementation of integrated educational policies. Furthermore, for the CME to fully perform its normative and supervisory role, it is essential to promote training activities for its members, strengthen its infrastructure, and encourage broader active and democratic participation from the school and civil community. Continuing education for council members is identified as a priority in expanding understanding of their role and responsibilities, reducing the influence of common-sense perceptions (Ferreira, 2016).

In the municipality of Rosário Oeste, the context of the practice shows challenges for the counselors' effective participation in meetings. During the interviews,

RO3 mentions that participation is tied to the interests of government representatives, that is, to **specific interests**.

Another point that stands out is the difficulty of reaching a quorum in meetings, where low participation hinders the progress of important agendas. In the words of counselor RO3, it's clear that, in cases of absence of quorum for three consecutive meetings, local law allows decisions to be made based on the number of attendees:

[...] The law states: if more than three meetings have passed and you need to move the matter forward, you make the call... three summons for the members. Then on the third, you settle the agenda. That's what's written in the bylaws... in the law, it's the rule... We have this legal backing (Interviewee RO3).

This scenario may generate a mismatch between decisions and the desired representativeness, reducing the legitimacy of deliberations. However, in the regulations governing the CME, no mention was identified of this "legal backing," raising questions about the deliberative effectiveness of the collegiate body.

The council faces challenges in ensuring its autonomy. On the one hand, its composition is largely tied to the municipal administration; on the other, there is a centralization of decision-making in a few individuals, such as technical staff or governmental representatives, as becomes clear in RO1's statement regarding the executive secretary/council member being her "[...] right-hand person... and the one who participated (in trainings) the most is the executive secretary, because she works directly with all councils, so she participated more."

This dynamic not only compromises the autonomy of council members but also limits plurality in decision-making and distorts the collegial nature of the Council.

These weaknesses are not restricted to the political and organizational dimensions, also extending to the council's operational conditions. In this regard, when considering the CME's infrastructure, it is observed that the council does not have a dedicated room or permanent materials; documents are stored in boxes placed on shelves, and meetings take place in shared spaces. These structural conditions limit the body's autonomy and hinder the organization of its activities, revealing institutional weaknesses in the recognition of the CME's relevance. Beyond the conditions experienced by council members, such limitations also extend to training processes.

In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that training for council members is essential to ensure the effectiveness and quality of collegiate action. When analyzing the CME's founding law (Law No. 1,089/2007) and its Internal Regulations, no reference is found regarding training or provision for capacity-building funding. In this sense, RO1's interview made evident the provision of per diem payments for council members; however, the controlling practice of the manager affects the training of these professionals:

[...] We do go, but without a daily allowance. We save the daily allowances for places where there's really no way even the secretariat's car can take us. So, this is even kind of my policy: we avoid excessive spending on the daily routine within the Department of Education because we already use that resource for something else (Interviewee RO1).

Thus, the scenario presented in the municipality of Rosário Oeste reveals that the weaknesses of the CME compromise its true function, its ability to act democratically and representatively.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The goal of this study was to present the research results focusing on analyzing the dynamics of democratic management within CME.

With this purpose, an effort was made to understand the contexts of two different municipalities in Mato Grosso, making it possible to identify different realities, challenges, and potential in exercising participation and social oversight, as well as the complexities of the political, normative, and practical dynamics that involve CME as spaces for deliberation and social listening.

In Nova Mutum, a more structured CME was observed, with greater alignment to current regulations, more institutionalized practices, and members with greater familiarity with the roles and responsibilities of the board. In Rosário Oeste, on the other hand, structural weaknesses were evident, with little coordination with other actors in the education network and low public participation, factors that make it harder for the CME to function as an effective space for democratic management. These

differences suggest a close relationship between the progress of democratic management, the political commitment of the public administration, the recognition of the Council as an autonomous body, and the ongoing training of its members.

It's important to point out that Municipal Education Councils still face significant barriers to fully playing their role as instruments of social change. Beyond the formal existence of these bodies, it's essential to ensure material, political, and educational conditions that allow them to act critically and proactively. In this sense, it's recommended to strengthen training policies for council members, review municipal legislation to ensure greater representation and parity. Therefore, it's suggested to create strategies that expand dialogue between the MEC and the school community, aiming to strengthen social oversight and implement democratic management.

So, even though the research focused on specific contexts, the data collected doesn't translate into absolute reality because, belonging to a certain context and historical moment, it is subject to being reproduced or transformed over time, and can even be compared to other situations, which broadens the reflective potential of the study.

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