



**CÂMARA MIRIM OF BELO HORIZONTE:  
EMBASSY STUDENTS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE  
IN A POLITICAL LITERACY PROJECT (2008-2015)**

Alessandra Soares Santos<sup>1</sup>  
Araci Rodrigues Coelho<sup>2</sup>  
Santer Alvares de Matos<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** The Camara Mirim is a citizenship education project through political formation and debate at about themes of various orders, coordinated by the Legislative School of the City Hall of Belo Horizonte. The present work sought to understand the impacts that the Camara Mirim had on the perception of the political life of the junior councilors. A structured questionnaire was developed, constituting itself as the main methodological instrument. The former junior councilors were invited to participate in the survey and, after analyzing the data, we verified that the Camara Mirim is a citizenship education project with effective and relevant results for those who directly participated in it. At the end of this work the considerations and unfolding of this research are presented.

**Keywords:** Camara Mirim; Policy and citizenship training; Education for Citizenship.

### **1 Belo Horizonte's Mirim Chamber**

The Câmara Mirim project was created in 2008 by the City Council of Belo Horizonte (CMBH), through the Legislative School and in partnership with the Municipal Secretary of Education of Belo Horizonte and the Regional Electoral Court of Minas Gerais. The project is an example of a civic education program that has been sought by other municipal legislative houses interested in the development of such educational actions or in the improvement of their existing initiatives like the Câmara Mirim. The central objective is:

[...] to promote citizenship education through political training and debate on social, environmental, economic and political issues of students ..., focusing on the legislative institution and using, as a pedagogical tool, the formation of a parliament of the Municipality (BELO HORIZONTE, 2016).

In this perspective, the project aims to stimulate the participation of students of the last years of Elementary School in matters of interest to the community, as well as the search for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Mestre e doutora em História pela UFMG, Co-coordenadora do Laboratório de Estudos e Pesquisas em Ensino de História e professora de História do Centro Pedagógico da UFMG (alessandrassantos@hotmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Mestre e doutora em Educação pela UFMG, pós-doutoranda em Ensino de História pela UEMG e professora de História do Centro Pedagógico da UFMG (aracoelho@gmail.com).

<sup>3</sup> Mestre em Ensino de Ciências e Matemática pela PUCMINAS, doutor em Educação pela UFMG e professor de Ciências do Centro Pedagógico da UFMG (santermatos@gmail.com).

development of political awareness and trust in democratic institutions, qualifying future voters and citizens.

Currently, for a one-year term, 45 junior councilors are elected by direct vote among the students of the third cycle of Elementary School of ten municipal schools of Belo Horizonte selected between the different regional coordination of education and the Pedagogical Center of UFMG. Over eight years of existence (2008-2015), 332 junior councilors from 56 different schools were elected. The project also reached thousands of students who participated as voters, debated topics important to society and discussed proposals for referral by the junior councilors of their school.

The electoral process in schools begins with the register, enrollment and parameterization of candidates for junior councilors and voters. Then, the process follows with campaigns and debates before the school community, lectures by judges of the Regional Electoral Court of Minas Gerais, visits to the City Hall of Belo Horizonte, among other activities. The elections are held in electronic ballot boxes of the Regional Electoral Court of Minas Gerais, in the schools participating in the project that year.

The inauguration of the elected junior councilors takes place in a solemn session with the presence of the Director of the Legislative School of the City Council of Belo Horizonte, the Director of the Pedagogical Center of UFMG, the Municipal Secretary of Education of Belo Horizonte, the Councilor Mayor of Belo Horizonte and a Judge of the Regional Electoral Court of Minas Gerais.

By means of monthly meetings based in the City Council and the incentive to carry out extra activities carried out in schools involving the community, the aim is to achieve the central objective, that is, to train conscious and politically active citizens. With a view to achieving this goal, the junior councilors experience dynamics such as: discussions about the constitution of the three branches of government (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary), and mainly of the functions and processes of the Municipal Legislature; exercise of oratorical skills in debates about issues present in the municipality and in the communities; simulations of public hearings and plenary meetings; election of the members of the Board of Directors and thematic commissions; the solemnity of unveiling the photograph of the councilor elected president in a noble place of the Municipality of Belo Horizonte, among other activities.

It is important to emphasize that, during the legislature, the junior councilors prepare proposals, which are discussed and voted in a single shift in the final plenary. The approved proposals are sent to the Popular Participation Committee of the City Council of Belo Horizonte and, after feasibility analysis, can be accepted and presented in the form of nominations or bills, on behalf of the commission, for formal processing, and thus possibly become laws.

At the end of the legislature, there is another solemn session with the presence of all partners, junior councilors and their families, in which the participants report how it was to act in

the project. Next, the municipal schools that will participate in the project in the following year are announced, with criteria for the permanence of the schools that have stood out and the insertion of other schools in the municipality of Belo Horizonte.

At the end of each meeting, junior councilors and schools are invited to carry out an evaluation of the project. These evaluations are generally positive, both on the part of the students and on the part of the teachers who supervise the project. Students highlight the personal growth that the project has brought them, and some of them believe they will bring such knowledge and skills to life. The perception of the teachers reinforces the opinion of the junior councilors pointing out changes in school life and growth in the aspect of socialization. However, these are assessments made at the end of participation in the project and in the heat of the last meeting of the group and, however sincere they may be, are not enough to scale the meanings attributed to the experience of the junior councilors in the project.

In this sense, in order to understand a little more about the role that the Câmara Mirim project can play in the life of the participants, it was proposed to carry out a survey with the junior councilors. In this research, we sought to focus on the representations built by junior councilors about their participation in the Câmara Mirim and to understand the meanings attributed by them to the impact that this experience had on their perception of political life. As will be seen below, studies show that civic education programs and political literacy have a significant effect on its participants, as they increase their knowledge about the functioning of democratic institutions and encourage practices that value them and have repercussions in society. Our goal, therefore, is to evaluate how students perceive this effect.

## **2 Education for citizenship**

The conceptions of an education for citizenship in Brazil are the fruit of a context of political and social changes that we have experienced since the end of the 1970s and that were deepened with the political redemocratization movement in the country in the 1980s. With the Constitution of 1988, we establish the participation of society in the conduction of public policies and raise citizenship as the foundation of the Democratic State of Law. This new configuration had an immediate impact in the field of education, since formation for citizenship has become a basic requirement for the full realization of the ideals of political participation launched by the Constitution. According to Sobral (2000), in this new context,

[...] education would bring to the individual his citizenship in the sense of both access to public and free education and his participation in the different spheres of power, which would mean for society a greater democratization and also greater autonomy.... (SOBRAL, 2000).

This new conjuncture has opened space for criticisms of all kinds to the educational model and for recognizing its incompatibility with the desired consolidation of democracy, based on the

achievement of civil, political and social rights of the citizen. Faced with these criticisms, many proposals for the reformulation of education, coming from various sectors of society - universities, state, trade unions, the press, church, teachers' associations, among others - were presented and systematically discussed, giving rise to a series of initiatives. Among them, we highlight the insertion of reports of teachers' experience in academic publications, revealing an increasing concern with a teaching practice focused on civic education. This movement was accompanied by the recognition and participation of governments from States in this process of reformulation of education and supported or promoted, at the federal level, by the approval of the new National Law of Education (LDB) in 1996, and by the National Parameters for Educational Curriculum, in 1997 (BRASIL, 1997).

In fact, education for the full exercise of citizenship is anticipated in these documents, which indicate the need to create teaching and learning situations that foster the student's comprehension of their social environment, including knowledge of the political system and the values that underlie the life in society. The purpose of these guidelines is to promote the understanding of citizenship "as social and political participation, as well as the exercise of political, civil and social rights and duties, adopting, on a daily basis, attitudes of solidarity, cooperation and repudiation of injustices" (BRAZIL, 1997).

The Constitution of 1988 gave to formal education, with the collaboration of society, the responsibility to prepare the person for the exercise of citizenship. Thus, "educating for citizenship" has become an objective not only of schools, but also of other institutions and associations. In the wake of the valorization of citizenship precepts, other political awareness initiatives have emerged, such as civic education programs - "programs promoted for the purpose of educating informed, politically active citizens with attitudes and values in line with the democratic regime" (FUKS, 2014) - developed by legislative houses. The Câmara Mirim Project of Belo Horizonte appears in this context.

Studies on so-called "civic education" emerged in the United States in the 1990s when Niemi and Junn (1998) relied on a national survey of American high school students to state that civic education can have a significant impact on knowledge of the functioning of democratic institutions and student attitudes in the public space (NIEMI, JUNN, 1998). Since then, other studies have followed similar paths in concluding that educational practices of this kind can make students more moderate and critical in the face of radical political positions and more likely to debate ideas (SLOMCZYNSKI; SHABAD, 1988). These studies eventually questioned Langton and Jennings' position that educational actions to increase the participation and political awareness of children and adolescents had very limited results in immediate political practice of communities, and just a generational shift could make these alterations be perceived (LANGTON, JENNINGS, 1968).

In addition to civic education, political literacy is another theoretical milestone in citizenship education. According to Crick (1998) Apud Meneguín (2017):

[...] Political literacy is learning about how people can become active in public life through knowledge, skills and values. For him, public life addresses realistic knowledge, preparation for conflict resolution and decision-making, relating to current social and economic problems, including individual expectations of each, preparation for the job market, discussion of allocation of public resources and the rationality of taxes, among others. (CRICK, 1998 apud MENEGUÍN, 2017, p.101)

Thus, in political literacy, the interpretation of the world alone is not enough. The student must understand that he can change it in practice, that is, the exercise of praxis is a strong ally in the comprehension of politics in the broadest sense (FOX, 2012). Likewise, civic education presents the need to anchor substantive issues to practical actions of political doing (FUKS, 2014).

More recent research, therefore, suggests that short- and medium-term transformations can be identified in the political culture of communities subject to civic education actions. Finkel and Smith (2011) clarify that

Theorists initially postulated that the acquisition of democratic regime norms, values and participatory orientations among individuals in new democracies would be a long-term process linked to social modernization and generational substitution. A number of more recent research on the new democracies, however, has established a new truism: that democratic guidelines are malleable, even in the medium and short-term periods (Finkel, Smith, 2011, p.).

According to Fuks (2014), today, studies on political behavior have the great challenge to explain the changes related to attitudes, decision making and the political participation of citizens. Questions that seek to understand "the process by which the apathetic citizen becomes participatory" and the circumstances in which "socially rooted political attitudes lose intensity and eventually change direction" have gained prominence in recent studies on political socialization (FUKS, 2014). In this way, educational programs focused on citizen education, such as the Young Parliament, analyzed by the author, or the Câmara Mirim, focused on this research, have become privileged objects to trace some possibilities of ways for these changes. It is believed that "[...] socializing processes that occur after childhood and in spaces broader than those of primary socialization are relevant for the formation and transformation of individuals' political profile, especially in high-flow environments information" (FUKS, 2014).

These civic education programs are initiatives of the Legislatures that, in addition to the goal of consolidating democratic practices, seek to strengthen the image of the legislature vis-à-vis society, through educational actions, in partnership with other institutions. After participating in such programs, it is expected that "[...] young people will have greater political knowledge and that this knowledge will have some impact on changes in attitudes, especially institutional trust" (SAMPAIO; SIQUEIRA, 2013, p.381). Therefore, evaluating the degree of influence that projects

such as the Câmara Mirim exercises on its participants can help in the expansion of initiatives of this type or in the reformulation of its pedagogical proposals.

### **3 Students from the Câmara Mirim project in Belo Horizonte**

For the production of the necessary data to know the experience of former junior councilors and their relationship with political practices, a questionnaire (Appendix) was elaborated as the main methodological instrument of this research. According to Gil (1999: 128), the questionnaire can be defined as "[...] the investigative technique composed of a greater or lesser number of questions presented in writing to people, beliefs, feelings, interests, expectations, situations experienced etc. "

Such an instrument was chosen, agreeing with the author (GIL, 1999), since it presents, among others, the following advantages over other techniques of data production: a) it allows to reach large numbers of people, even if they are dispersed in a geographic area very extensive; b) guarantees the anonymity of the answers; c) allows people to respond when they deem it more convenient; and d) does not expose the researchers to the influence of the opinions and the personal aspect of the interviewee.

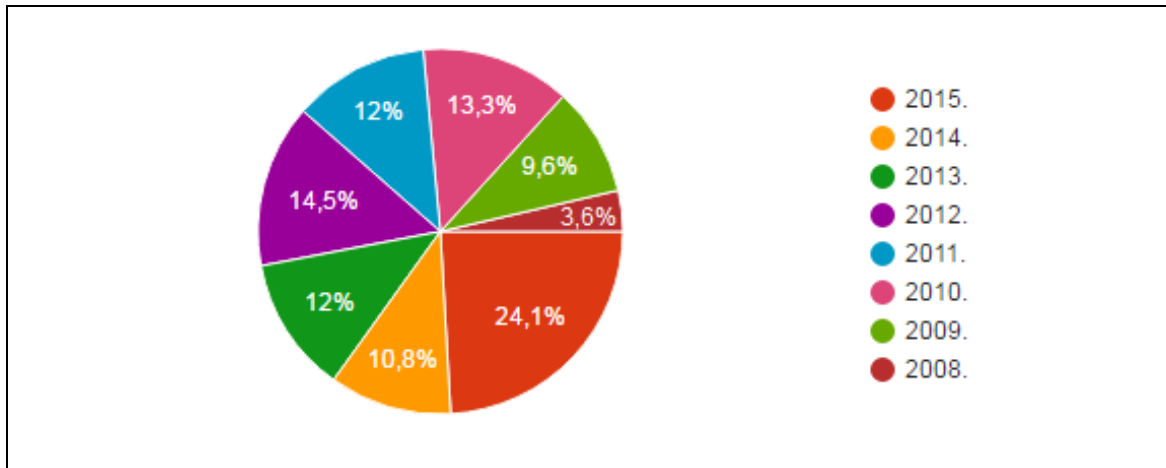
Based on the principles listed by Gil (1999), it has been reached a significant number of young people dispersed throughout the city, by sending to them the link of the questionnaire by electronic mail, since it was made available in a Google form. The set of questions submitted to self-administered students, in a self-applied way, aimed to collect as much information about their family profile as about their beliefs, feelings and values related to citizenship and political life. For that, closed, open and dependent questions about facts (concrete data such as age, for example), beliefs and attitudes (data concerning subjective phenomena) and behaviors (past or present) were elaborated (GIL, 1999).

In this way, of the 120 junior city councilors who were contacted<sup>4</sup> and who accepted to participate in the survey, 83 answered the questionnaire. These 83 respondents represent 25% of the total universe of project participants in the period 2008-2015, that is, during their eight years of its existence. They also show a representative universe of the years of Câmara Mirim, since 2008 (Graph 1). The majority of them are female (51.8%), are between 15 and 18 years old and

---

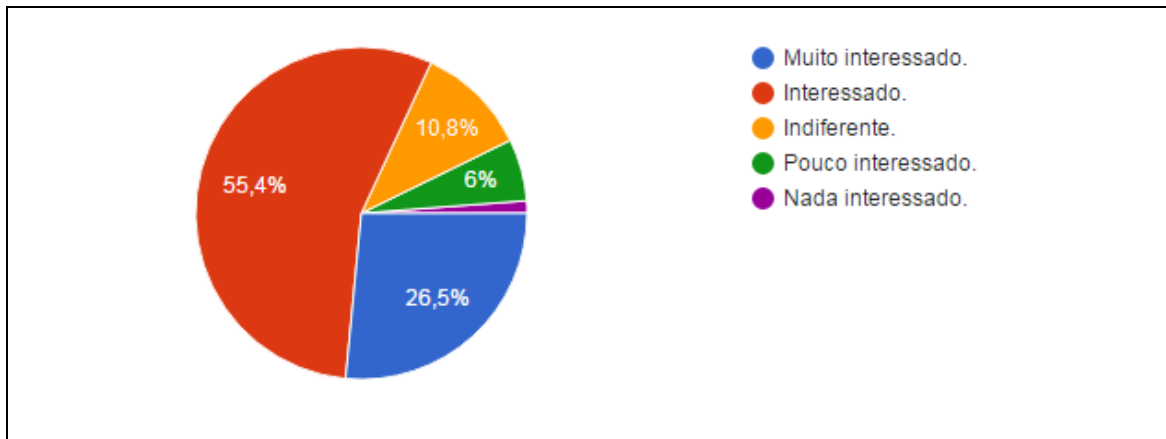
<sup>4</sup>We use the register organized by the project to contact the former junior councilors. However, this register has been improving over the years. Thus, for example, in 2008, there are no individual records of students, only representatives and schools. The individual registration, with telephones and addresses, was only made in 2009. As of 2010, the emails of each former city councilor were also registered. For three months we tried to contact them all, initially by phone, then by email. Many of these addresses were outdated. So many calls did not complete or did not answer and many emails came back. Finally, we seek to contact the project participants through social networks. This is how we reached a total of 120 ex-councilors, that is, 36, 14% of the total universe of the survey. These, after receiving general information about the research, were invited to participate. Everyone responded positively to the invitation. However, as is already expected in this type of research (GIL, 1999), 30% of them, despite agreeing to participate, ended up not responding to the questionnaire.

attended the 9th year of elementary school when they participated in Câmara Mirim (44.6%). Today, the majority are students of High School (39.8%) or Superior (22.9%).

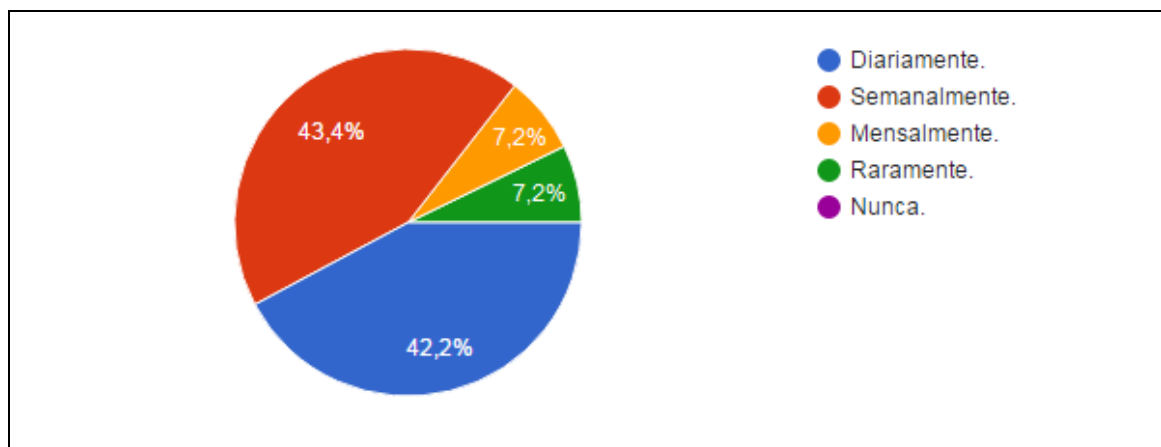


**Graph 1** – Years of participation of the interviewees in the Mirim Chamber of Belo Horizonte.  
**Source:** Prepared by the authors

In relation to the interest in politics, 82% of the students from Câmara Mirim classified themselves as interested or very interested (Graph 2) and almost 87% stated that they keep informed on issues related to politics daily or weekly (Graph 3), mainly through of digital media (newspapers, magazines and blogs), according to Graph 4.

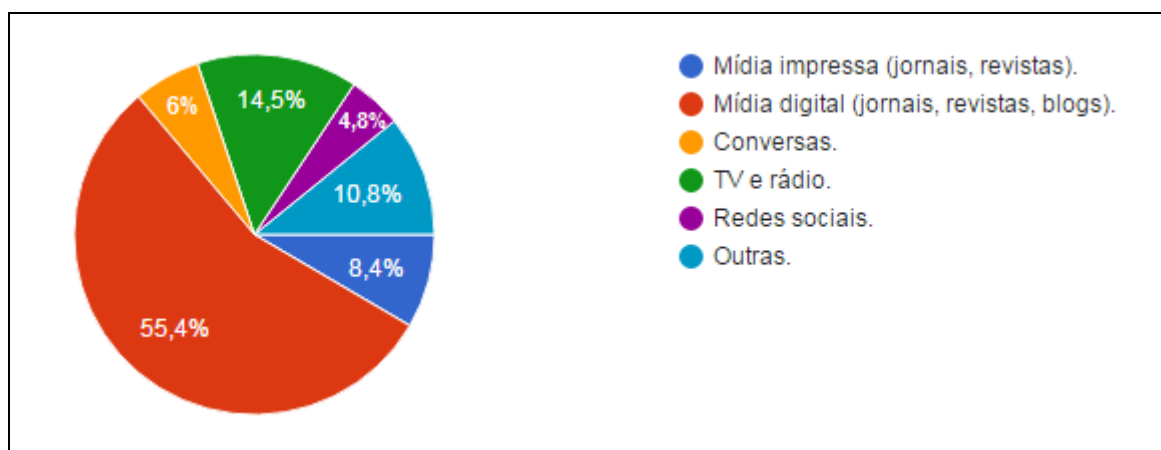


**Graph 2** – Classification of interest in politics.  
**Source:** Prepared by the authors  
**Legend:** Very interested, Interested, Indifferent, Little interested, Not interested



**Graph 3** – Frequency of information on policy issues. Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely, Never

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

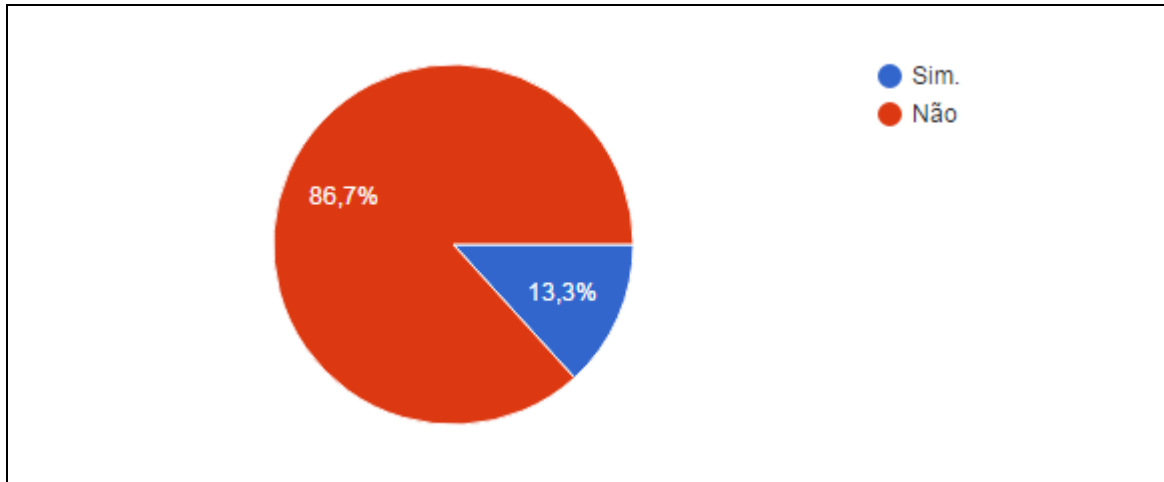


**Graph 4** – Obtaining information on policy issues: Media company (newspapers, magazines). Digital media (newspapers, magazines, blogs) conversations. TV and radio. Social networks. Others.

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

Although the majority report that they have never participated in any other project geared to political formation or exercised some type of political representation (Chart 5), those who declared that they had already participated in other projects of political formation existing in Belo Horizonte cited the Youth Parliament, mini UN and Young Ombudsman. Of the 13% who assumed other political representations before the experience in Câmara Mirim, 23% became involved with the Student Guild and another 23% were class representatives. These data are very significant, especially if we consider that not all schools have student's associations. Another 23% participated in collegiate bodies of their educational institutions. Thus, in the universe of 13% who had already assumed positions of representation, 69% were involved in political activities related to their school (student body, class representation, school council, etc.).





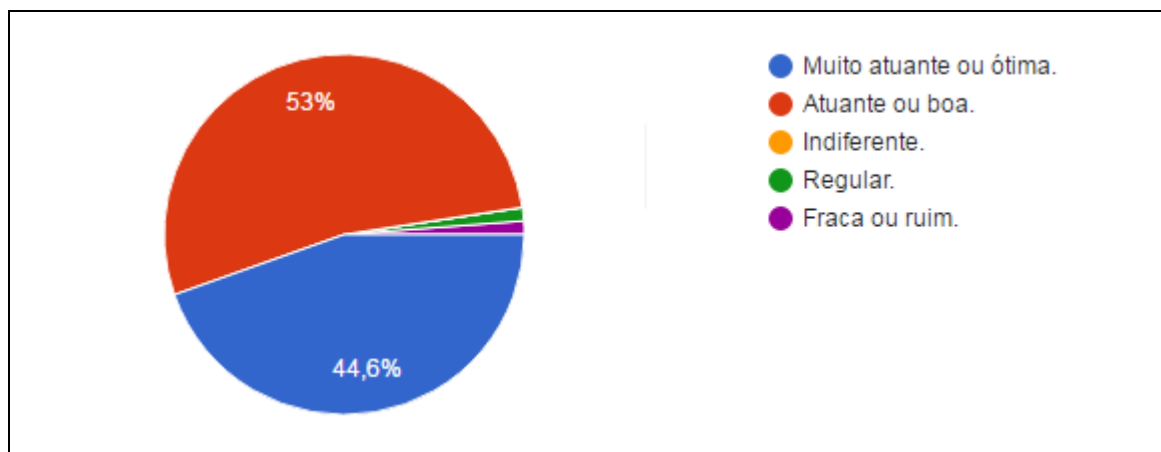
**Graph 5** – Participation in other projects aimed at the political formation and / or exercise of other activities of political representation. Yes; Not.

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

Of the 83 interviewees, 97% positively assessed their performance as a junior councilor, according to Graph 6.

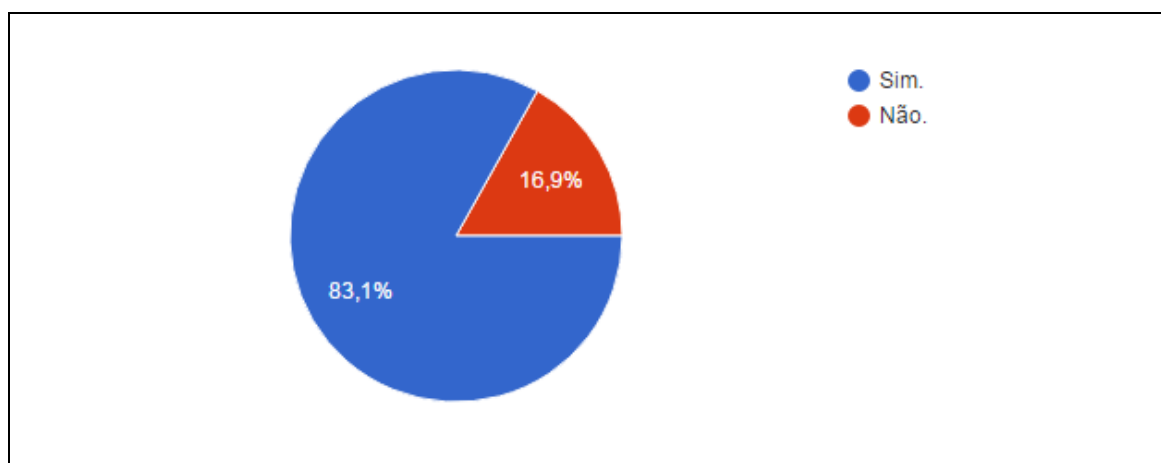
Already 83% of the interviewees affirmed that their participation in Câmara Mirim contributed to their political formation (Graph 7). In clarifying how this contribution would have been made, some graduates explained that they had more knowledge about the Brazilian political system and about the work of the councilors within the Chamber. They also reported that they understood the functioning of the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary powers, which increased their interest in politics and made them become more critical of this issue.

A good example of this contribution of Câmara Mirim to the political formation of its graduates is the trajectory of a student who participated in the project in 2009, while attending the sixth year of Elementary School. His mother is a housewife and his father a mechanic and both have not completed Elementary School, nor has any member of his family participated in associations or any political representation. However, currently attending Higher Education, the student was a candidate for the local council in the municipal elections of 2016. She attributes to the participation in Câmara Mirim her interest in being a councilor.



**Graph 6** – Evaluation of the participation as councilor mirim: Very active or great, Active or good, Indifferent, Regular, Weak or bad.

**Source:** Prepared by the authors



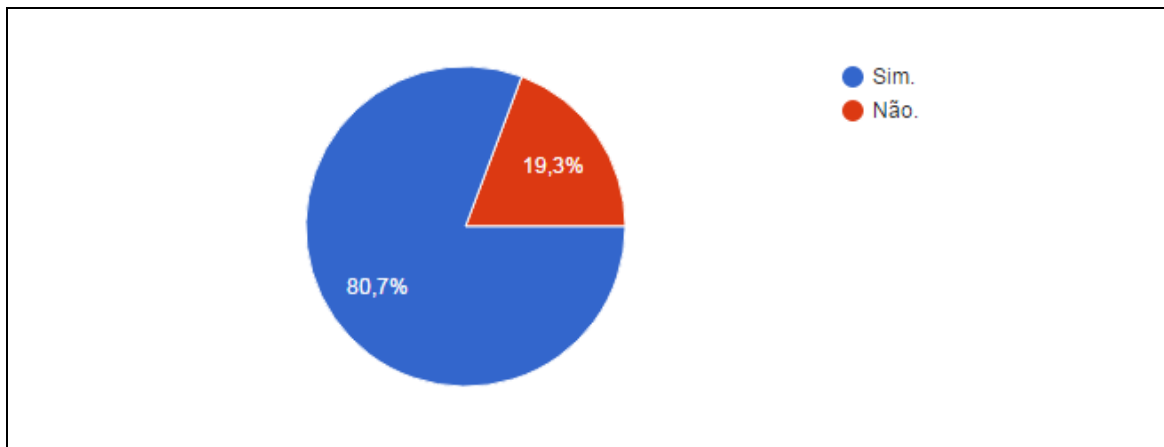
**Graph 7** – Participation in the Mirim Chamber and its contribution to political formation: Yes; Not.

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Some of the former youth councilors drew attention to the fact that their participation in the project would have helped to turn their gaze to the world and to society, encouraging a more active participation in matters of collective interest. This is the case, for example, of a student who is currently in high school and works as a computer monitor. He participated in Câmara Mirim in 2011, when he was in the seventh year of Elementary School. His parents did not complete Basic Education, but in his family circle there was a person associated with the association of his neighborhood, which encouraged him to participate effectively in it, with other political leaders. The interest he has developed in political matters makes him follow the news daily on the subject. He classifies his participation in the Câmara as very active, and his perception about the formation acquired in the project can be quoted literally: "[...] it was of great value to me, acting in society as a citizen. Engaged in politics, I became aware of how the three constituent powers of our nation functioned. I'm glad I'm not a political illiterate anymore." In addition, he states that his involvement in the Câmara Mirim has changed his life, as he has altered his

perception of politics. According to him, "[...] thoughts contrary to politics were thrown by land, since politics encompasses all aspects of our lives, so we can not ignore it or let others decide what our duty is."

In addition to recognizing the importance of the project for its political formation, 81% of those interviewed still stated that participation in the Câmara Mirim caused some change in their lives (Graph 8). This statement can be seen from other affirmations that emphasized the contributions of the project to the improvement of social interactions, to expose ideas and opinions in a clear way, to overcome shyness, to value diversity and to respect the otherness.



**Graph 8** – Participation in the Mirim Chamber and changes in students' lives: Yes, Not.  
**Source:** Prepared by the authors

As an example, we can cite the statement of a student who participated in the Câmara Mirim in 2015, when she was in her ninth year of Elementary School. According to her,

Today I have more respect for others independent of who I am and I value diversity. I have more wisdom and patience to deal with certain problems, whether at school, at home, or wherever I am. I learned how to be a good citizen and today I know that I have rights. I learned how and when to use my rights and have equality before the law. I have more arguments to express myself [...]. I have more confidence in my abilities and awareness of my limitations and increased my interests in politics and everything else that involves it. These were the changes that occurred to me after my participation in the Câmara Mirim.

Among those who had already participated in another citizenship education project, the assessment that participation in the Câmara Mirim caused some change in their life was 100%. When you observe the group that had never participated in any other project, the percentage is close to the general population, falling to almost 78% those who felt changes in their lives. From this cross-referencing of data, we can say that those who have participated in other similar projects more positively evaluate the potentiality of the project to bring changes in their lives.

After literature and the indications presented by the graphs so far, it can be inferred that the Câmara Mirim awakened the junior councilor to the universe of politics. The support for such

an inference is based on the relation between the declared interest and commitment of the junior councilors to political issues. In addition, it is based on other researches according to which the student who becomes more interested and informed about politics would be more likely to engage in civic and political literacy activities in the future (ZUKIN et al., 2006; LUSKIN et al. 2007; FUKS; PEREIRA, 2011). In this way, it is concluded that the former junior councilors would be really more likely to engage in political activities as stated by them in the responses of the present research.

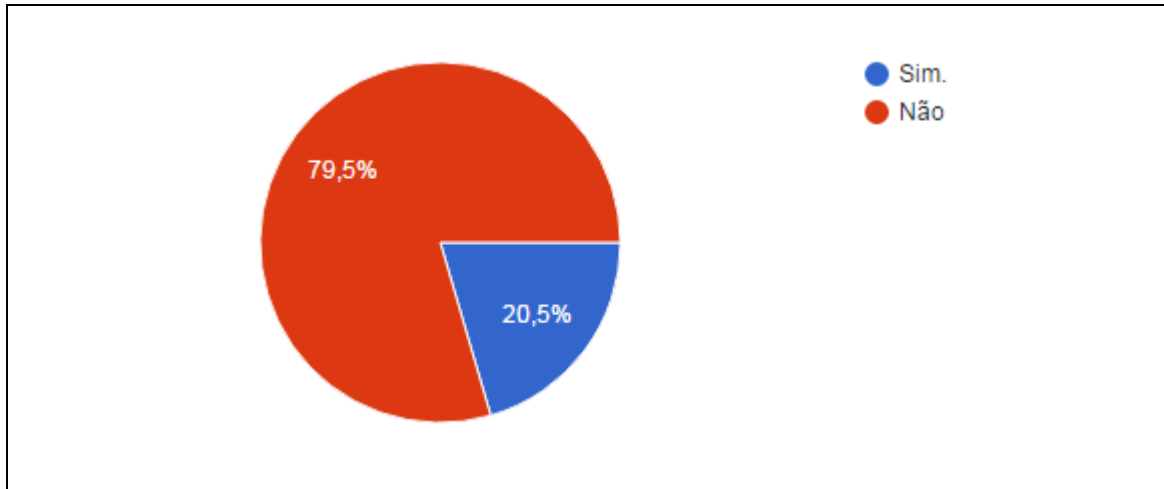
We also mapped the family profile of the interviewees. The majority of the parents of the graduates of the Câmara Mirim Project have completed High School (32.5%). Only about 10% of respondents' parents have complete or incomplete Higher Education. Among the majority professions, 10.2% are related to the provision of domestic services (janitor, maid and caregiver of the elderly) and 8.4% are autonomous (Table 1).

We also asked if any family member participated or already participated in any association and / or political representation, and 20.5% answered affirmatively (Graph 9). In families where someone has participated in a political association or assumed some political representation - such as participation in a union, membership of a political party, participation in a neighborhood association, etc. - the percentage of junior councilors who also assumed other functions of representation before the Câmara Mirim Project - as a class representative, participation in student group and school council, etc. - it's bigger. This data suggests that junior councilors with this family history of representation are more likely to also engage in political activities.

**Frame 1** – Major professions of fathers/mothers.

<b>PROFESSION</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	2,4
<b>Beauty sector.</b>	3,0
<b>Do not know</b>	3,6
<b>Professor</b>	4,2
<b>Construction</b>	5,4
<b>Technicians</b>	5,4
<b>Retired</b>	6,0
<b>Drivers</b>	6,0
<b>Trade</b>	6,6
<b>Housewife</b>	7,2
<b>Self employed</b>	8,4
<b>Domestic services</b>	Domestic services
<b>Others</b>	32,0

**Source:** Prepared by the authors



**Graph 9** – Family member participates / participated in association and / or political representation: Yes, not.

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

As an example, we can cite the case of a student who currently attends High School and works as a stockist. He attended the Câmara Mirim in 2014, when he was in his ninth year of elementary school and had already participated as an effective member of the collegiate and student body of his school. Her mother has completed High School and her father did not complete Elementary School. Other relatives participated in activities related to political representation. He stated the following:

My uncle was president of the neighborhood association and my great-grandfather was an articulator of the residents' association and mobilized the neighborhoods for the construction of a school and for the asphaltting of the streets. In fact, my family had the honor of having his name on a street.

Very interested in politics, he stated that he follows the news on the subject daily. In its evaluation, the Câmara Mirim Project in Belo Horizonte contributed to its ethical and citizen training. In addition, he states that he learned several methods of appealing to the authorities and that discussions and conversations with colleagues were very productive for his personal growth.

In fact, among the junior councilors whose relatives had some kind of political participation, the percentage of those who evaluated the project as less transformative in their life was lower. Considering the total number of interviewees, 19% stated that they did not feel changes in their lives after participating in the Câmara Mirim. It was observed that among the former youth councilors whose parents had political participation, the percentage of those who believe that the project did not result in changes in their life is lower, reaching only 11.7%,.

Another important aspect evidenced by the research is the relation between the degree of education of the relatives and the students' interest in politics. When we analyze mothers and fathers who have a high school education, 90% of their dependents have declared themselves interested or very interested in politics. In the opposite direction, among mothers and fathers who have a lower education level than incomplete high school, the percentage of children and daughters interested or very interested in politics drops to 77%. Therefore, there seems to be a

very clear relationship between education and interest in politics and citizenship, indicating that a more radical change in citizenship education in schools must be accompanied by an increase in citizens' access to higher education.

Among those who considered their participation as junior councilors as good or great, 94.5% said they monitor daily matters related to politics, especially through digital media. In addition, 89% of participants in this group said they were very interested or, at least, interested in politics. We believe that the interest in the politics of this group of students analyzed may be related to the interest of the family on the subject, since 21% of them had parents in positions of political representation.

When we analyzed only those participants who claimed to be interested or very interested in politics, we noticed that in 22% of cases they had someone in the family who engaged in some political activity, at class, community, municipal and even national level. And only 8.8% of those who said they were very interested or just interested in politics said that the experience in the Câmara Mirim Project was not relevant to their trajectory.

We conclude, therefore, in line with other studies that sought to analyze the political profile of young people with participation in initiatives or programs of political socialization, that the family environment and the school environment can have a significant influence on knowledge, attitudes, values and political participation of students from the Câmara Mirim (FUKS, 2014; SILVA, 2012; VERBA; SCHLOZMAN; BRADY, 1995). Thus, we agree with Fucks (2014) and other authors that the family activity in social and political activities seems to be very relevant for the formation of the students, influencing the greater use of these when participating in citizenship education projects, such as the Câmara Mirim.

At the beginning of the research with the former councilors of Câmara Mirim in Belo Horizonte, we assumed that, as a voluntary and extracurricular activity, it could only attract students who already had a prior interest in politics. However, the survey showed that about 15% of the students who participated in the project and answered the questionnaire stated that they were a little bit interested, not interested or indifferent to the politics. Even so, half of these disinterested students in politics are aware that the subject has much influence on their life. Surprisingly, although they had no previous interest in the subject, 100% of these students claimed to have been active or very active as junior councilors. In addition, 58% of them admitted that the project contributed a lot to their lives.

A good example was a student who participated in the project in 2012. In the research she declared herself indifferent to politics; however, she stated that her main channels of information on the subject are digital media, which she says follow weekly, and the school. The student also stated that during the project she was a working council member and, because of this engagement, her life changed according to the following statement: "made me have more knowledge of the

political area nowadays, because my interest in politics has grown after the experience in the Câmara Mirim".

On the one hand, if students' interest in politics and citizenship contributed to their engagement in the project, on the other hand, for those who were not interested in the subject, participation in the Câmara Mirim meant an instrument of change in his stance on the subject. This was evidenced by his extremely positive involvement as a junior councilor.

#### **4 Final considerations**

After analyzing the data presented here, we hope to have demonstrated that the Câmara Mirim Project is a citizenship education project that in fact presents effective and relevant results for its direct participants: the former junior councilors. These results can be translated, for example, by the change of attitude towards politics and by the understanding of the importance of citizen participation in the community. They also translate into an increase in knowledge about the Brazilian political system and the work of the councilors within the Chamber and a greater comprehension of the functioning of the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary Branches. And, in the words of some, these results contributed to the transformation of the way of looking at the world and society, encouraging a more active participation in issues of collective interest.

The present study performed an initial analysis of the data produced by the questionnaires. Other analyzes and productions of more data should be carried out providing a reflexive consolidation on the understanding of the Câmara Mirim Project to its graduates. Therefore, we note that Câmara Mirim also constitutes a space for research actions in the field of education for citizenship and politics.

#### **Referências**

BELO HORIZONTE. Câmara Municipal. **Projeto Câmara Mirim** (Camir). Belo Horizonte: Escola do Legislativo da Câmara Municipal, 2016.

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. **Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais**: introdução aos parâmetros curriculares nacionais. Brasília: MEC/SEF, 1997.

FINKEL, S. E.; SMITH, A. E. Civic education, political discussion, and the social transmission of democratic knowledge and values in a new democracy: Kenya 2002. **American Journal of Political Science**, v.55, n.2, p.417-435, 2011.

FOX, N. H. Teaching (is not) activism. **Radical Teacher**, n. 94, p. 14-23, 2012.

FUKS, M. Explicando os efeitos de programas de socialização política: a experiência do Parlamento Jovem no Brasil. **Opinião Pública**, Campinas, v. 20, n. 3, p. 425-449, 2014.

FUKS, M; PEREIRA, F. B. Informação e conceituação: um estudo sobre a dimensão cognitiva da desigualdade política entre jovens de Belo Horizonte. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, v. 26, n. 76, p. 123-143, 2011.

GIL, A. C. **Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social**. São Paulo: Atlas, 1999.

LANGTON, K. P.; JENNINGS, M. K. Political socialization and the high school civics curriculum in the United States. **American Political Science Review**, v.62, n.3, p.852-867, 1968.

LUSKIN, R. *et al.* Deliberation in the schools: a way of enhancing civic engagement? **Presented at the Biennial General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research**. 2007. Disponível em: <<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.176.6381&rep=rep1&type=pdf>>. Acesso em: 02 fev. 2018.

MENEGUIN, A. M. P. L. Plenarinho: novos paradigmas para novas gerações. **E-Legis**, Brasília, n.22, p.99-128, 2017.

NIEMI, R.; JUNN, J. **Civic education**: what makes students learn. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

SAMPAIO, T.; SIQUEIRA, M. Impacto da educação cívica sobre o conhecimento político: a experiência do programa Parlamento Jovem de Minas Gerais. **Opinião Pública**, Campinas, v.19, n.2, p.380-402, 2013.

SILVA, R. G. da. Juventude e educação cidadã: estudo sobre os impactos do Parlamento Jovem de Minas Gerais. **Teoria e Cultura**, v.7, n.1-2, p.55-68, 2012.

SLOMCZYNSKI, K. M.; SHABAD, G. Can support for democracy and the market be learned in school? A natural experiment in post-communist Poland. **Political Psychology**, v.19, n. 4, p. 749-779, 1988.

SOBRAL, F. A. da F. Educação para a competitividade ou para a cidadania social? **São Paulo em Perspectiva**, São Paulo, v.14, n.1, p.3-11, 2000.

VERBA, S.; SHLOZMAN, L.; BRADY, E. **Voice and equality**: civic voluntarism in American politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

ZUKIN, C; *et al.* **A new engagement?** Political, civic life, and the changing American citizen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Article received on: 05/03/2017

Article accepted for publication on: 17/05/2017